# Coloniality and Resistance: The Revolutionary Moment in Communication Study in the Anglophone Caribbean

Nova Gordon-Bell

*University of the West Indies*, nova.gordonbello2@uwimona.edu.jm

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*Abstract*

This essay discusses the development of communication and media Studies in the Anglophone Caribbean. Despite the prolific work of Anglophone researchers and scholars and over half a century of institutional engagement in media and communication education and training, a body of knowledge identifiable as the English-speaking Caribbean's contribution to media and communication study and theory remains unidentifiable. North American, British, and European paradigms and theories constitute the hegemon of Anglophone Caribbean scholarship in media and communication study. This is consistent with the ideological role of education in the historical context of a British colonial legacy, which valorizes knowledge transfer over indigenous knowledge generation and typically elides the mastery of the English language with communicative competence. In response to the demands of the local and regional media industry, training in practical skills for journalism and media production is consistently prioritized over theory and scholarship regarding human communication. The paper points to the rich contributions of individual scholars, researchers, and teachers, and the possibilities for a distinctive Caribbean contribution to the study of communication, which could inform production and training for industry and expand theoretical and analytical approaches to research and scholarship.

*Resumen*

En este ensayo se rastrea el desarrollo de los estudios de comunicación y medios en el Caribe anglófono. Pese a la nutrida obra de investigadores y estudiosos anglófonos y al más de medio siglo de compromiso institucional con la formación y capacitación en comunicación y medios, no existe todavía un corpus de conocimiento identificable como la aportación del Caribe anglófono al estudio y teoría de comunicación y medios. Los paradigmas y teorías norteamericanos, británicos y europeos ejercen la hegemonía sobre la investigación de medios y comunicación en el Caribe anglófono. Esto no sorprende dado el papel ideológico de la educación en el contexto histórico de un legado colonial británico, que privilegia la transferencia de conocimientos por encima de la generación de conocimientos indígenas, y donde suele identificarse la competencia comunicativa con el dominio del idioma inglés. Ante las demandas de la industria mediática local y regional, se prioriza la capacitación en habilidades prácticas de periodismo y de producción mediática, dejando en un segundo plano la teoría e investigación de la comunicación humana. En este trabajo se señalan las ricas aportaciones de estudiosos, investigadores y maestros individuales, así como las posibilidades de una aportación caribeña propia al estudio de la comunicación, lo que podría incidir en la producción y la capacitación para la industria, y, en última instancia, ampliar los enfoques teóricos y analíticos del campo académico y la investigación.

The formal body of literature, research, and inquiry which took institutional shape after World War II in Europe and North America "when a family of fields concerned with communication and media institutionalized themselves around the world" inevitably found its way into the colleges and universities in the Anglophone Caribbean as the canon of knowledge for media and journalism training.[1] Institutions generating that literature post–World War II had undoubtedly been in the business of research and academic inquiry long before the British Act of Emancipation in 1834 legally recognized Black British West Indians as human beings. Fifty years after communication and media studies entered the higher education landscape in the former British West Indies, the Anglophone Caribbean, no body of literature is yet distinguishable as a distinctive body of knowledge representing Anglophone Caribbean communication and media studies.

The institutionalization of knowledge is central to the emergence and recognition of a discipline and a field of study. Institutions dialectically manage society as products of a society's histories, cultures, and social norms, shaping understandings and perceptions and structuring opportunities and limitations.[2] Institutions serve an ideological function. Hall, having experienced British Colonial culture and education as a child growing up in Jamaica, proposed that inquiry into former British colonies in the West Indies must consider how institutional cultures emerged from the peculiarities of the British West Indian modes of production.[3] Hall used a theoretical frame from the region—the plantation model[4]—to critique institutions in the Anglophone Caribbean. Central to this model is the premise that a mode of production designed to produce and extract wealth from the colony for the economic interests of the mother country became the mold for social, political, and economic development in the colony.

This essay establishes educational institutions' ideological role as a critical part of the infrastructure of domination and control, fostering a culture of academic dependency and knowledge transfer over knowledge generation. Secondly, we explore how engagement in that body of literature in communication and media studies that emerged post–World War II from the US, coupled with the British Cultural Studies movement, would provide a kind of Trojan Horse–like cover for local scholars to seize a "revolutionary moment" for critical engagement with themes and issues related to Caribbean media and communication. This was realized primarily through oral engagement and discussions in the "classroom" rather than a distinctive outflow of literature. Yet again, for a region whose people have a strong ancient oral tradition, these contributions would not

[1] Peter Simonson and David Park, "Introduction," in *The International History of Communication Studies*, ed. Peter Simonson and David Park (New York: Routledge, 2016), 3.

