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Communication Research In Taiwan: Retrospect And Prospect

By

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Retrospect and Prospect

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Communication Research in Taiwan: Retrospect and Prospect

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Communication Research in Taiwan: Retrospect and Prospect

Communication as an area of study has developed its concept and approach primarily on the basis of discipline well-established in the West, or more precisely, in the United States. It is therefore not surprising to see the introduction of communication research to the other nations following a process similar to the introduction of most technological innovations: Awareness, adoption, and localization.

Twenty-two years have passed since the first piece of communication research appeared in Taiwan (Chu and Chi, 1964). Within this time span, over 400 studies were completed in journalism and mass communication. Some people who have received basic training in this field became leading communication researchers and established their strong bases not only in Taiwan but also in Hong Kong, Singapore, and the United States. But exactly what has been found and accomplished in communication research in Taiwan? What stage is it in and what direction will it take?

This paper will begin with a historical account of the development of communication research in Taiwan. By using recently completed meta-research studies, this paper will then categorize the content and direction of the previous communication studies and projects. The final section will be devoted to the discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of communication research in Taiwan.

I. The Path of Development

Just as in many other places, communication research in Taiwan grew out of journalism education. "Grew out" in the sense that communication started as a sub-field of journalism studies, and the majority of researchers also held teaching positions at journalism departments. Only in recent years did department of communication begin to appear in Taiwan.

Yen-Jin University was the first one in China to establish a department of journalism (1918), under the influence of the Missouri school. When China fell to the Communist in 1949, National Chengchi University became the only higher learning institution on the island of Taiwan offering trainings in this area. Majority of the faculty members were either trained
on China mainland or in the United States. A bi-annual journal titled Bao Hsueh (the *Journalism*) started publication in 1951 and soon provided a forum for studies in journalism practice, e.g., newspaper printing, how to be a foreign correspondent, and the applications of telecommunication technologies in newspaper works.

The term "communication" as an area of study, however, remained foreign to most people until students who went to the United States for graduate training returned with new ideas. In 1964, two young scholars fresh from American universities completed the first piece of research using communication and sociology theories as frameworks and quantitative methods for data collection. This project, completed by Godwin Chu and Jin-Yao Chi (1964), to a great extent supported the hypotheses that younger and better educated radio listeners would prefer programs that introduced modern ways of thinking.²

This breakthrough should have triggered the development of communication research in Taiwan, but on the contrary, after the completion of a few projects by Chu and Chi, there followed nearly five years of vacuum. As Chu left Taiwan to work in Canada and later in the United States, only one major research project (Chi, 1966) in the field of communication was completed aside from master's theses during the period between 1965 and 1970. This lengthy period of inactivity seemed to signify a serious setback for communication research, but later it was proved to be a critical stage in which the way for further development was paved.³

In 1966, Chia-Shih Hsu, a returnee with a master's degree from the University of Minnesota, published a book titled *Introduction to Mass Communication*. The book introduced, for the first time in the history of Taiwan's communication research, communication theories as an organized body of knowledge to local readers. The book was written in easy language and soon became popular among journalism students. In the following year, Hsu left his newspaper translation job to become chairman of the Department of Journalism at National Chengchi University.

Under the leadership of Hsu, a second attempt at communication research was made in the early 1970s. Several large-scale research projects were launched; topics included two-step flow and opinion leaders, accuracy of news, television and children, and
communication and national development. One of the most interesting research studies at this time was conducted by Hsu to test the applicability of the two-step flow theory (Hsu, 1970). Hsu examined female consumers' behaviors in purchasing clothes as well as their decision-making processes in movie-going, and found no evidence that his sample subjects were influenced heavily by any "opinion leaders." He concluded that either the two- or multi-step theory of information can be used in the Taiwan society only in a limited degree.

