

Editor's Introduction

The first selection, Ithiel Pool's "Introduction to Political Communication" from the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (1968), begins with a brief comment that might be overlooked as an aside. However Pool's view that "The domain of the study of communication can thus legitimately be the entire domain of the social sciences" is an entrance to his work and to this volume.

Specifically, a group of wide-ranging pioneers (Harold Lasswell, Nathan Leites, Ithiel Pool, and Karl Deutsch, among others) saw communication systems with the same vividness that economists see economic systems. This framework is unique and seemed to permit them, with apparent effortlessness, to think (e.g., in Pool's case) usefully about subjects as disparate as the modernization of peasant societies, nuclear deterrence, how Congress works, the computer simulation of American voting behavior, and many other topics.

This "communication studies" framework is rarely taught and it differs from a typical academic major that might have a similar name. It is not a designation for a diffuse and limited education but a framework that is recommended if one wants to make a commitment to integrate insights and methods ("the entire domain") of all the social sciences. The understanding of a particular communication system requires detailed field work: as Bauer, Pool and Dexter wrote in their multiyear study of Congress (pp. 91-117 in this volume): "[C]ommunications is one input into a complex sociopsychological system. The effect of the communication on that system is, to a greater degree than is usually acknowledged, a function of the structure of that system.... [T]he study of communications in real-life situations is a study of complex structural facets of society. It is not enough to examine a message flow between the black boxes. One needs to know the transforming characteristics of the black boxes." They carefully studied five sets of black boxes.

Images and Influence

Changing Images: Communication in the Process of Modernization, Newsmen's Fantasies, Audiences and Newswriting, Deterrence as an Influence Process

The next three selections reflect a greater depth that emerges in Pool's research after his personal experience with psychoanalysis. (It also was a common sensibility in his circles early in his professional life: Lasswell and Leites were pioneers in the application of psychoanalytic sensibilities and methods.) I have included them because of the subjects which they illuminate, and also because the emphasis upon imagery remains ahead of its time; social scientists have developed more quickly the measurement of attitudes toward an external reality [Does the subject agree or disagree with a particular expression of opinion, and how strongly, using a seven-point scale] than the measurement of images. Yet the altered images—in political modernization, in psychoanalysis, in social science research itself—are often the pathway for change or learning: an "image Congress" (real enough in the imagination) becomes, after a multiyear field study, a different Congress. The reality of American capacity to destroy the Soviet Union with nuclear weapons can be distinguished from the "image America" that impinges on the mind of Soviet leaders—and one may want (for example) this "image America" to convey strength and resolve, but to keep the menace in the background.

If Pool is right, the impact of communications on images is a key to predict one set of major social and political effects of new telecommunications technology.

Concerning the paper on nuclear deterrence: for several decades, MIT and Harvard trained defense analysts (for example, in graduate seminars where students had rotary slide rules calibrated in megadeaths—a theory of how to make nuclear deterrence rational.) Ithiel Pool spent his post-World War II professional life surrounded by these questions of nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence. His "Deterrence as an Influence Process" sought to create a productive discussion between two opposing camps that seldom spoke to one another. It was highly regarded in the Cambridge arms control community and prescient. (A student of the period might find it insightful to read the paper as an implicit commentary on the work of a Harvard economics professor of the era, Thomas Schelling, who was brilliant, innovative, influ-

ential, and [by implication] not always reliable in some of his ideas about nuclear deterrence.¹)

Networks and Power

Contacts and Influence

“Contacts and Influence” may become Ithiel Pool’s most original single contribution to theory and research, with special value for the decades ahead as the verb “to network” increasingly characterizes behavior.

