



新闻传播学英文原版教材系列  
大众传播学研究的里程碑  
第三版

# Milestones in Mass Communication Research

## MEDIA EFFECTS

THIRD EDITION

Shearon A. Lowery and Melvin L. DeFleur



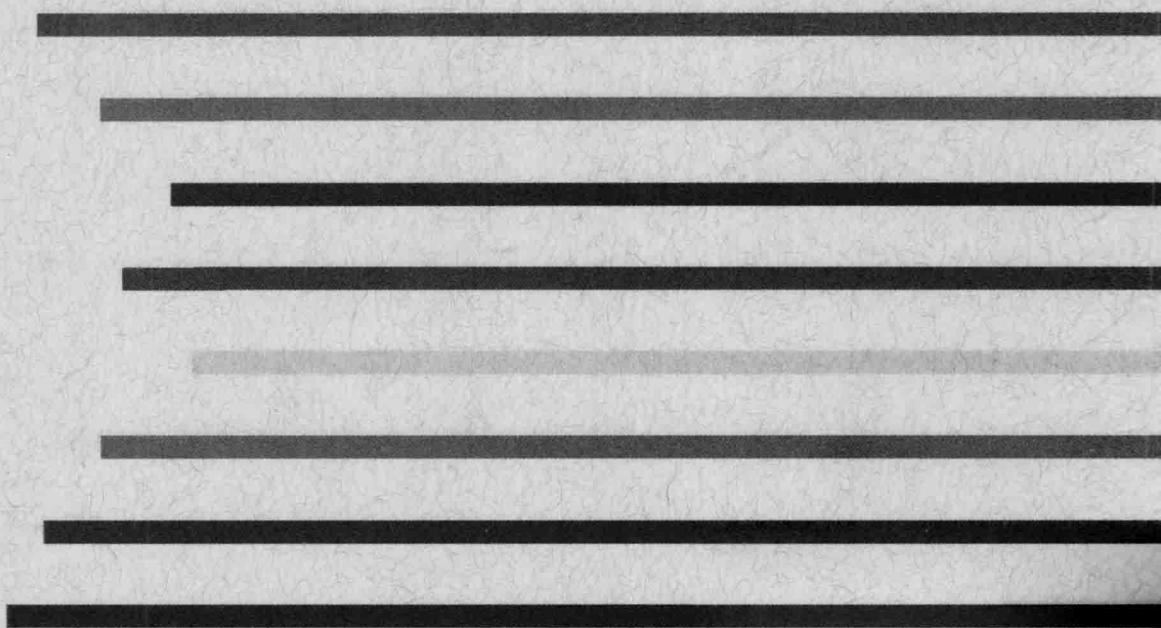
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# 大众传播学研究的里程碑

第三版

希伦·A·洛厄里 著  
梅尔文·L·德弗勒



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## 出版说明

近年来,我国新闻传播学教学水平不断提高,但与发达国家相比,还是有一定差距。当今世界,全球化趋势势不可当,这一点在大众传播媒介上体现得极为明显。中国加入WTO,更要求新闻传播学教育能够及时、全面、深入地反映国内外学界和业界的动态,尽快拉近与世界先进水平的差距。如今,广大教师和学生已不满足于仅仅阅读国外优秀教材的翻译版,他们迫切希望能读到原汁原味的原版教材。为了能尽快了解和吸收国外新闻传播学的最新研究成果,提高我国新闻传播学的教学研究和实际工作的水平,中国人民大学出版社选取了美国著名大学新闻传播学院长期选用的经典教材进行原文影印。

本丛书所选的图书均系美国新闻传播界有影响的大学教授所著,内容涵盖了新闻传播学的各个重要领域,全面反映了美国新闻传播学领域的理论研究水平和实践探索水平,因而受到了美国及世界各地的新闻传播学院师生、新闻从业人员的普遍欢迎,其中大部分版本都多次再版,影响深远,历久不衰,成为新闻传播学的经典教材。

本丛书在原汁原味地引进英文原版图书的同时,将目录和作者简介译为中文,作为对原版的一种导读,供读者阅读时参考。在这套英文原版影印丛书之后,中国人民大学出版社还将陆续推出它们的中文翻译版,广大读者可以对照阅读,相信收获会更大。