If the 1960s could be seen as a time for preparation for communication research in Taiwan, then the following decade was really a time for take off. In 1973, Hsiao-Rong Yang, a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin in Madison, returned to teach in the Graduate School of Journalism at National Chengchi University. With an intense interest in quantitative methods, he soon became an advocate for the use of statistics and computer in communication research. Mostly because of Yang's contribution, the number of theses and projects using survey methods also took lead.

With better research facilities available at this time, plus closer cooperations among researchers, Yang was able to conduct research subjects that had never been touched by others, such as communication behavior of delinquent youths (Yang, 1974a), communication patterns of Taiwan's aboriginals (Yang 1975a), the diffusion of news/information (Yang, 1975b, 1978). Yang's early training in rural sociology also enabled him to apply sociological theories and methods to communication problems (e.g., Yang 1972, 1974b, 1975c, 1976, 1977a). Yang left National Chengchi University in the mid-1970s and then taught in the Department and Graduate School of Sociology at Soochow University; his interest in communication, unfortunately, was gradually subsided after his transfer.

Also starting in the early 1970s, when Taiwan was moving into the process of economic "take-off," the National Science Council (NSC) began to play a key role in promoting and funding research projects in varied fields, including communication. For example, the first island-wide survey was initiated and supported by the NSC in 1974 to study general patterns of communication behaviors among the audience in Taiwan (Hsu, et al., 1975, 1976a, 1976b). Led by Hsu, Yang, and their colleague, Pan Chia-Chin, researchers examined not only the audience's motives and habits in terms of media use but
also the contents of newspapers and electronic media. Their main findings to a great degree were paralleled with conclusions reported by scholars in the West, that is, media use is correlated with the audience's age, education, sex, and habitats—high media users are most often those with better SEC backgrounds or those living in the urban areas. In terms of media's content, these researchers found that "entertaining" has been over-emphasized by the media as the primary function.¹

By the end of the 1970s, the second generation of communication researchers started to return home after their studies in the United States. Most of them have received Ph.D. degree, had their own areas of specialty, and were capable of conducting independent research. This inflow of talents has led to a third stage of development: a time of maturity for communication research in Taiwan.

To summarize, we have quickly delineated the historical development of Taiwan's communication research in this section. Three stages were identified and introduced: The early beginning of communication research in Taiwan was described as heavily influenced by the journalistic tradition, until two young scholars, Godwin Chu and Jin-Yao Chi, completed the milestone research in 1964. Later, in the early 1970s, both Chia-Shih Hsu and Hsiao-Rong Yang have contributed significantly to improving Taiwan's research environment by introducing communication theory as an integrated body of knowledge as well as by using complicated statistical measurement in explaining social realities. Finally, starting the late 1970s, a whole new generation of young researchers with higher degree returned to Taiwan and thus have injected fresh blood to the field.

In the following section, the general picture of past research results in communication in Taiwan will be presented and discussed.

II. Content Analyses of Research Reports

Several studies have attempted to analyze what has been found and accomplished in communication research in Taiwan in the past two decades. For example, a study published in 1977 by Yang examined the content of master's theses and research projects in communication (Yang, 1977b). In conclusion, Yang suggested that several stages of development can be characterized regarding communication research in Taiwan: brooding

While discussing the necessity to study communication from a Chinese perspective, Leonard L. Chu (1978) content analyzed two major journals in journalism and communication research: Bao Hsueh and Journalism Research in addition to master's theses. He found a significant increase of communication research using quantitative methods published in Journalism Research from 1969 to 1973, while the number of articles about issues and problems in other countries decreased considerably. This trend emerged again when the content of master's theses was examined.

Another study too content analyzed Bao Hsueh. Chen (1970) discovered that an increasing number of the articles published in the journal were of an behavioral scientific nature focussing on the process of communication rather than biographies of well-known journalists. But in comparison to locally conducted studies, the percentage of translated articles was in the rise.