[2] Clarence Ayres, *Toward a Reasonable Society* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961); Ayres, *The Theory of Economic Progress* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962); John Commons, "Institutional Economics," *American Economic Review* 21, no. 4 (1931); Walter Neale, "Institutions," *Journal of Economic Issues* 21, no. 3 (1987).

[3] Stuart Hall, "Pluralism, Race and Class in Caribbean Society," in *Selected Writings on Race and Difference by Stuart Hall*, ed. Paul Gilroy and Ruth Wilson Gilmore (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1977).

[4] Kari Levitt and Lloyd Best, "Character of Caribbean Economy," in *Caribbean Economy: Dependence and Backwardness*, ed. George L. Beckford (Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies, 1975), 34–37.

have the same presence among the institutionalized traditions of "writing" and publishing from the North.[5]

The oral tradition notwithstanding, Caribbean scholars have made significant contributions to the literature of various international academic fields and disciplines.[6] The Anglophone Caribbean, however, is unrepresented in the documented histories of Communication Studies authored by scholars from North America, Europe, or even Latin America.[7] The Anglophone Caribbean is not represented in the documented contribution of the Americas to communication research.[8] This is not a matter of exclusion or oversight. A coherent body of Anglophone Caribbean communication research and theory is conspicuously missing.[9] This essay proposes that the dominant institutional perspectives in the region saw communication and media as limited to a context of training for the burgeoning local and global media and journalism industries.

We highlight how the current local institutional landscape prioritizes knowledge transfer as central to development. Local scholars faced with the perennial need for sponsorship and funding tend to focus less on theorizing and knowledge generation and more on applying existing theories and approaches to resolving the plethora of social challenges that require communication and media intervention.

[5] Wimal Dissayanake, "The Production of Asian Theories of Communication," in *De-westernizing Communication Research: Altering Questions and Changing Frameworks,* ed. Georgette Wang (New York: Routledge, 2011).

[6] Marjan DeBruin, "IAMCR and the Caribbean Region: Rethinking Our Thinking; Understanding the Epistemic Effects of Colonialism in Higher Education," in *Reflections on the International Association for Media and Communication Research: Many Voices, One Forum,* ed. Jörge Becker and Robin Mansell (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave McMillan, 2023).

[7] Livingston White, "Charting the Course of Communication Studies in the English-Speaking Caribbean: Disciplines, Developments and Future Directions," *The Journal of Human Communication Studies in the Caribbean* 1, no. 1 (2015).

[8] Robert T. Craig, "Communication as a Field and Discipline," in *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*, ed. Wolfgang Donsbach (Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 675–88.

[9] DeBruin, "IAMCR and the Caribbean."

## *The Ideology of Education in the British West Indies*

Britain enacted the Negro Education Grant in the same year that the Emancipation Act freed enslaved Africans in their West Indian possessions. The Education Grant sought to regulate "the condition of the Negroes as may combine their welfare with the interests of the proprietors [of the slave sugar plantations] to carry on the production of sugar."[10] Such education as was to be provided was concerned only with the basics required for functioning on the sugar plantation. Education became institutionalized as a utilitarian function. This would continue post-independence, prioritizing the transfer of knowledge and technology to the local labor force that services the assets of regional and global elites.

Education in the British West Indies was never concerned with knowledge generation because knowledge was understood to reside in the mother country. While Spanish and French colonies in the region had universities from the early eighteenth century and mid-nineteenth century, respectively,[11] the British West Indies would not have a university until 1948. Ironically, the University College of the West Indies was located on the site of a former plantation in Jamaica. Established by royal charter as a college of the University of London, the UCWI began as a faculty of medicine. In 1962, the same year

[10] Shirley C. Gordon, "The Negro Education Grant 1835–1845: Its Application in Jamaica," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 6, no. 2 (1958): 140.

[11] DeBruin, "IAMCR and the Caribbean," 364.

Jamaica became independent, the UCWI became the University of the West Indies, UWI, a degree-granting institution in its own right.

