Comparing Political Communication
Theories, Cases, and Challenges

This volume assesses the state of the art of comparative political communication research and considers potential ways in which it could and should develop. While cross-national studies were long neglected, twenty experts from Europe and the United States offer a unique and comprehensive discussion of the theories, cases, and challenges of comparative research in political communication. The first part discusses the fundamental themes, concepts, and methods essential in order to analyze the effects of modernization and globalization of political communication. The second part offers a broad range of case studies that illustrate the enormous potential of cross-national approaches in many relevant fields of political communication. The third part paves the way for future research by describing the most promising concepts and pressing challenges of comparative political communication. This book is intended to introduce new students to a crucial, dynamic field as well as to deepen advanced students’ knowledge of its principles and perspectives.

Frank Esser is Assistant Professor of Mass Communication at the University of Missouri, Columbia. He was assistant professor at the University of Mainz, Germany, and visiting professor at the University of Oklahoma. His research centers around cross-national studies of journalism and political communication and has appeared in the European Journal of Communications, American Behavioral Scientist, and Press/Politics.

Barbara Pfetsch is Professor of Communication and Media Policy at the University of Hohenheim, Germany. She was a Fellow at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and at the Center for German and European Studies at Georgetown University. Her research interests focus on comparative analyses of political communication and the mediated public sphere.
COMMUNICATION, SOCIETY AND POLITICS

Editors
W. Lance Bennett, University of Washington
Robert M. Entman, North Carolina State University

Editorial Advisory Board
Larry M. Bartels, Princeton University
Jay G. Blumer, Emeritus, University of Leeds
Daniel Dayan, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique Paris, and University of Oslo
Doris Graber, University of Illinois, Chicago
Paolo Mancini, Università di Perugia
Pippa Norris, Harvard University
Barbara Pfetsch, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung
Philip Schlesinger, University of Stirling
David L. Swanson, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Gadi Wolfsfeld, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
John Zaller, University of California, Los Angeles

Politics and relations among individuals in societies across the world are being transformed by new technologies for targeting individuals and sophisticated methods for shaping personalized messages. The new technologies challenge boundaries of many kinds – between news, information, entertainment, and advertising; between media, with the arrival of the World Wide Web; and even between nations. Communication, Society and Politics probes the political and social impacts of these new communication systems in national, comparative, and global perspective.

Titles in the series:
C. Edwin Baker, Media, Markets, and Democracy
W. Lance Bennett and Robert M. Entman, eds., Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy
Bruce Birnbach, Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power
Murray Edelman, The Politics of Misinformation
Frank Esser and Barbara Pfetsch, eds., Comparing Political Communication: Theories, Cases, and Challenges
Herman Galperin, New Television, Old Politics: The Transition to Digital TV in the United States and Britain
Myra Marx Ferree, William Anthony Gamson, Jürgen Gerhards, and Dieter Rucht, Shaping Abortion Discourse: Democracy and the Public Sphere in Germany and the United States
Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics
Robert B. Horwitz, Communication and Democratic Reform in South Africa
Richard Gunther and Anthony Mughan, eds., Democracy and the Media: A Comparative Perspective
Pippa Norris, A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Postindustrial Society
Pippa Norris, Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty, and the Internet Worldwide
Adam F. Simon, The Winning Message: Candidate Behavior, Campaign Discourse
Gadi Wolfsfeld, Media and the Path to Peace
Comparing Political Communication

THEORIES, CASES, AND CHALLENGES

Edited by

Frank Esser
University of Missouri-Columbia

Barbara Pfetsch
University of Hohenheim
Contents

Contributors page xi

INTRODUCTION

1 Comparing Political Communication: Reorientations in a Changing World
   Barbara Pfetsch and Frank Esser 3

I: THEORIES AND METHODS

2 Americanization, Globalization, and Secularization: Understanding the Convergence of Media Systems and Political Communication
   Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini 25

3 Transnational Trends in Political Communication: Conventional Views and New Realities
   David L. Swanson 45

4 Comparing Mass Communication Systems: Media Formats, Media Contents, and Media Processes
   Hans J. Kleinsteuber 64

5 Designs and Methods of Comparative Political Communication Research
   Werner Wirth and Steffen Kolb 87
Contents

II: CASES

6 Global Political Communication: Good Governance, Human Development, and Mass Communication
   Pippa Norris 115

7 Local Political Communication: Media and Local Publics in the Age of Globalization
   Sabine Lang 151

8 Strategic Political Communication: Mobilizing Public Opinion in "Audience Democracies"
   Hanspeter Kriesi 184

9 Political Campaign Communication: Conditional Convergence of Modern Media Elections
   Christina Holtz-Bacha 213

10 Political Communication and Electronic Democracy: American Exceptionalism or Global Trend?
    Thomas Zittel 231

11 Political News Journalists: Partisanship, Professionalism, and Political Roles in Five Countries
    Wolfgang Donsbach and Thomas E. Patterson 251

12 Political Communication Messages: Pictures of Our World on International Television News
    Patrick Rössler 271

13 Political Communication Effects: The Impact of Mass Media and Personal Conversations on Voting
    Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck 293