Also worthy of attention was an annotated bibliography of communication studies in Taiwan and Hong Kong compiled by G. Chu, Hsu, and Chi (1977). The bibliography provided detailed information on individual research that were completed up to 1977.

In 1985, James Chu, a visiting professor at National Chengchi University embarked a study of the state-of-the-art of journalism and communication research in Taiwan. With the assistance of L. Kwai and S. F. Yang, questionnaires were sent to 120 potential researchers working in colleges, universities, government offices, and media institutions. Forty-four responded, and additional information was sought. In this way, a list of research projects completed over the past twenty-one years was compiled and analyzed. In addition, the report described the opinion of researchers and media practitioners on conducting communication research in Taiwan, and comparisons were made between studies published in the United States and in Taiwan from 1981 to 1985 (see J. Chu and Kwai, 1986; National Science Council, 1986; also see S-F Yang, 1985).

J. Chu and Kwai's analysis of the research projects showed that communication and social change was the most popular topic of study up to 1985, accounting for 12.64% of the
total (Chu and Kwai, 1986, p. 127). Next was audience analysis (10.91%), media performance (9.77%), and communication policy (9.19%). As to research methods used, social survey took the lead (70.87%), followed by content analysis (10.68%), and narrative/literature review (9.71%).

Comparisons of journal articles published in Taiwan and United States from 1981 to 1985 also showed interesting results. It was found that the most popular topic during this time period was public opinion for Taiwan (11%) and international communication for the United States (11.9%). Chu and Kwai also located much more articles by U.S. journals in such areas as advertising, law and court, editorial policy, government and media, magazine, minorities, public relations, visual communication, and women and media (Chu and Kwai, 1986, p. 171).

To acquire a fair picture of communication research in Taiwan, three small-scale content analyses were completed by the current authors to examine and compare the following three items:

1. Master's theses completed in journalism and communication from 1956 to 1985;
2. Research projects completed from 1964 to 1985;
3. Content of Bao Hsueh, volumes four to seven, as a continuation of Shih-Ming Chen's study of the same journal volumes one to three.

Master's theses. As mentioned earlier in this paper, the first journalism graduate school was established as early as in 1954. One of the degree requirements was completion of a thesis. This degree requirement was later adopted by other graduate programs in communication. Since students need to work with faculty members on the thesis, their work pretty much reflected research interest at the time, and throughout the years clearly indicated a changing direction.

Two points are of special interest here: theoretical orientation and research methods applied. The first problem encountered in the endeavor was to devise a set of clearly defined coding categories. Unfortunately this could be as difficult a job as the coding itself. In an effort to describe communication research completed in Korea, Kim (1985) used the eight ICA divisions as a basis, but to cover the wide range of varieties, he added five more
dimensions to the list.

Meaning to facilitate cross-cultural comparisons, this study used primarily the same set of coding categories, with slight modifications to reveal more details. For example, the category of "mass communication" was subdivided into media practice to house the traditional journalism studies, communication and national development, audience analysis (e.g., uses and gratifications), research methods, and mass communication (e.g., communication effects).

Two other groups of studies deserved special attention and were independently coded: communication policy and discussion of media institutions or communication issues and policies in foreign countries (e.g., English press in Western Africa, public television in Great Britain). Their presence indicated a special interest of communication researchers in the outside world.

Findings showed a steady increase in the number of theses completed from 1956 to 1985, except for a sudden drop to a total of three in 1983, but in 1984 it was back to average: eleven completed.

A look at content categories showed that studies on media practice began as the largest item in the late 1950s, occupying 47% of the total (see Table 1). Topics in this category included studies of news and column writing, and newspaper self-disciplines. But in the 1960s percentage of studies in this category was down to 20, and in the 1970s and 1980s, dropped even further to only a couple in half decades, and some took a very "modern" angle (e.g., computerization of newsroom) while doing such research.

| Table 1 About Here |

Contrary to what was observed with studies on media practices the number of theses in mass communication was on a steady upward trend from 17.6% in the late 1950s to 30% in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Audience analysis studies took on a similar growth pattern, although the total was smaller.
Another sub-category in mass communication, communication and national development, however, had a slightly different story. The number of studies in this category reached the peak period in 1971-1975 when many became interested in the relationship between media exposure and innovativeness and modernity, then started to 'dwindle. In the early 1980s, theses in this category numbered the same as those in media practice. With its five subcategories lumped together, mass communication accounted for 56% of the total number of theses during the 29 years under study.