Queen Elizabeth II's aunt, Princess Alice, was the university's first chancellor, and her spotted lion emblem still forms part of the university's coat of arms today. Until 2019, Queen Elizabeth II held the role of Visitor, which gave her the right to occasionally inspect the institution and mediate disputes among or between staff and students where all other remedies had failed. Contributing territories of the UWI are still members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and some, including Jamaica, still retain the British monarch as their Head of State. Cultures of coloniality make maintaining these vestiges of colonialism in the region's premier educational institution seem unproblematic. The legacy of our colonial education systems reinforces a culture of academic and thought dependence on Britain.[12]

After five centuries of colonial rule, our institutions continue to validate and privilege imported knowledge. Post-independence, the education system remained critical to applying and implementing prescriptions from the industrialized world. These institutions were already predisposed to imitate and import knowledge uncritically. The emergence of nationalist leaders and movements for self-government and, ultimately, independence did not significantly dismantle the institutional systems and culture of coloniality. A litany of literature from regional scholars describes how the emergence of a nationalist Black and mixed-race educated class maintained systems of coloniality in the various sectors of the Anglophone Caribbean, consolidating their power through control of state institutions and as mediators and agents for British and eventually American and European interests.[13] Coloniality, distinct from colonialism,[14] defines the locally crafted systems of domination that apply Western Eurocentric cultural systems in the interest of the local elite and their political and cultural capital. The leaders, themselves products of British and colonial education systems and cultures, were almost destined to recreate systems of inequity and power that had for centuries been the British West Indian experience.[15]

Hall likens the transition from feudal Europe to a capitalist economy to the transition from colonial rule to independence in the British West Indies.[16] In much the same way that the bourgeoisie in Europe formed alliances with the feudal lords as they exchanged power, the nationalist leaders in the Anglophone region made clear interest-based alliances with the outgoing colonial masters.[17] They also declared support for the emerging Anglophone superpower in the region, the USA.[18] The institutions in post-colonial territories were generally unaltered in their culture of academic dependency.

[12] Patrick Bryan, *The Jamaican People: 1880–1902* (London: MacMillan Caribbean, 1991).

[13] Anthony Bogues, "Politics, Nation and Postcolony: Caribbean Inflections," *Small Axe* 6, no. 1 (2002); Aggrey Brown, *Color, Class and Politics in Jamaica* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1978); Hall, "Pluralism, Race and Class in Caribbean Society"; Holger Henke, "Ariel's Ethos: On the Moral Economy of Caribbean Existence," *Cultural Critique* 56 (2004): 33–63; Percy Hintzen, "Reproducing Domination, Identity and Legitimacy Constructs in the West Indies," *Social Identities* 3, no. 1 (1997); Aaron Kamugisha, "The Coloniality of Citizenship in the Contemporary Anglophone Caribbean," *Institute of Race Relations* 49 (2007); Rupert Lewis, "Reconsidering the Role of the Middle Class in Caribbean Politics," in *New Caribbean Thought: A Reader*, ed. Brian Meeks and Folke Lindahl (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2001).

The British mercantile system had left the West Indian societies with agricultural monocultures and an undiversified economy, with export crops rapidly losing value on the global market.[19] Large territories like Jamaica that were extensively used for plantation sugar production faced extreme poverty, unemployment, and social decay.[20] Hardly were they through the gates of political independence, but they would have to comply with economic directives and prescriptions for development from agents of their old and new overlords through organizations like the WTO and the IMF. New industries, such as bauxite and tourism, primarily owned by foreign interests, needed skilled labor. The local media and communication institutions, dependent on advertising and the promotional needs of local and overseas business interests, were more concerned with acquiring relevant skills than with research and knowledge generation. Dominant wisdom in the region considered knowledge transference through education as the most efficient mechanism for development.

The University of the West Indies (UWI) evolved as a symbolic part of the educational institutional structure and systems that still imitate and reflect British traditions.[21] To understand this is to appreciate how the education system in the region produced an educated class of mixed-race and Black citizens who would never be hostile to colonial values and the British legacy long after the Union Jack was lowered and national flags were raised. Institutions like UWI became important in validating status in the class system post-independence. The nationalist "independence" moment was far from a "revolutionary" moment regarding transformation from dominant elements of coloniality. UWI is still "fed" by a secondary education system organized around systems of "selection," which critics recognize as largely privileging the already privileged even as it does provide some opportunities for marginalized groups.[22] (A UWI education is still perceived as the path to the middle-stratum and middle-strata professions through traditional university courses and program offerings. UWI, for many in the society, is still validated by its colonial association with the monarchy and externally validated bodies of knowledge.

While many locals were, and are still, able to achieve some measure of social and economic mobility through the education systems, the regulation of persons to specific jobs and social strata through the processes of selection managed by educational institutions is still evident.[23] One of the main criteria for social mobility was cultural, and the command of English was central to social status and professional advancement. If knowledge transfer is to be effective, the citizenry would need more than a basic command of English. The study of Communication as advanced instruction in English serves this ideological end.

