

Commuting and Coauthoring: How to Be in More Than One Place at the Same Time

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The dean and Deb Williams can testify that I tried coaxing them into making this event a modest one—but, as you see, it was to little avail. So let me welcome everybody from far and near, and proceed with the immodesty that the occasion seems to require.

Communicating, commuting, and collaborating each provide opportunities to be here and elsewhere simultaneously. The nightly news, for example, can transport viewers from their couch to London or Teheran, and media events can take one to the moon or the Super Bowl. Even if Freud or Bakhtin or Goffman suggests that we talk to ourselves, in the plural, I think it's fair to say that communication is mostly about reaching out to another, often over great distances, via virtual transportation. Using his cell phone, one of our students in Jerusalem demonstrated how he could lull his baby to sleep even while on reserve duty in the army. This further develops James Carey's (1988) point that the telegraph made it possible to place a remote order on Wall Street at the same moment as somebody else who is on the market floor. So students of communication make this journey regularly.

Commuting not only shares five letters with communication: it also shares the idea of exchange. Even when physical movement is involved, its aim is to get from one place to the other as speedily as possible. Some of you have heard me tell the famous Hebrew University joke about two planes that crashed in midair and Professor X was on both of them. It originated with a professor of comparative religion who visited every ashram and signed on for every haj.

Later, the joke was bestowed on members of other disciplines, but was bested by the joke about ubiquitous Isaiah Berlin, who headed an Oxford college. "What's the difference between God and Isaiah Berlin?" is the question. And the answer is that "God is everywhere, but Isaiah Berlin is everywhere except Oxford."¹ Logistically, I must reveal, this feat can be accomplished thanks to the different academic calendars of different universities. (But I hasten to add that I have not been guilty of this crime during my affiliation with Penn. Moreover the mandatory retirement age in Jerusalem is 68, and, somehow, Kathleen Jamieson knew that when she invited me to join the Annenberg team.)

¹ Our local contender is Monroe Price, who in addition to being ubiquitous, is alleged to be able to be in more than one place at the same time—and take somebody along!

Some of you may be thinking of *The Captain's Paradise*, but that's just a fantasy. Ruth and I have been together for 62 years without ever changing pictures midstream. We began by commuting while Ruth was completing her dissertation at Columbia and I had begun my first job at Chicago. Then we were invited to visiting stints in Jerusalem and later began the reverse commute from Jerusalem to Chicago. I commuted from Jerusalem to London for a while, and then Jerusalem-USC until I was traded—I like to say—from one Annenberg to the other in 1993. I then began 20 years of commuting from Jerusalem to Philadelphia, ending today.

And then there's a third "c"—collaborating or coauthoring. I haven't counted lately, but I daresay that well over half of my publications are coauthored. I regret that collaboration does not augur well for longevity, or maybe my partners just wished to avoid this celebration, and I mourn them. But some are here, and I wish to salute them. They are living proof of how one enters a coauthor's mind, not only emerging mutually enriched, but emerging unsure of who proposed which idea, when, and where. Daniel Dayan will agree, I believe. We produced our book in Jerusalem, Los Angeles, Paris, and Italy over a period of 15 years.

Now to demography. I was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York—some years ahead of Howard Pack—studied at a bilingual Jewish Day School, coedited the Midwood High School *ARGUS*, began a BA at Columbia, was drafted and trained by the U.S. Army as a Japanese interpreter, and returned to Columbia from Japan in 1946, GI Bill in hand. My first ambition was to be manager of a circus, but I soon surrendered that fantasy in favor of part-time management of a string ensemble, and then, more realistically, thought of the Columbia School of Journalism. That was the point at which exposure to the sociology of communication lured me into graduate work with Paul Lazarsfeld, Robert Merton, Robert Lynd, Seymour Lipset, and the other Columbia luminaries, and membership in its Bureau of Applied Social Research.