本丛书在图书选择和论证过程中,得到了中国人民大学新闻传播学院院长郭庆光教授和上海外国语大学新闻传播学院张咏华教授的大力支持和帮助,中国青年政治学院新闻系展江教授对目录的翻译进行了审校工作,在此谨向他们一并致以敬意和衷心的感谢。

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## Foreword

**T**oday the field of communication study has reached a level of growth and maturity in the United States and in other nations that leads scholars and students to look back at their past in order to understand their future. Of the approximately one million bachelors' degrees awarded annually by universities in the United States, 50,000 (5 percent) are in various fields of communication. This number represents a doubling in the past 10 years. Since communication study was institutionalized in American universities somewhat prior to 1960, about 2,000 departments and schools of communication have been established. There is no more important innovation in American universities in the past century.\*

The vision for communication study formed during the World War II years among a set of leading social scientists who were then working for Federal agencies during the emergency. Wilbur Schramm, on leave from the University of Iowa to work for the Office of Facts and Figures (and its successor agency, the Office of War Information), returned to his university in 1943 to launch the world's first Ph.D. program in "communication." Thus he implemented the vision that had been created in the nation's capital. This event was a turning point in the evolution of the field of communication study.

*Milestones in Mass Communication Research*, Third Edition, tells an important history of this growth of communication study, beginning with the famous Payne Fund studies of the effects of movies on children, carried out by sociologists,

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\* Everett M. Rogers, *A History of Communication Study: A Biographical Approach* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

psychologists, and educational researchers around 1930. About half of the 14 milestones in this book were conducted prior to 1960, the somewhat arbitrary date of the beginning of university departments and schools of communication. These early studies of mass communication were conducted by sociologists, social psychologists, and political scientists, and formed the intellectual basis for later students and scholars of communication. Several other histories of communication study focus on the early communication scholars who carried out these investigations, emphasizing the historical context in which they operated, rather than the substantive content of what these pioneering researchers actually found.

*Milestones in Mass Communication Research* takes quite a different approach to this history of mass communication research. A distinctive aspect of this text is that it organizes the history of our field by "milestones." What is a milestone? The term derives from the stone markers placed along ancient roads like the Romans' Appian Way to inform travelers of how far they had come and thus how far they had yet to go to reach their eventual goal. The 14 milestones featured here provide the reader with a scholarly roadmap of the path taken by mass communication research. For the new student of mass communication, the present book answers such questions as Where did we come from? How did we get here? Where are we? Where are we going? I have used the first and second editions of *Milestones* in my courses at Stanford University, the University of Southern California, and at the University of New Mexico. I found my students very interested in these classics. *Milestones* presents our past in an interesting and effective manner, so that the reader grasps the multidisciplinary foundations from which mass communication research has emerged.

## FOCUS ON MEDIA EFFECTS

The main focus in the 14 milestone studies is upon mass media *effects*. Mass communication research has been dominated by an effects-orientation over the 60-year period covered by this book. This concern with media effects is guided by a one-way model of mass communication, originally proposed by Claude E. Shannon's *A Mathematical Theory of Communication* (University of Illinois Press, 1949). This one-way model came on the intellectual scene about halfway through the sequence of the milestones detailed here, but it fit well with the existing concerns of mass communication scholars. The mass media in a nation like the United States reach such huge audiences with such rapidity that any observer of these mass media (and many laypeople) believe in strong media effects. Much of the funding for mass communication research has come from research sponsors who are primarily interested in media effects issues. Given this dominant orientation toward determining media effects, the Shannon model was interpreted by mass communication scholars into an effects framework (even though that interpretation of his model was not intended by Shannon).