Other categories of importance included historical studies (10.4%), communications in foreign nations (9.0%), and promotional communication (8.4%; e.g., studies on public relations, advertising, and propaganda). But none of these categories showed any clear pattern of growth or decline over the years.

As to research methods employed in the master's theses under study, library and literature research have taken the largest percentage: 129 studies (43.1%) belonged to this category, including a dozen legal studies in communication (see Table 2). But when studies using library research method were broken down by year, a downward trend was rather obvious; it was almost parallel to the decline of studies in media practice. As many be expected, sampling survey has been on the rise. Although throughout the years theses using survey method accounted for no more than 24.4% of the total, the percentage in the early 1980 was 40% which led library method by 9%.

Table 2 About Here

Content analysis was another quantitative methods frequently used by master's students in journalism and mass communication. Its popularity too has been steadily rising, from 5.8% in the late 1950s to 26.7% in the early 1980s. Theses using content analysis include a number of studies in national image as presented in media, and news coverage of a certain event.

Other research methods included historical method, experiment and small purposive survey, e.g., survey of news editors, family planning workers. But theses using these
methods failed to amount to a significant number, nor did they exhibit a trend of development over time.

Research Projects. In addition to master's theses, research projects also constituted an important part of communication research activities in Taiwan. Unlike master's theses, however, projects were not obligatory; rather, they were initiated by researchers' interests or the need of the sponsoring agents. They were, therefore, weaker indicators of changes over time, but certainly not to be overlooked since projects were usually better organized, at a large scale, and tended to produce important findings.

As previously mentioned, Chu and Kwai (1986), and Yang (1985) compiled a list of research projects completed over the past 24 years. This list may suffer from a bias toward quantitative research (as everyone has a different interpretation of what constitutes a "project"), some small to medium scale library and historical research that do not require large amount of funding or specific date of execution may have been left out. Nonetheless, the list was by far the most updated and representative of what has been accomplished in communication in Taiwan aside from the list of master's theses.

Altogether 133 projects (excluding those still in progress) were coded using the same set of categories (see Table 3). Results showed a slightly different pattern. As indicated in this table, the number of projects completed over the years had a steady increase, except for a slight decline in the late 1970s. However, unlike what was found with the master's theses, there was not clear trend of either rise or decline of any particular type of research. As previously suspected, projects using quantitative methods were clearly taking lead: over 65% of the total. In the 1950s and 1960s when qualitative studies prevailed, there was no "project" on record. This of course does not mean there have been no such studies conducted, only there were more of a journalistic orientation, e.g., techniques of interviewing and news writing.

Table 3 About Here
A further breakdown by methods showed that over half of the research projects used some form of survey for data collection. Unlike what was observed with master's theses, percentage of projects using this method was high when they first began to emerge in the mid-1960s. Also different from what appeared in master's theses, only a quarter of the total projects opted for library method (which was the second popular option for degree students). Except for the five "quiet years" in communication research from 1966 to 1970, on average less than 30% of the projects used this method throughout the years under study.

Content analysis, experiment, and historical analysis were also methods employed in the research projects, but none were used in more than 10% of the total.