I was born, academically, at Lazarsfeld's bureau around 1950 and reincarnated years later at Louis Guttman's Israel Institute of Applied Social Research, which was modeled after the Columbia bureau. The idea of a university-based laboratory for empirical social research—sponsored by grants and commissions from clients—was an original one, combining both academic rigor and usefulness. Most of the faculty of the department, and their wives, held posts at the bureau (about which Peter Simonson [2006] has much to say). My first assignment at the bureau, I recall, was to apprentice in a study for the Voice of America (VOA) of public opinion and communication in four Arab countries and in Greece and Turkey, which Daniel Lerner later incorporated in his classic book. Leo Lowenthal, of Frankfurt School fame, was also affiliated with the bureau at the time and was rehearsing for his surprising assignment as research director of the VOA. As Lowenthal's student, I found my second assignment—my MA thesis—on fan mail to a radio talk show (excavated by Paddy and published only recently) (Katz, 2012). And then came the Big Moment when Lazarsfeld invited me to tackle a draft of his study of women in Decatur, Illinois, who were asked to reconstruct the sources that had influenced their recent decisions in the realms of consumer goods, fashion, movie attendance, and a then-current municipal referendum. The study was a return to Lazarsfeld's earlier work on voting decisions, in which the idea of a two-step flow of communication (from media to "opinion leaders" to their friends and family) was floated. Field work for the study was completed before my arrival on the scene, and my job was to do some additional analysis and to edit the messy

manuscript, of which others—more distinguished than I—had despaired. Somewhere along the way, I was invited to produce an introductory essay on the ostensibly paradoxical idea that so-called small-groups research could illuminate the process of mass communication. The marriage of these two seemingly opposite traditions—mass communication research and group dynamics—became my dissertation and Part One of *Personal Influence* (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) (even if Jeff Pooley [2006] thinks that we understate the insights contributed by Edward Shils). I was thereupon crowned coauthor, though it is still a mystery why Lazarsfeld insisted that my name precede his. Alphabetical order? Not very likely.

The continuity of studies at the Bureau, theoretically and methodologically, seems amazing retrospectively, since the organization was so oriented to ad hoc projects that were commissioned from outside. Clients like *TIME* magazine, for example, thought there was profit to be made from Lazarsfeld, Merton, Charlie Wright, and others who researched the idea that interpersonal networks had a share in the flow of mass communication, even if they mitigated the powerful effects that the then-theorists of “mass society” had attributed to the media (especially to radio). The culmination of this series at the bureau was the study of the adoption of a new antibiotic among four communities of medical doctors. In this study, by Coleman, Katz, and Menzel (1957), and in later work, Lazarsfeld’s original interest in “decision making”—not “persuasion”—morphed into the study of the diffusion of innovation. In effect, the bureau shifted emphasis from individual decisions to the spread of something new over time, via media and interpersonal networks. This paradigm has gained even greater attention over the years, in that the computer enables the mapping of structures of interpersonal relations far beyond the two steps with which Lazarsfeld began. More than that, it [the paradigm] proposed a new balance between audience power and media power.

A second thread in those Bureau days was based on the related idea that the audience was not waiting at the ready to be influenced by every utterance of the media, but exercised selectivity in exposure, perception, and retention of media content. Here again, the audience was reconceived as having power of its own. Early work by Herta Herzog and other Bureau affiliates made this point. That’s where the word “gratifications” first surfaced. It answered the question “why tune in” before asking about effect.

In trying to summarize my own work over all these years, I keep harking back to these two themes—that of networks of interpersonal influence and audience selectivity. I continue to believe that I can summarize much of my work—not all—along these two dimensions. At any rate, I will try to do so by tracing two vertical lines—one that highlights structure, especially the structure of interpersonal relations and the organization of society, and another that deals with what I will call, hesitantly, culture—or, less hesitantly, function, that is, the uses and gratification of media content. At a later point, I will bisect these two lines with a horizontal line, explaining how I moved from being a social psychologist to being more of a sociologist.

Table 1. Three Threads.

Structure	Institutions	Culture
<i>Personal Influence</i>		<i>Uses of Mass Comm</i>
<i>Medical Innovation</i>		<i>Secularization</i>
<i>Fluoridation</i>		"Important Things"
"Traditions of Diffusion"		
<i>Bureaucracy and the Public</i>		
	"TV Comes"	
	<i>BBC</i>	
	<i>Third World</i>	
"Segmentation"		<i>Dallas</i>
<i>Media Events</i>		<i>Jewishness</i>
"Deliberative Democracy"		<i>Cultural Policy</i>
	<i>End of TV</i>	
<i>Echoes of Tarde</i>		Esther

I have already begun to sketch the first vertical line. It led Lazarsfeld and associates to incorporate sociometry into survey research, and moved from an image of an atomistic mass audience to a greater connectivity. My part in *Personal Influence* and the study of how innovations spread led next to a study of how fluoridation spread in the United States (Crain, Katz, & Rosenthal, 1969), where the unit of adoption was no longer an individual but a municipality.