III: PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES

14 State of the Art of Comparative Political Communication Research: Poised for Maturity?
   Michael Gurevitch and Jay G. Blumler 325

15 From Political Culture to Political Communications Culture: A Theoretical Approach to Comparative Analysis
   Barbara Pfetsch 344
Contents

16 Problems of Comparative Political Communication Research: Culture as a Key Variable 367
  Robert L. Stevenson

17 Meeting the Challenges of Global Communication and Political Integration: The Significance of Comparative Research in a Changing World 384
  Frank Esser and Barbara Pfetsch

Author Index 411
Subject Index 413
Contributors

Jay G. Blumler is Emeritus Professor of the Social and Political Aspects of Broadcasting at the University of Leeds, England, and Emeritus Professor of Journalism at the University of Maryland. A Fellow and Past President of the International Communication Association and a founding co-editor of the European Journal of Communication, he has written extensively on the mass media and politics, including "The Crisis of Public Communication" (1995, with Michael Gurevitch) and "The Third Age of Political Communication: Influences and Features" (in vol. 16 (3), 1999, of Political Communication, with Dennis Kavanagh).

Wolfgang Donsbach is Professor of Communication and founding director of the Department of Communication at the University of Dresden, Germany. He received his Ph.D. and his postdoctoral Habilitation at the University of Mainz. Prior to his current position he taught at the universities of Dortmund, Mainz, and Berlin. He was a Fellow at the Gannett Center for Media Studies at Columbia University, New York, in 1989–90, and Lombard Visiting Professor at Harvard University, Cambridge, in 1999. From 1995 to 1996 he was president of the World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR), and from 2004 to 2005 he is president of the International Communication Association (ICA). He also served as chair of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) Psychology and Public Opinion section and of the ICA Political Communication division. He is managing editor of the International Journal of Public Opinion Research. His main research interests are in journalism, political communication, and media effects.
Contributors

Frank Esser is assistant professor of mass communication at the University of Missouri, Columbia. He was assistant professor in the Institute fuer Publizistik at the University of Mainz, Germany, and visiting professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Oklahoma. His research interests center around cross-national studies of journalism and political communication. He received three top-paper awards at the annual conventions of the ICA (1996, 2001, 2003) and has published four books and various articles in journals such as European Journal of Communication, Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics, and American Behavioral Scientist.

Michael Gurevitch is professor in the College of Journalism at the University of Maryland. Prior to his current position he was on the faculty of The Open University in England. Besides his recent book, The Crisis of Public Communication (with Jay Blumler), he has published a large number of journal articles and book chapters and is co-editor of Mass Communication and Society (1977), Culture, Society and the Media (1982), and Mass Media and Society (1991, 1995, 2001). He served as associate editor of the Journal of Communication and is currently a member of the editorial board of Journalism Studies.

Daniel C. Hallin is Professor of Communication at the University of California at San Diego. His research interests include media and war, media and elections, the development of journalism as a profession, and comparative analysis of media systems, particularly focusing on the United States, Western Europe, and Latin America. He recently published, with Paolo Mancini, Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics (2004).

Christina Holtz-Bacha is Professor of Communication at the University of Mainz, Germany. After receiving her Ph.D. from the University of Munster in 1978, she held positions as assistant professor at the University of Munich and full professor at the University of Bochum, Germany. She was visiting professor at the University of Minnesota in 1986 and a Fellow at the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy at Harvard University, Cambridge, in 1999. From 1998–2002 she was chair of the Political Communication division of the German Communication Association (DGPuK), and since 2002 she has been chair of the Political Communication division of the ICA. She published several books, including the German Communication Yearbook.
Contributors


Hans J. Kleinsteuber is Professor of Political Science and Journalism at the University of Hamburg, Germany. He studied in Berlin and Medford, Massachusetts, and received his Ph.D. in 1975 from the Free University of Berlin. He was visiting professor at various universities in the United States, Canada, Australia, and Japan and is a member of the Euromedia Research Group since 1982. His research interests include media policy and political communication in comparative perspective. He published several books, including Europa als Kommunikationsraum (1994, with T. Rossmann), Information Superhighway (1996), and Neue Medientrends in den USA (2001).

Steffen Kolb studied media and communication sciences and political sciences at the universities of Leipzig and Aix-en-Provence. As research and teaching assistant at the University of Hamburg, Germany, he is completing his doctoral thesis on media coverage of leaded gas in comparative perspective. His research interests include intercultural communication, empirical methods, and political communication.

Hanspeter Kriesi is Professor of Comparative Politics in the Department of Political Science at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. After studies in sociology at the universities of Berne, Chicago, and Zurich, he became an assistant professor in sociology at the University of Zurich. Then he taught political behavior at the University of Amsterdam and Swiss politics and comparative politics at the University of Geneva. His research focuses on opinion formation in grassroots democracies, elections, social movements, the development of West European party systems and the European public sphere, and public participation in democratic systems.