[14] Ramon Grosfoguel, "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (2007).

[15] Cyril L. R. James, *Party Politics in the West Indies* (San Juan: Vedic Enterprises, 1962).

[16] Hall, "Pluralism, Race and Class in Caribbean Society," 156.

[17] Hall, 156.

[18] Hopeton Dunn, "Creative Resilience and Globalization from within Evolving Constructs for Analysing Culture, Innovation, and Enterprise in the Global South," *Annals of the International Communication Association* 44, no. 1 (2020).

[19] Dawn Richards Elliott and Ransford Palmer, "Institutions and Caribbean Economic Performance: Insights from Jamaica," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 43, no. 2 (2008); Michael Witter, "Caribbean Economic Thought: Advances, Retreat, Current Challenges," *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy* 10, no. 3 (2021).

[20] Norman Girvan, "Reinterpreting the Caribbean" in *New Caribbean Thought: A Reader*, ed. Brian Meeks and Folke Lindahl (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2001); Richards Elliott and Palmer, "Institutions and Caribbean Economic Performance"; Witter, "Caribbean Economic Thought."

[21] Alan Cobley, "The Historical Development of Higher Education in the Anglophone Caribbean," in *Higher Education in the Caribbean: Past, Present, and Future Directions,* ed. Glenford D. Howe (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2000); Bevis Peters, "Tertiary Education Development in Small States: Constraints and Prospects," *Caribbean Quarterly* 47, no. 2–3 (2001).

[22] Collette Applewhaite, "Is the Common Entrance Examination in Barbados Valid in the 21st Century in Light of Issues of Male Underachievement?," *Journal of Education & Development in the Caribbean* 17, no. 1 (2018); Jerome De Lisle, "Secondary School Entrance Examinations in the Caribbean: Legacy, Policy, and Evidence within an Era of Seamless Education," *Caribbean Curriculum* 19 (2012).

[23] De Lisle, "Secondary School Entrance Examinations"; Erica Donna Gordon, "Problems, Pressures and Policies Affecting the Progress of the Caribbean Examinations Council Examinations: A Postcolonial Response to Secondary Education in Jamaica" (PhD diss., University College London, 2019).

What is widely known as Communication Studies in the region is offered as part of the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE), administered by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) since 1994. The University of the West Indies greatly assisted in developing the CXC and the Anglophone Caribbean's regional school leaving exams, which replaced the overseas examinations administered by the University of Cambridge. The Communication Studies syllabus has three modules: Gathering and Processing Information, Language and Community, and Speaking and Writing. The first general objective for all three modules requires students to ". . . use the structures of *Caribbean Standard English* correctly and appropriately and with a degree of elegance." The first specific objective of all three modules requires that students be able "to speak and write with *effective* control of the grammar, vocabulary, mechanics and conventions of *Caribbean Standard English usage*."

As of April 2024, on the CXC website, we read the following:

> Communication Studies builds students' awareness of the centrality of language to the normal functioning of human beings and facilitates their ability to operate in the Caribbean linguistic environment and beyond. . . . *It focuses primarily on developing advanced competencies in Standard English, mainly Caribbean Standard English . . .*

Outside of the institutional provisions of CXC, we find compulsory communication courses in several Jamaican post-secondary and tertiary institutions that focus extensively on developmental, continued, or advanced instruction in English. The "problem" of Creole interference in students' use of English makes continued systematic instruction in English necessary past high school.[24] Communication Studies or Communication then becomes a euphemism for continued instruction in English. Post-colonial culture in the Anglophone Caribbean sees mastery of English as central to and inextricable from effective communication and presents English language competence as central to all that is considered communication.

[24] Joseph Farquharson, "The Black Man's Burden? Language and Political Economy in a Diglossic State and Beyond," *Zeitschrift fur Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 63 (2015): 158.

## *Communication Studies: The Revolutionary Moment*

What World War II was to the development of the body of literature and the field we now recognize as Communication Studies in North America and Europe, the Non-Aligned Movement and the emergent call for a New World Information Order would become, for the development of media and communication study in the Anglophone Caribbean. American hegemony in both media as a global industry and Anglo-American and European communication media research and theory created an opening for Communication Studies to be recognized as a legitimate field within the University of the West Indies'

traditional offerings. Media training and mass media development were part of a dominant Western paradigm for developing post-colonial societies.[25] The ferment in the United Nations and the role of international development agencies who actively prescribed mass media development and training as critical to Third World Development significantly influenced our higher education systems.