This interest in diffusion led to the rediscovery of Gabriel Tarde, who argued at the end of the 19th century that social networks, not norms, should underlie the study of social change. Anticipating Tarde's current resurrection, Joohan Kim, Bob Wyatt, and I (1999) embarked on an empirical study of Tarde's vision that the manufacture of public opinion and political action follows a model of multiple steps that proceeds from the agenda of the press, to conversation in cafés and salons, to individual opinion formation, to the percolation of public opinion. Our hypertext "dialogue" with Tarde—what we know better or different 100 years later—is now published, authored by Christopher Ali, Joohan Kim, and myself (2014), under the imprimatur of the Annenberg Press at USC, headed by Larry Gross. This preoccupation with Tarde and the flow of communication through social structures might have originated, like almost everything else, with father-figure Lazarsfeld, but, as I have confessed elsewhere, it may also be due to my ignorance of Tarde during the oral exam for the PhD, when Robert Merton asked me to name the scholar who debated Durkheim in the 1890s. And I didn't know.

Psychoanalysis aside, this interest in Tarde led to a convergence in my mind between processes of diffusion and the workings of the public sphere, which, in turn, led to a series of new papers on the segmentation of national audiences, on the uprisings in Arab countries, and on the unfulfilled promise of deliberative democracy. These papers seem to have persuaded Kathleen that my true calling is political communication. Maybe. It does, however, describe how societies integrate during the broadcasting of media events, the proud product of 15 years of collaboration with Daniel Dayan (of which I will say more in the following pages).

Backtracking, I would like to report on another aspect of social integration that has engaged me since arriving in Israel. In the late 1950s, the new nation was almost overwhelmed by the influx of new immigrants. Many of them, especially those from traditional backgrounds, had to make their way into the new society via bureaucracies staffed by Eastern Europeans who had themselves migrated not so long before. Thus, together with almost all social scientists working in Israel, I became interested in immigrant absorption, in problems of communication between bureaucracy and new immigrants, and in the implicit problems of intercultural communication. Collaborating with Brenda Danet who, like me, came to Jerusalem from Chicago, I studied such things as passengers bargaining with bus drivers over the fare, interactions with doctors at well-baby clinics, appeals to the customs authorities, and the "reasons" that accompanied them. Later, we applied this same kind of discourse analysis to prayers that offer reasons to God when asking for favors. These studies, plus related work by others, are incorporated in our book, *Bureaucracy and the Public* (Katz & Danet, 1973).

Let me turn now to the second of the two vertical threads that, I believe, describe my work. Following Charles Wright, this might be called the functional thread because it deals with the purposes for which people and societies make "use" of communication, with its "reception," so to speak, its gratifications. I am naming this thread culture. As we proceed, it will become increasingly clear that the two threads are not so easily separable. They certainly share the idea of limited effects, that is, that the media is not all powerful and that certain powers remain with the audience.

The Happiness study in which a homespun radio philosopher catered to loyal listeners—may belong here, as a start (Katz, 2012). But the big star of this thread is Jay Blumler. I confess that I cannot remember how we first met, but our meeting, together with Michael Gurevitch, has turned into an ongoing discussion of an amorphous something called "uses and gratifications," and an edited book (Blumler & Katz, 1974), which has spawned other edited books and endless papers, still searching for an adequate theory. We began by recalling Herzog and Cantril and Lloyd Warner on soaps and quiz shows, on early studies on the uses of media in wartime, on uses of action programs by isolated children, on adolescent uses of popular music, and the like. Gradually, we became aware that attention had been overly directed to individual functions rather than to groups and whole societies. Long before Benedict Anderson, Tarde had indicated that the national press united whole societies. National integration may also be enhanced by events such as the moon landing or the Kennedy assassination or the first papal visit to Poland, and hence a bridge between the two vertical lines I am trying too hard to separate.