As to content categories, research projects regarding mass communication accounted for one-fourths of the total, same as what was found with master's theses (see Table 4). but similarity in results ended here. Besides mass communication, the areas that concerned most researchers were audience analysis (20.3%), communication and national development (12.0%), and political communication (9.8%). When broken down by year, the number of studies on audience analysis, e.g., media uses, patterns of exposure and motivation began to increase in the 1970s, and from then on every year one or two projects in this area were completed. Projects in this category also accounted for over 20% of the total.

| Table 4 About Here |

Political communication was another area worthy of discussion. As elections began to attract wider and closer public attention in recent years, the influence of mass media on voter attitude also became a favorite topic of communication research. From the 1970s on, the number of studies in this area had a steady increase. Although at this point they accounted for no more than 10% of the total, very likely it will continue to grow in the future.

Also worthy of some attention are studies on new communications media and informatics. As Taiwan's telecommunication system has been quickly expanding in recent years, studies on communication technology began to appear at intense intervals. From 1981
to 1985, six projects have been completed in this area; topics include uses of videotex (Hsu, et al., 1985) and underground cable networks (Wang, 1984).

Research on communication and national development, however, seemed to be on a downward trend after a peak period in the late 1970s, same as what has been observed with the master's theses. Although in total it still accounted for 12% of the projects, in the early 1980s the percentage was down to seven.

Similar to the findings of the Korean study, in Taiwan, researchers' interest also focussed on a few areas. Several categories, e.g., interpersonal, educational, health, and religious communication and communication philosophy consistently failed to attract much attention from either degree students or researchers. Like in Korea, mass communication was the single most popular topic, but less attention was paid to intercultural communication, except for a few studies on national image.

Bao Hsueh. Content analysis of Bao Hsueh, too, showed a growing body of quantitative research. As shown in Table 5, the number of empirical studies has increased steadily although the percentage remained to be rather small (11.6% in Volume 7).

Table 5 About Here

The number of translated articles was another significant indicator of development. As communication research itself was introduced to, rather than developed in, Taiwan, translated books are articles showed the percentage of translated articles reaching a peak from 1978 to 1983 (33.8%), and did not begin to drop until the mid-1980s. This decline showed a closer attention on the local scene, and the ability in conducting independent research improved.

With so many studies completed and so much written and published, exactly what can be learned from communication research in Taiwan as a whole? The question is a difficult one to answer as the task of trying to sum up the results of over four hundred studies in a few paragraph is nearly impossible. The authors, however, will venture to offer at least a
few highlights of what has been found.

Several groups of studies stood out by just a quick review of the literature; they could be roughly labeled as the studies to communicators, content, process, and audience.

Communicators.

---Communication and national development: media exposure was not significantly related to the degree of modernity in college students (Yang, 1975b). But exposure to television was shown to be a significant factor for the same dependent variable in rural areas (Yang, 1976). Community newspapers have also been found to have made contributions to community development (Huang, 1975; Yang, 1976, 1983)

---Media and children: peer group (gang members), instead of the media, was found to have a great influence on delinquent youths (Yang, 1974a), but maladjusted teenagers did show preference over violent media content (Hsu, 1980). This finding was consistent with Philip Cheng's early report, in which he found delinquents were heavy consumers of Kung Fu fictions (Cheng, 1963). More alarming were study results on television and children; on the one hand, television programs were judged as unfit for children's viewing, on the other hand, its influence on children was found to be great, possibly rivaling that of the parents (Tsan, et al., 1973; Kuo, 1980).

---Media and political activities: A study in 1973 (Yang) indicated that over 50% of the election news were opinionated; most tended to be overly positive about candidates. In the 1980s, there was some change. Reports in privately owned newspapers were found to be objective, but those owned by the government or party did not deviate too much from the "official standpoint." (Chen, et al., 1984). In general, the media were not key sources of information voters (Chiu, 1968; Lin, 1971; Chen et al., 1984), rather, friends, relatives, and campaign flyers and pamphlets were more important. However, the media did make some difference in one study. A survey of residents on a small island off the Eastern coast of Taiwan (Orchid Island) showed positive correlations between media exposure and their participation in political activities (Yang, 1975a).