## ADVANCES IN THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF MASS COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

The 60-year era spanned by the 14 milestones was punctuated by important methodological advances that allowed mass communication scholars to study the effects question with greater precision. Survey design, multivariate statistical methods, and new measurement techniques were incorporated in scholarly studies of media effects. Paul F. Lazarsfeld, one of the main founders of mass communication science, in the *People's Choice* study (chapter 4 herein) utilized a panel design with 600 research interviews each month for six months prior to the 1940 presidential election. The panel design allowed scholars to trace changes in voting intentions due to mass media influences. The mass media had relatively weak effects in the political campaign (we should remember that the Erie County, Ohio study was conducted in the pre-television days, and the project's results might be different today).

The 14 milestone studies of media effects are empirical, quantitative social science investigations, carried out in the mainline academic tradition of North American functionalist theory. These 14 soundings in the academic river of mass communication research illustrate the nature and directions of multidisciplinary social science research in the United States, as it grew in size and scientific sophistication across the six recent decades. Halfway through this period, about the time that the Shannon model appeared, the first Ph.D. degrees in mass communication were awarded, first at the University of Iowa, then at the University of Illinois, at Stanford, and soon thereafter at many other research universities.

Once mass communication research became institutionalized in university departments, schools, and research institutes, the field began to display greater consistency, and moved toward becoming a discipline. Communication scientists today have their own scholarly journals, scientific associations, textbooks, and other trappings of a discipline. Many contributions to mass communication research continue to be made by sociologists and other social scientists, and communication science remains open to intellectual contributions by many scholars who were trained in other fields. No other social science discipline today is so open to external intellectual influences as is communication study.

Communication scholars have displayed (in the topics they select to study) a certain degree of *technological determinism*, the belief that technology is a cause of social change in society. Most American mass communication scientists are probably "soft" technological determinists, believing that communication technology is *one* cause, along with others, of social change in American society.

The focus on children in certain of the milestone studies suggests that mass communication scholars often regard media effects with a critical stance, looking for possibly harmful impacts (like those of television violence on children's aggressive behavior). Certainly, critics of mass communication research cannot accuse these scholars of assuming that media effects are usually positive for the audience individuals under study.

## THE MILESTONES OF MASS COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

Most of the milestones chapters in this book have appeared in the two previous editions of *Milestones in Mass Communication Research* but are updated here. Two new chapters have been added. Chapter 5 concerns an important theoretical perspective, uses and gratifications, that began in the 1930s and 1940s with studies of daytime (radio) soap operas. Chapter 6 analyzes research on the diffusion of innovations, a research front that began around 1940 with a classic study of the diffusion of hybrid seed corn in Iowa. Since then, over 5,000 investigations of the diffusion of new ideas have been carried out.

What have the mass communication studies told us about media effects? For example, the television effects research shows little support for a catharsis effect, that TV violence purges the viewer of aggressive tendencies. Support *is* provided for a social learning model of television effects; viewers may identify with television roles and thus learn certain of the behaviors depicted in television programs. At least for some individuals, such modeling leads to television effects on behavior.

An important topic for mass communication research in recent years centers on an indirect media effect, which is covered in chapter 12 (The Agenda-Setting Function of the Press). This field of research began with an investigation by Max McCombs and Donald Shaw of the 1968 U.S. presidential election. These scholars, then at the University of North Carolina, found that the mass media influenced the relative importance that the public attached to various political issues. In the two decades since the McCombs-Shaw research was published, over 300 studies of the agenda-setting process have been completed. This research provides evidence that the media play an important role in influencing what the public *thinks about*, even though the media may not determine *what we think*. The scope of the original McCombs-Shaw research has been widened to explore (1) how the media agenda is set and (2) how the public agenda (that is, what the public thinks are the most important issues) influences the policy agenda (what public officials and politician think are the most important issues). This indirect effect of the mass media was stimulated, in large part, by mass communication scholars' search for media effects (and their general inability to find strong media effects of a direct nature in the methodologically sophisticated research of the 1950s and 1960s). Perhaps mass communication researchers will investigate other types of indirect media effects in the future.

The 14 milestones in this book represent a sampling of the outstanding breakthrough discoveries in mass communication research over the past six decades. Additional milestone chapters undoubtedly remain to be "written" by future investigators.