The original version was drafted in the late 1950s when the organizing imagery of American politics (and indeed, world politics) was still group-based. A minuet of organized political parties and formal interest groups bargained, lobbied, brokered public opinion and campaign contributions, and decided political outcomes. National governments set the agendas and made decisions through formal institutions and representatives. As a contrast, Pool looked at *personal* communication systems and networks of potential influence from a global perspective and, with his co-author, sought to estimate the probabilities that any two persons selected at random might share a common contact. Or (to extend the question) how many steps or degrees of separation would there be between any two people on the planet, selected at random? Or between a randomly selected American voter and a president or congressman?²

Both Pool and Kochen worked on the paper (Kochen, especially, on the formal mathematics which is not reprinted here.) Subsequent researchers earned the label “the small world phenomenon” for this line of work.³ The title of a play and movie, *Six Degrees of Separation*, was based on the ideas in the paper.

The Pool and Kochen paper lays a groundwork for monitoring and predicting new routes of influence and power as new communication technologies extend the capacities of personal two-way communication systems on a global scale.

Congress and Its Constituents

If [early social science research has] shown that, for good or ill, the ordinary man does not conform to Rousseauian prescriptions of citizenship, what we have done here is to say a similar thing about his political betters. They, too, fulfill their roles while uninformed, preoccupied, and motivated by adventitious private goals. If such facts disqualify men for a role in affairs of state, it is difficult to say who would be qualified. We believe we have shown that, the rush of events being what it is and the

limitations of time and energy being what they are, no leading politician could meet the test. A political theory that expects a statesman to act with that degree of deliberation on all issues which he might at best achieve for one issue at a time is clearly unrealistic.... [M]ost existing literature portrays the policy decision-process in what we came to feel was an overly intellectualized way. (p. 111, below)

We find that the notion that big business interferes rudely and violently with the democratic process needs qualification. This notion is based on a long historical stream of writings, but, so far as our reporting goes, it was not true on the tariff in the period since 1953. (p. 113, below)

In the calculations of self-interest that occurred continuously among our [businessmen] subjects, the aspects of the conception that varied included *whose* self-interest, in the light of *which facts*, and *over what time periods*. (p. 98)

Bauer, Pool, and Dexter's *American Business and Public Policy: The Politics of Foreign Trade* (1963) from which this selection is drawn, remains the best case study of a political communication system and congressional decision making. Each of the three quotations above illustrates a finding that affected the understanding of Congress, public opinion, and the role of businessmen. For example, a standard arm-chair analysis of political behavior is that businessmen pursue their self-interest in politics: the study determined three critical ingredients (cited above) that needed resolution before self interest was defined. And, Bauer, Pool, and Dexter found, big businessmen often did not know—in this framework—on which side of these issues their rational self-interest was to be found.⁴

Trends in Content Analysis

Stir the human mind with a word, an idea, or an action, and ripples of thought and feeling will billow across the world...⁵

An example of an analysis which uses the representational element in highly manipulated communications is *Movies*, by Wolfenstein and Leites. It is a content analysis designed to identify national myths in one of the most calculated of the mass media. Movies are made for the box office. Every shot is designed to appeal to an imagined audience. It does not represent the aesthetic taste or the emotional states of the authors or directors in any immediate way. Individual idiosyncrasies are ironed out in the collective process of production. Yet in the very process of collectively producing an expression of what the producers conceive to be the fantasy life of their audience, they are representing something about their own image of the culture in which they live. In that lies the creative element in the making of a movie, which emerges despite the influence of box-office considerations. There are choices to be made which express the character and environment of the chooser. There is a story to be thought up, pieces to be put together; there is room for associations to float, controlled of course by one's image of the audience's associations. And in this process the fantasies and values of the culture somehow get expressed. There is thus room for analysis of movies, not only in

terms of the instrumental calculations which go into them but also as representations of their makers. (Pp. 134–35, below)

The first generation of social scientists was captivated by the idea of monitoring the flow of mass communications in different countries and using new quantitative methods to draw inferences. The work was done by hand. One study in which Ithiel Pool participated (with Daniel Lerner and Harold Lasswell) hand-coded 19,553 editorials, a sample from five prestige newspapers in the U.S., Great Britain, Russia, France, and Germany across sixty years, for 416 symbols.