The next big knot in this thread is Katz and Gurevitch's *Secularization of Leisure* (1976) subtitled *Communication and Culture in Israel*. It was an effort to show how the forms (more than the religious content) of traditions, such as the Sabbath, holidays, book reading, are enlisted to provide identity—to connect past and present, and the myriad ethnicities that had come together. Again we interconnect structure and function, and one of the best-known of its by-products, "On the Use of Mass Media for Important Things," is a landmark in the quest for a theory and method for gratifications research. The article, by Katz, Hadassah Haas, and Gurevitch (1973), makes clear how people sort out the media by the different functions they serve. For example, television—like radio and newspapers—initially was thought

by viewers to connect them with the goings on in politics. However, in a repeat study, 20 years later, television was primarily viewed as entertainment, along with cinema and books.

The culmination of this second vertical line—although it belongs below the horizontal one—is Tamar Liebes and Katz’s cross-cultural study of *Dallas* (Liebes & Katz, 1990). It shows not only how different cultural settings and different subgroups of the audience decode a premiere soap, but also how such programs serve to integrate nations and, sometimes, the world. Although we apply Stuart Hall in this exercise—he has just passed away—he, like others, thinks that gratifications research extends too much comfort to the broadcasters and the status quo; that is, it finds too much good in what happens to be. So, we now prefer the term “reception”—which allows for more critical decodings and uses—about which Sonia will tell us more.

I was born yet again in 1967—not as an academic this time but as founding director of a national television network. This story is told in my essay “Television Comes to the People of the Book” (Katz, 1971), but it’s the horizontal line I want to draw here. The story begins during the weeks prior to the Six-Day War, when Israel miraculously—so it was thought by many—repulsed a multipronged attack, concluded in a triumphant stupor, and found itself in charge of one million Arabs who had been living, theretofore, under Jordanian and Egyptian rule. The threat of war was preceded by deep public anxiety, focusing a lot of attention on the findings of the government-sponsored social survey administered jointly by the Guttman Institute and the newly established Communications Institute of the Hebrew University. In the process of our regular reporting on the state of public opinion and readiness, Louis Guttman and I were on quite familiar terms with the commissioning minister, who was, in effect, also minister of information, which included broadcasting. During the few days of war, a frantic attempt was made by the government to establish television broadcasting both for the sake of bolstering morale, especially of the new immigrants, and of countering and blocking enemy broadcasting that had been infiltrating Israel’s unoccupied frequencies. Whether television would be good or bad for the Jews—some feared that *I Love Lucy* would undermine the regeneration of Judaic culture—had been debated for years, but victory in the war led to the newer idea that television broadcasting in Arabic might help put a humane face on the occupation. The postwar context changed attitudes toward the introduction of public television broadcasting (alongside the school broadcasting that was already in place).

A sense of urgency motivated our minister to appoint a special task force to construct a national system of public television. But politics, and maybe wisdom, led him to look for leadership from outside the established BBC-like broadcasting authority that had charge of radio. Paradoxically, the search led him to Elihu Katz. Who would be more knowledgeable about the technology, the bureaucracy, the programming, the financing of a broadcasting organization, than Israel’s first professor of communication? So, he asked, and I said yes, although I did try to explain that I had had no practical experience, and that, furthermore, I was not at all sure that the new medium would live up to the exaggerated hopes being held out for it. Notwithstanding, the minister said, “You can do it,” and I asked myself, “How can one refuse?”

So I took leave from Jerusalem and Chicago, took the job, and changed my life, including my academic life. It’s a good story that I (and three or four dissertations) have already told, and I won’t repeat it here. I will report only that in less than two years’ time, our team of some 100 Israelis and a

score of semi-experts from abroad launched a national TV service, broadcasting three nights a week at first, and without Lucy. We also found time for a lot of sparring with the Broadcasting Authority, which had been authorized to review content; with radio personnel who wanted television jobs; with Hebrew news editors who refused to be scooped by the early evening Arabic news broadcast; and with the unsurprising reluctance of the ministry to transfer the surprisingly big moneys involved. Although it was exciting and illuminating to be on the production side of a broadcasting company, I resigned—in a fight—after less than two years, returned to academia, and began to perceive myself and to be perceived by others as an institutional sociologist. At least that's my best explanation with what has happened to me since 1970. This is the horizontal line we're now crossing.

For one thing, I teamed up with George Wedell (Katz & Wedell, 1977), professor at Manchester, whose experience—achievements and disappointments—had somewhat paralleled mine in his capacity as founding director of England's second TV authority—the commercial one. We both were curious about how television broadcasting was diffusing around the world, and the role of New York, London, and Paris in this process. We applied for—and received—a grant from the Ford Foundation via the International Broadcasting Institute with which we divided the third world between us to delve into the promise and performance of broadcasting in a dozen developing countries. Dov Shinar and Michael Pilsworth were our deputies.