Everett M. Rogers  
University of New Mexico



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# Preface

**A**fter more than six decades of empirical research on the process and effects of mass communication, consensus remains incomplete among media scholars as to exactly what makes up the intellectual heritage of their discipline. It is clear, however, that the dominant mode of inquiry—the major methodology—that has been moving the cutting edge of that discipline forward is quantitative research conducted within the theoretical perspectives and methodologies of social science. Other modes of analysis are obviously important. Interpretive qualitative studies often reveal subtle influences on the nature, functions, and consequences of mass communication that could not be understood from quantitative studies alone. Critical perspectives call attention to power relationships between communicators and their audiences that every thoughtful citizen needs to examine. However, it is the accumulation of quantitative research completed within the guidelines of the scientific method that has made the most significant contribution to our emerging understanding of the process and effects of mass communication.

That conclusion has guided the selection of studies to include in *Milestones in Mass Communication Research*, particularly in the present third edition. Moreover, the studies selected form a pattern that is more than the sum of its parts. That is, in a rough and often unplanned way, the research on media issues summarized in the various chapters has led to the formulation, assessment, and refinement of an increasingly rich body of theory. Admittedly, the relationship between theory and research in mass communication has seldom fit the tightly articulated model described in textbooks. Nevertheless, the significant studies of the past have helped lead the way to an accumulation of theories explaining the nature, functions, and influences of our major mass media. To understand how particular studies contributed to the development of theory, it is necessary to look backward to see what was studied and what was discovered. For that reason,

the final chapter of this third edition briefly notes ways in which one or more of the milestone studies have contributed to ten specific theories that have been under development by media scholars.

Such a retrospective view of a series of seminal studies provides the major organizing framework of this book. Following discussion of the general nature of the society in which mass communication began, the initial chapter sets the stage with a discussion of the logical foundations of communication research and the role of quantitative procedures. The body of the work reviews 14 specific projects that have been conducted within a developing scientific perspective that has matured over time. Finally, in a nontechnical way, the last chapter links the studies to ten theories that have been proposed and investigated during the last six decades.

How were these 14 projects selected? Several criteria were used, as outlined in detail in chapter 1. One criterion was *theoretical significance*—some studies brought about new ways of thinking about the process and effects of mass communication. Another was *methodology*. At least a few projects developed or made use of innovative strategies that truly advanced the capacity of researchers to investigate the role and consequences of the media for individuals and society. A third criterion, used in part, was *scope*. Most of the studies and projects included in the book were large scale, involving thousands of subjects. However, scope in itself was not enough. Some of the milestones selected were actually of relatively small scale. In spite of this they are included because, in retrospect, they played a major role as turning points in the development of a particular explanatory perspective on the functions, process, or effects of the media.

Unfortunately, selection also implies exclusion. The gatekeeping process exercised by the authors, based on the above criteria, resulted in the exclusion of many worthwhile studies that made contribution to the development of the field. Fortunately, however, most are available in professional journals and can be identified and accessed via on-line information retrieval of electronic databases. In contrast, many of the works reviewed in the present book are not easily obtained in that they are reported in long-out-of-print books, multivolume publications, or complex government documents.

As in any area of scholarship, the most thorough and informative way to understand the methods, findings, and implications of a complex project is to review its original report. It should be kept in mind that the chapters of the present book are merely *summaries* of what was done and found. As such, they can serve only as secondary sources. At the same time, an attempt was made throughout to convey as much of the original report as possible, retaining the conceptual framework and general outline of each while focusing on the main issues and conclusions. Inevitably, however, any summary cannot reveal the richness of the full research report as presented by its original authors.

Why was a third edition necessary? Simply put, as scholarship advances, older studies come to be seen in a new light—sometimes as having had a previously unsuspected but significant influence on developments in the field or as having turned out to be dead ends. Thus, looking backward in a process of constant reassessment provides fresh insights into the intellectual roots of the discipline. By so doing, the study of the process and effects of mass communication remains

a dynamic discipline, in which generalizations, causal explanations, and theoretical predictions are constantly under assessment and revision.