Eventually, they stopped. The work was fiercely time consuming. They recognized that it needed to wait for better technology, both for the mechanics and, especially, for any analysis of the data that could answer the more sophisticated questions they wanted to ask. This technical summary symposium in 1959, from which Ithiel Pool's selection is drawn, was a message in a time capsule to future generations who could pick up the work. Today, with scanning technology and the expanded capacities of computers, the time is arriving when renewed progress may be possible.⁶

Concerning more advanced questions: one of the fascinations in Ithiel Pool's circle was to analyze public communications in each country with a psychoanalytic-like (but more rigorous and structured) sensibility to describe and infer the "operational code" of the country or culture. The pioneer was Nathan Leites, whose monumental *Study of Bolshevism* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1953) and briefer *Operational Code of the Politburo* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951) fascinated his associates.⁷

Ithiel Pool began a similar project in India to infer the operational code that made Indian culture, politics, and behavior uniquely Indian. Among his papers is a trunk, filled with hundreds of careful note cards detailing classic Indian texts and folk stories of monkey kings, arguments from Indian philosophers about how Indian categories of logic differ from Western categories, and puzzled letters about Indian movies (whose plots and conclusions he could not predict, and whose great popularity with Indian audiences partly eluded him.)

The movies produced by Indian culture illustrate the research problem: India produces more motion pictures than any other country and Indian audiences love these motion pictures. But there is virtually no market outside of India. Why not? (By contrast, the market for movies generated by American culture is global and extraordinary.)

In the end, Ithiel never figured out the answer. The problem may be another "ahead of its time" challenge. The methods that can provide a

general solution to the distinctiveness of each culture would be insightful for studying the spread of cultures in coming decades.⁸

Notes

1. The extended series of case studies and books by Pool's contemporary, Alexander George, also can be read as an implicit critique of Schelling, although both authors characteristically make external reality, rather than other academic theorists, the focus of their published work.
2. The discussion of Congress in the paper (pp. xx-xx) may put the formal academic literature concerning public opinion more in touch with reality. Congressmen can be extraordinarily sensitive to the action moods and concerns of the people who elect them and the Pool and Kochen analysis suggests a plausible process (i.e., letter writing and telephone calls, which represent a minute fraction of constituents, aside) by which political discussions in personal networks link together to give 500 elected representatives a degree of workable feedback system from 200,000,000 people.
3. See Manfred Kochen (ed.). *The small world: a volume of recent research advance commemorating Ithiel de Sola Pool, Stanley Milgram, Theodore Newcomb*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corp., 1989.
4. Concerning the influence of business: the interested reader may wish to pursue the comments along these lines in Pool's review of Charles Lindblom's *Politics and markets*, which ignored the results of this empirical work. The essay is "How powerful is big business?" in *Does big business rule America?* edited by Hessen, Robert. Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1981, pp. 23-34.
5. This is the opening sentence of the Advisory Committee *Report* on international communications research, which led to the founding of the MIT Research Program in Communications. Ithiel Pool was secretary of the committee. An abridged version of the report is Hans Speier et al. "A plan of research in international communication." *World Politics* 6, no. 3 (April 1954): 358-77.
6. As a companion to Pool's edited volume and his essay (from which this excerpt is drawn) anybody interested in content analysis should consult an excellent book by Ole R. Holsti, *Content analysis for the social sciences and humanities*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1969. The stress (tension) indicators discussed by Pool continued to develop and have provided valuable insight into foreign policy decision making in crises. See M. Hermann's review, "Indicators of stress in policymakers during foreign policy crises," *Political Psychology* 1, no. 1 (1979): 27-46.
7. Alexander George, Ole Holsti, and others attempted to infer "operational codes" of different decision makers. The task was analogous to inferring the key elements of a computer simulation that would, with appropriate changes in parameters, generate the distinctive decisions and sentences of a selected American president or secretary of state or foreign leader.
8. Good indicators would help to prevent hasty generalizations by people thinking in traditional political categories. For example, Samuel Huntington's *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996. Huntington's categories of cultures and analysis (e.g., Islamic culture v. Western culture) overlook trends that are readily recognized by monitoring global communications. (In addition to the worldwide popularity of American movies, MTV has become a global channel, serving a global teenage culture.)