---News reporters' image: A study by Kuang (1982) showed that average public had the highest evaluation of reporters while journalism students the lowest, and their
self-evaluation depended on their age, educational background, and job satisfaction.

Content.

--Readability: At least three studies dealt with readability of news reports in Taiwan, and attempts were made to devise a formula for measurement (Yu, 1959; Yang, 1971).

--Accuracy of news reports. A study of news reports found that no more than 30% of the news reports sampled were entirely accurate (Hsu, 1972). Nine years later, a similar study showed that the majority still suffered from errors and mistakes, but the percentage for "accurate news" was slightly up--55% of the total (Chen, 1981). A study of science news (Sun, 1976) found that news having something to do with physics had more mistakes, compared to those on pollution, astronomy, and weather. Experts' assistance was found to be a critical factor in science news accuracy.

--Crime news: Privately owned newspapers were found to have printed more crime news stories than those owned by the government/party (Chen, 1972; Tsan, et al., 1973); pages for local news also tended to indulge in sex and violence (Chen et al., 1978). Another study found that crime news reports in three major dailies often violated the libel law (Chi, 1966).

--Literary page: Pan (1973) found that the literary page of newspapers, often an important part of a Chinese language newspaper, was more of an entertaining nature. It did not, as some suspected, reflect social change and national development.

Process.

--Opinion leaders: Most of the studies on the flow of information failed to show the existence of opinion leaders in Taiwan (Chu & Chi, 1965; Hsu, 1970, 1975).

--Diffusion of information: When a national leader passed away, 80% of all residents in Taiwan knew about it within three to four hours; major sources of information for urban dwellers were friends, relatives, and radio. In rural areas, television is the major source of information for the same event (Yang, 1975b).

Audience.

--Media uses: Television was found to be the most credible, and most frequently used medium; it was also the best in satisfying audience's needs. Newspaper was ranked second
on both credibility and satisfaction (Hsu, et al., 1974). This finding was consistent with Chi's study (1973) in which television and newspaper were the major sources of information for Taipei residents. Another study found college students tended to favor newspaper as it provided more in-depth analyses on issues and problems (Yang, 1975a).

As to television viewing, most frequently watched programs included popular culture-entertainment and educational programs. The major motives for viewing was learning (Chen and Chen, 1982). A similar study, however, had different results. News and weather was the most frequently watched program, while viewing pattern varied according to respondents' demographic background such as age, education, income, marital status, and residential area. The motive for viewing was primarily entertaining (Kuang & Chen, 1983).

The above description certainly does not exhaust all the interesting findings, nor did it intend to be exhaustive. But for the purpose of this paper, some observations ought to be made of what have been done in communication research in Taiwan:

1. Communication research activities have been closely related to the return of the talents primarily trained in the United States. In the past there may be some differences in the focus of attention between communication researchers in the United States and those in Taiwan (G. Chu, 1986), but there was no doubt that American influence prevailed, both theoretically and methodologically.

2. More research of interdisciplinary nature has appeared in recent years which may lead to an expanded scope and more depth in the study of communication.

3. As more and more people with higher degrees in communication work in news media and other institutions, there is a growing awareness of the importance of communication research outside the academic world.

III. Discussion and Conclusions

In this paper we have first provided an overall sketch of the development of communication research in Taiwan back to the early 1960s. We identified a number of important figures who have contributed to the growth of communication research in different sub-areas, including G. Chu and Chi's milestone study which opened the whole field of communication research in Taiwan, Hsu's efforts to integrate the body of knowledge of
communication theories, and Yang's series of projects which employed complicated statistical measurements and produced in-depth interpretations of communication behaviors in Taiwan. We then provided results obtained from many research projects conducted before 1986 in order to draw a picture about what communication problems in Taiwan have been investigated and answered. We also used the data resulted from our own small-scale content analysis to show some of the details of communication research activities in Taiwan. Using five years as an unit of analysis, we compare, summarize, and discuss past efforts in communication research in order to give a "Chinese" touch to findings thus far accumulated.