Sabine Lang is Visiting Associate DAAD Professor of Politics at the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies of the University of Washington, Seattle. Having finished her studies of political science in Freiburg, New York, and Berlin, she did her doctorate on the "Political Public in the Modern State" (published 2001). She was assistant professor in the Department of Political and Social Sciences at the Free University of Berlin and visiting Fellow at the Center of European Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. She published widely, particularly on
Contributors

political public sphere, mass media, and gender studies. In her current
research project on mobilizing urban publics, she investigates changes
of local publics in German and U.S. cities.

Paolo Mancini is Professor of Communication and Academic Direc-
tor of the School of Broadcast Journalism at the Università di Perugia,
Italy. He has published several books, including Videopolitica (1985),
Come Vincere le Elezioni (1989), Guardando il Telegiornale (1991), and
Il Giornalismo e le Sue Regole (1992). Many of his works appeared in
international journals such as Theory and Society, European Journal of
Communication, and Journal of Communication. His research concerns
primarily political communication and comparative analysis of mass me-
dia systems. He recently published, with Dan Hallin, Comparing Media

Pippa Norris is the McGuire Lecturer in Comparative Politics at the
John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. A politi-
cal scientist, her research compares election and public opinion, political
communications, and gender politics. She has published more than thirty
books, including A Virtuous Circle (2000), Digital Divide (2001), Demo-

Thomas E. Patterson is Bradlee Professor of Government and the Press
in the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He
previously taught for many years at Syracuse University, where he took a
position after completing his Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota. His
recent book The Vanishing Voter, published in 2002, is based on a study of
the decline of citizen participation in U.S. elections. Earlier books include
Out of Order, which was recipient of the American Political Science As-
association’s Graber Award for the best book in political communication,
and The Unseeing Eye, which was selected by the American Association
for Public Opinion Research as one of the fifty most influential books of
the past half century in the field of public opinion.

Barbara Pfetsch is Professor of Communication and Media Policy at
the University of Hohenheim, Germany. She previously held a position
as senior researcher at the Science Center Berlin for Social Research
(WZB) and taught at the Free University of Berlin and the University of
Mannheim. She was a Fellow at the J. F. Kennedy School of Government
Contributors

at Harvard University, Cambridge, and at the Center for German and European Studies at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. Her research interests center on comparative analyses of political communication and on media and the public sphere. She published several books including *Politische Kommunikationskultur* (2003) and numerous articles and book chapters including “Political Communication Culture in the United States and Germany” (in vol. 6 (1), 2001, of *Press/Politics*) and “Government News Management” (in *The Politics of News: The News of Politics*, edited by D. Graber et al., 1998).  

Patrick Rössler is Professor of Communication Science at the University of Erfurt, Germany, and serves as representative of the ICA in Germany. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Hohenheim, Germany, and was assistant professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Munich. His research interests concern political communication, media effects, media contents, and new media technology. He has published several books including *Agenda-Setting* (1997), *Online-Kommunikation* (1998, ed.), and *Theoretische Perspektiven der Rezeptionsforschung* (2001, edited with U. Hasebrink and M. Jäckel) and numerous journal articles in, among others, *Journal of Communication*, *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, and *Communication Research*.  


Robert L. Stevenson is Kenan Professor of Journalism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He earned a Ph.D. from the University of Washington in 1975, where his academic adviser was Alex S. Edelstein. Since joining the University of North Carolina in 1975, he has been a Fulbright Senior Scholar in Mainz, Eric Voegelin Professor in Munich, German Academic Exchange Service Visiting Professor in Dresden, and...
Contributors

assistant director of the American Journalism Center in Budapest. He is author of *Global Communication in the 21st Century* and *Communication, Development, and the Third World – The Global Politics of Information* and coeditor of *Foreign News and the New World Information Order*. He was associate editor of *Journalism Quarterly* and president of the regional Southern Association for Public Opinion Research.

**David L. Swanson** is Associate Provost and Professor of Speech Communication and Political Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His research concerns the social effects of mass communication, with particular attention to the role of media in politics. His scholarly work on these subjects has appeared in various journals and volumes in the United States, Europe, and Asia and includes “The Uses and Gratifications Approach to Mass Communication,” “New Directions in Political Communication” (with D. Nimmo), and “Politics, Media, and Modern Democracy” (with P. Mancini).

**Werner Wirth** is Professor of Empirical Communications at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. He previously taught as Professor of New Media and Online Communication at the University of Munich, Germany. He has edited three books and published numerous book chapters and journal articles in different areas, including media exposure and media effects research, infotainment, online research, and empirical methods.

**Thomas Zittel** is John F. Kennedy Memorial Fellow at the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies at Harvard University, Cambridge. He studied political science and German and holds an M.A. from Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, and a Ph.D. from the University of Mannheim, Germany. From 1990 to 2001, he was assistant professor at the University of Mannheim; from 1996 to 1997 he was Congressional Fellow of the American Political Science Association. His current research deals with the impact of computer networks on democracy. He has published numerous journal articles and book chapters on this topic and directs a research project on parliaments, representative democracy, and new digital media.
Comparing Political Communication

Theories, Cases, and Challenges