Anglophone nationalist leaders bought into this narrative, swiftly setting up national radio and television systems. After all, the colonial powers had set up media systems, primarily radio, to expedite empire management and control, especially during the war years.[26] Brown suggests that nationalist leaders launched into setting up national media systems without fully appreciating the implications of the technologies, especially television, which would rely heavily on imported content.[27] By the time the UWI started the first program offerings—a diploma and then a degree in Mass Communication in the 1970s—Jamaica and the region were already inundated with foreign media content and an established British tradition in journalism and broadcasting. Newspaper journalism and broadcasting companies prepared workers through apprenticeship and skill development in the newsroom. Broadcasters were sent to the BBC for training and mentorship, and that was considered a privilege and an essential part of the ranking or status of journalists who were so honored.

North America's emphasis on professionalizing media and journalism through college and university education would gradually influence media and communication education in Jamaica and the wider Anglophone Caribbean. The cumulative external stimulus from the North made the Anglophone regional university receptive to a modified status quo in its otherwise traditional offerings. Another factor that stirred the university to make room for communication and media training was the need for growing local and regional media organizations.

The political mood in the region in the 1970s also primed the university's otherwise traditional culture to be receptive to new offerings. CARIMAC, the Caribbean Institute of Mass Communication (now the Caribbean School of Media and Communication), was set up to serve the Anglophone Caribbean through the collaborative effort of UNESCO and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Its terms of reference were primarily formal training in media and communication. Regional and local scholars saw the opportunity to use the rationale of media training as a platform for germinating a "Caribbean consciousness" among media workers and a critical perspective regarding the study of Communication and Media. The establishment of CARIMAC on UWI's Jamaica campus coincided with the Democratic Socialist "moment" in Jamaican politics.

[25] Thomas McPhail, *Electronic Colonialism: The Future of International Broadcasting and Communication* (Beverley Hills, CA: Sage, 1981).

[26] Hopeton S. Dunn, "Imperial Foundations of 20th-Century Media Systems in the Caribbean," *Critical Arts: A South-North Journal of Cultural & Media Studies* 28, no. 6 (2014).

[27] Aggrey Brown, "The Mass Media of Communications and Socialist Change in the Caribbean: A Case Study of Jamaica," *Caribbean Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (1976): 47–48.

Jamaica's Prime Minister, Michael Manley, became a significant voice in the Non-Aligned Movement. He was undergirded by a constituency of regional academics and scholars who ranged from moderate to left of center and far left. The University of the West Indies became the hotbed for much of this ferment.[28] Witter notes the impact of this moment on stimulating Caribbean contributions to economic theory and the opportunities it provided for those thought leaders to "reinterpret conventional and radical theories for the analysis of Caribbean reality" and revise university curricula.[29] While Michael Manley's administration was repatriating assets and levying multinational bauxite companies, Caribbean scholars in economics, sociology, and other disciplines were reflecting new critical perspectives in journals and books.

However, communication and media studies in the region seemed locked into a paradigm of training for media production and journalism. The dominant perspective was that capitalist economies taking shape in the region needed media services for their promotional operations.[30] In the interest of funding and local and external support, journalism, media production skills, and improved practice had to be seen to be prioritized. Our scholars record the emergence of Communication and Media Studies in the Anglophone Caribbean as the rollout of primarily undergraduate degree programs, rather than a body of distinctly Anglo-Caribbean original literature in Communication and Media.[31] DeBruin notes the absence of regional or local texts and reading material as resources for journalism and media programs in the region.[32] Institutionally, this would allow program development as it was generally accepted that appropriate and relevant knowledge is easily obtained from North American and British texts and readers. Institutional cultures are central to maintaining a culture of coloniality that institutionalizes the "uncritical adoption of externally generated theoretical constructs."[33]

Despite attempts to resolve the textbook issue,[34] North American texts still outstrip the generation of local or regional resources. Media and communication scholars continue to discuss the production of texts and readers for use in Caribbean classrooms; however, with universities ranking textbooks and teaching resources low on the scale of points required for promotion, motivation seems low. Programs in communication and media continue to proliferate in national and private institutions in the Anglophone Caribbean without any significant emergence of regional literature on issues in Caribbean Communication Studies or analytical texts on Caribbean media. Jamaica never paid considerable attention to the development of Spanish as a second language beyond occasional utterances by political leaders, so students enrolled in media and communication programs had limited access to emerging Latin American literature in the field.