For the above reasons, this third edition of *Milestones in Mass Communication Research* presents some totally new chapters, substantial revisions of several carried over from previous editions, and others that remain virtually unchanged. In addition, the authors have made an effort to make the book more accessible to undergraduate students. When the book was first prepared, it was written for an audience consisting mainly of upper division and graduate students, primarily from the social sciences. More and more, however, the book is being used in communication departments and schools offering undergraduate courses dealing with mass communication theory and research. To make the material more suitable for such users, careful attention has been given to such matters as definition of terms, explanations of research designs and methods, and avoidance of unnecessary social science or statistical jargon.

More specifically, the third edition contains the following changes: Chapter 1 has been shortened and rewritten. It now provides an introduction explaining why research is important. It lays out the criteria for selecting the milestones, and it sets forth a point-of-departure theory that came to be abandoned and replaced as research began and continued. Overall it shows how the media, public concerns about their influences, and the ability to conduct related research all came together earlier in this century to provide the foundation for a new discipline of mass communication research.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are essentially unchanged from previous editions. These chapters discuss three very important pre-World War II investigations that provided a solid beginning for the new field of media research. These were the Payne Fund studies of the influence of movies on children (chapter 2), Cantril's investigation of public response to the *War of the Worlds* broadcast (chapter 3), and the classic *People's Choice* research on the role of the media in the 1940 presidential election (chapter 4).

Chapter 5 is completely new. It shows the origins of the uses and gratifications perspective on media audiences. The foundation study of ways in which thousands of listeners made use of and received enjoyment from the daily radio soap operas provided a turning point in scholarly thinking about the behavior of media audiences.

Chapter 6 is also completely new. It shows how a relatively obscure study of Iowa corn farmers, and the way they took up a new kind of seed, led to a theory of the adoption of innovation. In today's era of the information superhighway and numerous other dazzling media innovations, the process by which people come to accept and adopt new technologies is central to the field of media studies.

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 are carried over from previous editions with only minor changes. The film studies of World War II (chapter 7) remain important in cautioning all of us against overestimating the degree to which seeing a movie can produce fundamental changes in people's beliefs, attitudes, and values. The Yale program of attitude studies (chapter 8) remains important in that it was a seminal series of experiments from which came many concepts and generalizations about the process and effects of communication that continue to guide thinking and research. The role of personal influence (chapter 9) is still important

in understanding that the mass communication process includes not only direct exposure to messages but a flow of word-of-mouth information from media to opinion leaders and then on to secondary audiences.

Chapter 10, on Project Revere, has been revised. In particular, it places that research effort into a context of cold war concerns that even the investigators and authors at the time did not suspect. Leaflets remain a mass medium of last resort, able to reach audiences when contact by other means is out of the question. Moreover, in view of recent disclosures about the Mark-Ultra research sponsored by the CIA, this study takes on more dramatic dimensions.

Chapters 12, 13, and 14 have been edited in only minor ways. The theory of the agenda-setting function of the press (chapter 12) has become widely researched since it was introduced in the study discussed. The report of the President's Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (chapter 13) and its assessment of the amount of violence on television provided the foundation for theories linking people's beliefs about their society with degree of exposure to televised portrayals of that society. The Report to the Surgeon General (chapter 14) remains a classic and large-scale effort by social scientists to understand the link between violence portrayed on television and aggressive behavior on the part of children and adolescents.

Chapter 15 consolidates what were two long chapters on Ten Years of Progress in the second edition into a single, more concise chapter. It now has a more central focus on televised portrayals of violence and children's aggressive behavior, which remains high on today's agenda of public concern.

Finally, chapter 16 is new. It provides a summary of the major findings of each milestone project in concise form. Equally important, it identifies in a very basic way ten specific theories of mass communication that either emerged from one or more of the milestones or were significantly influenced by them.

Generally, then, this third edition focuses somewhat more on emerging theories than did previous editions. It includes additional studies that have come to be recognized as milestones in that they contributed to theory development, and it emphasizes the value of accumulating a strong base of quantitative empirical research as a foundation for understanding the process and effects of mass communication. Above all, it makes accessible to students at least part of the intellectual heritage of the discipline of mass communication by summarizing a number of remarkable research efforts by which brilliant investigators made major contributions to this increasingly important area of knowledge.

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