Here we are going to turn our attention to the discussion of strengths and weaknesses relating to Taiwan's communication research as we see.

1. On research environment

With more than 400 research projects and master's theses collected from the past 40 years it seemed that the research environment in Taiwan has been active and mature. If we look into the details of these research projects, however, the picture is quite different.

For example, among the 133 research projects completed from 1964 to 1986, the faculty of National Chengchi University's Journalism Department/Graduate School produced 116 (87%), while seven researchers (all teaching in National Chengchi's J Dept. or Graduate School) each produced at least 10 projects in the last 20 years (totaling 98 projects, or 74%). These figures show clearly that the research environment in Taiwan is rather unbalanced and ill-nurtured—a small pool of researchers residing in one university have produced a large number of research studies.7

As to the grantees of the research fund, J. Chu & Kwai's account (1986) indicated that more than two-thirds (68%) of communication research projects in the past were originated from government offices, particularly the National Science Council. Very rarely, nevertheless, has there been any research grant from the media or media-related foundation. This trend implied two things: First, many of the past communication research projects were policy oriented without making much theoretical contribution to the field. Second, there is indeed a gap between the communication research community and practical world. Research findings can seldom be applicable to journalism professionals in Taiwan, as ANPA has done
to the American journalists.8

2. On theory and methodology

Up to the present, trends in communication research in Taiwan seem to indicate graduate changes of emphasis: from essays on journalism practice to behavioral research of communication process; from historical account of the past to empirical studies of the present. While there is little doubt that communication research in Taiwan has by-passed the stage of awareness, we are not sure whether it has already entered the stage of localization. In one sense, communication researchers have closely followed the Western trend by testing whatever theoretical perspective is available. But as G. Chu has once criticized, even communication research in the American academic world tends to be repetitive and lacks clear foci, and researchers tackled "problems that may seem to be trivial or irrelevant although methodologically rigorous" (G. Chu, 1986, p. 4). It seems that, without exception, communication research in Taiwan would also fall into the trap of "reification," producing large quantity of research projects with limited effects of accumulation, if the current strategy and planning continues.

To improved the situation, one of the better ways is that researchers should concentrate their efforts on certain communication subjects and problems at one time and work as a team. For example, the National Science Council in Taiwan has initiated in the mid-1980s a large-scale, long-term project aiming at understanding the relationships between social change and variables such as political voting behaviors, media use habits, health conditions etc. With limited research resources at hand in Taiwan, as well as in other Asian nations, integrated efforts from different academic fields would possibly produce more fruitful research results.

Secondly, an in-depth exploration of our own "great tradition" will definitely enrich our theoretical perspective in communication research. Kincaid's continuous work in developing the convergence model of communication provides an good example (he admitted that the basic idea of convergence was partially adopted from the Taoist's principle; see Kincaid, 1980, pp. 35-39; also see Kincaid, 1989; Rogers and Kincaid, 1981).9

There is little doubt that the greatest challenge for those in the field of communication
research in Taiwan is to take what is available in the West, while looking harder in their own culture and society in coming up with a research framework that is more meaningful and more appropriate in the long run. More than a decade ago communication researchers, sociologists, anthropologists and philosophers from Hong Kong and Taiwan participated in a conference entitled "Chinese Communication Studies." Various issues in approaching the goal of "Chinesentizing" communication research were discussed at the meeting. Unfortunately, the conference was not followed up by significant breakthroughs. Communication studies in this part of the world continued to be led by theories and methods "in vogue" in the West. Since permanent dependence has never been proved to be ideal under any circumstances at any time, communication researchers in Taiwan will still have a long way to go.###
Footnotes

1 This figure includes master's theses, Ph.D. dissertations, and research projects completed before 1990.

2 The G. Chu and Chi's project was originally entitled "Social Changes in Taiwan's Rural Community." The second stage of the project was conducted in 1978 and reported in a book published in 1984 using the same title. Chu and Chi's main findings showed that Taiwan's rural community has experienced drastic changes in the 14 years between their two surveys, in terms of both cultural context and social values. For example, interpersonal contacts among villagers have greatly reduced, and the importance of some traditional beliefs has weakened in a significant degree. The authors then concluded that the main forces which brought in strong impacts to the Taiwan's rural society in the 1970s were: economic development, urbanization, and the mass media.