A second, nearly simultaneous development will make my point clearer. Every decade there is—or used to be—a high-level review of the state of broadcasting in England. Each of the players invests great effort in making an impression on the commission. For that reason, the BBC was looking for an outside expert to, in effect, answer the question of what the corporation, department by department, knew about its audience. They asked Joseph Klapper, a predecessor at the bureau and director of research at CBS, but he was unavailable. So, they asked me—taking account, of course, of my worldwide reputation (after 18 months!) for familiarity with both sides of the camera. They assumed, I later learned, that such a person might be critical, but would also be sympathetic to management. So, naturally, I again said yes. The BBC was my dream of a broadcasting organization to begin with and remains so until this day. I spent one week per month commuting from Jerusalem to London, for over a year (see Katz 1977).

Two projects begun in the 1980s are also more systemic in nature. They include aspects of content, production, audience, and cultural context. Both have already been alluded to here. One has to do with the way in which the nighttime soap *Dallas* conquered the world, partly due to the flexibility with which it can be decoded. Sonia Livingstone's early work on the success of British serials related to the kind of ambiguity that invites viewer participation. The other project, best known of all, is *Media Events* (Dayan & Katz, 1992). It analyzes the characteristics of a television genre that demands attention, almost as a religious ceremony. Dayan and Katz call it "the live broadcasting of history." This, too, I believe, represents the new Katz with a broader institutional perspective, a brilliant partner, and a great reviewer. The genre embodies the kind of "powerful effect" (in the short-run) for which we have been searching, an experience that calls whole nations, sometimes the world, to attention—one that overcomes selectivity and energizes social networks. Such events can have major effects on public opinion. We are rightly criticized, I think, for understating the nationalistic bias of these events, and their hegemonic striving, and also for

emphasizing well-rehearsed ceremony, but not the live broadcasting of disturbing “interruptions,” as in disasters, natural or man-made.

In reviewing work on television and its effects, limited and powerful, I concluded—in the volume with Scannell on the *End of Television* (Katz & Scannell, 2009)—that the major effect of broadcasting was to move politics “inside,” that is, off the streets and into the home. This had the consequence of connecting viewers to worlds far outside themselves, but at the same time neutralizing their participation. This idea has popped up now and then, first in Lazarsfeld and Merton’s “narcotizing,” later in Gerbner and Gross’ “heavy viewers” trapped inside television reality, and in Putnam, Iyengar, Boltanski, and others who lament this seeming impotence. By contrast, consider the “social media.” If mass media move people inside, social media mobilize them to go out again to protest, to occupy, or to vote. If mass media squash political participation, social media empower; if mass media connect one to the big world, social media, paradoxically, seem to make the world smaller, much closer to self. Or so it seems to me, at least so far.

Table 2. The Social Situation of Contact.

	MASS MEDIA	SOCIAL MEDIA
LOCUS	Inside	Outside
POWER	Neutralize	Empower
REFERENCE	Big World	Small World (self)

Here is where we come full circle, returning to Gabriel Tarde, who anticipated this movement perfectly. He virtually defined deliberative democracy through reference to the fact that, even while creating an imagined community, one reads the newspaper alone (maybe inside), then goes out to join a conversation about the news in a café, from which public opinion percolates and circulates. Three continents and three or four generations separate us from Gabriel Tarde and from each other, but this is the subject Christopher Ali, Joohan Kim, and I have been discussing with Gabriel Tarde over the last few years—Christopher in Virginia, Joohan in Seoul, and Katz in Jerusalem—and we invite you to buy the book and join the conversation. If that’s not global enough, see Katz and Blondheim (2012) on communications in the ancient Persian Empire as chronicled in the biblical book of Esther. And note the immediate relevance of the title of one of our essays: “A Home Away from Home.”

I wrote out this talk to stay within a reasonable time limit, not to impress anybody but myself. Rereading it, I see that it asks two questions that remain unanswered. One question relates to Paul Lazarsfeld, for whom this talk is a kind of memorial. The question is: Why did he anoint me to continue his famous (but short-lived) interest in communication while he went on to other things?

The second question arises from Part Two, and that is “How did Professor Ruth Katz put up with so much commotion for 62 years?”

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