3 We certainly have no intention to ignore efforts made by other researchers during this period of time; for example, Thomas Lee's comparative studies (e.g., 1965, 1967, 1968) on global media systems have successfully introduced theories of international communication research to the local readers. Kuan-lin Lai's continuous exploration of early Chinese journalists' contributions, on the other hand, also built strong research traditions upon the historical analysis of communication problems in Taiwan (Lai, 1965, 1967, 1969).

4 This project consists of four sub-sets, including: 1) analysis of the communication model in the audience's family planning (completed in 1976, see Hsu, et al., 1975), 2) analysis of communication behavior (1976, see Hsu, et al., 1976a), 3) analysis of the process of mass communication and the audience reaction (completed in 1976, see Hsu, et al., 1976b), and 4) analysis of improving media's national development function (completed in 1978, see Hsu, et al. 1978). The project was repeated in 1986 led by Pan (see Pan et al., 1986).

5 The first Ph.D. dissertation in journalism and communication was not completed until 1987 and therefore was not included in this analysis.

6 Only starting in the mid-1980s did we begin to see some fresh returnees from the communication institutes located in Europe. Compared to the stronghold maintained by the
U.S.-trained researchers, however, it would be difficult to change the behavioristic tradition in communication research in Taiwan soon.

7 Before 1963, only two schools had department of journalism islandwide. Today the number has increased to eight (four of them colleges), not counting one journalism "division" at the National Normal University. National Chengchi University has been taking lead in graduate education; it started the nation's first master's program in journalism in 1954, and also the nation's first Ph.D. program in communication in 1983, while three other universities and colleges also offer graduate courses at the master's level. The number of full-time teaching faculty members with Ph.D. degree has overpassed 20 as of 1990, while more than half of whom are associated with National Chengchi University. All these figures may be regarded as indicators of a growing communication community in Taiwan.

8 ANPA, representing the American Newspaper Publishers Association, includes a news research center which publishes research reports (sometimes in summary form) and distributed these reports to media professionals.

9 Here, G. Chu provided a warning by suggesting that researchers must avoid the pitfall of confusing the philosophical wisdom of the great masters with the values, beliefs and behavioral patterns of the common people. As he said:

   The pitfall is that we may devote our effort to a highly philosophical discourse about Confucianism, or Buddhism, or Taoism, but forgot to ask two questions:

   1. Whether and to what extent do the common people understand these philosophical points about which the scholars themselves do not seem to agree?

   2. To what extent and in what way are the common people influenced by these philosophical points which they may or may not understand?

   Understanding the Confucian philosophy, for example, will give us insight into the Chinese culture, but does not substitute for an independent study of Chinese culture.
References


__________. (1978). Improving Media's Function in National Development in Taiwan. Report printed by the National Science Council. (Yang Shiao-Ron was not involved in this research; instead, it was done by Hsu, Pan Chia-Chin, and Chao Yin).


Pan, Chia-Chin et al. (1986). Communication Behaviors of Taiwan Audience. Report printed by the National Science Council.


Yang, Hsiao-Rong. (1978). An Analysis of College Students' Sources of Important


# TABLE 1: Master's Theses by Content Categories

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*Bao Hsueh* also contains a large number of articles about journalism practices, reviews, and descriptive works, which are not included in the calculation here.

**Usually one volume has ten issues, here Vol. 7 includes only six issues.