[28] Witter, "Caribbean Economic Thought," 475.

[29] Witter, 468.

[30] Brown, "The Mass Media of Communications and Socialist Change," 47.

[31] Korah Belgrave, "The Development of Communication Studies at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus: Lessons from the Trenches," *Journal of Human Communication Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015); Godfrey Steele, "The Human Communication Discipline: Pathways in the Anglophone Caribbean," *Journal of Human Communication Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015); White, "Charting the Course"; DeBruin, "IAMCR and the Caribbean."

[32] DeBruin, "IAMCR and the Caribbean," 367.

[33] Hopeton Dunn et al., "Re-Imagining Communication in Africa and the Caribbean: Releasing the Psychic Inheritance," in *Re-Imagining Communication in Africa and the Caribbean: Global South Issues in Media, Culture and Technology*, ed. Hopeton Dunn et al. (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2021), 6.

[34] Hopeton Dunn, "Caribbean," in *Inventory of Textbooks in Communication Studies Around the World: Final Report of the Project*, ed. Kaarle Nordenstreng (Tampere, Finland: University of Tampere, 1998).

A few core courses concerned developing Caribbean thought in media and communication. The late Professor Emeritus W. Aggrey Brown (1941–2011), the longest-serving director of CARIMAC from 1979 to 2002, was a significant figure in this moment. Brown earned his MA and PhD in Political Science from Princeton University. On his return to Jamaica, Brown immersed himself in local media as a newspaper columnist, TV videographer, radio announcer, news analyst, and moderator of a widespread and often controversial radio call-in program. A culturally and historically contextual response to studying communication in the Anglophone Caribbean came in an almost Trojan Horse–like context embedded in a compulsory course for first-year students. Communication and Society, which evolved into Communication Culture and Caribbean Society, was quickly dubbed "Aggrey's course."

Elements of the institutionalized family of fields which Simonson and Park reference found their way into those discussions alongside Latin American contributions to development communication.[35] Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was compulsory reading, as was *The Media Are American* and Mass *Communication and Society*.[36] Not to be left out was the copious documentation of the MacBride Report, *Many Voices, One World: Towards a New, More Just, and More Efficient World Information and Communication Order*,[37] and yellowing photocopies of Chief Seattle's speech, which too was required reading.

"Aggrey's course" was a course of questions and redefinitions. The seed of potential Caribbean communication thought presented more as a classroom experience for students than a formal published body of literature. Questions about media ownership and control, the role of journalists, and the evolution of new forms of media and occupations provoked fiery debates between perspectives left of center and perspectives that reminded us of the "real world" of the Caribbean, where powerful local private sector–owned enterprises and transnational corporations —including advertising agencies— were or would soon be the students' employers. Brown determined that the students' primary task was to re-signify based on our context and culture. True independence and development would only come from naming our world and setting our priorities.[38] As descendants of people brought to the plantations as "resources," we in the South needed to be wary of the new neoliberal orthodoxies of structural adjustment, deregulation, liberalization, and privatization that felt the need to signify us as "resources" albeit "human."[39]

Western paradigms that framed development as material conquest of the environment needed to be redefined into "the reciprocal action between people and their environment that leads to the actualization of human potential in all its dimensions and to the con-

[35] Simonson and Park, "Introduction."

[36] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1972); Jeremy Tunstall, *The Media Are American* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); James Curran, Michael Gurevitch, and Janet Woollacott, eds., *Mass Communication and Society* (London: Hodder Arnold, 1979).

[37] International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, *Many Voices, One World: Towards a New, More Just, and More Efficient World Information and Communication Order* (New York: UNESCO, 1980).

[38] Aggrey Brown, "The Dialectics of Mediated Communication in Development as Historical Process," in "Culture and Development vs. Cultural Development," ed. Helen Gould and Kees Epskamp, special issue, *Culturelink Review* (2000).

[39] Brown, 172.

servation and continuity of the environment as people create society and [H]istory."[40] History with the uppercase *H* is "the total of the dialectic of people and their environment."[41] The lower case *h* is transferred to "the recorded abstraction from that totality, frozen in time," which is subject to the "scribe or griot's perspective and the purpose to be served by such abstraction."[42]

Brown's sentiments harmonized with the advocates of development communication who directed attention away from Western paradigms that universalized their historicity and contexts with their inherent emphases on materialism and empiricism.[43] Media was a tool that could be used for different agendas. Nationalist leaders in the Anglophone Caribbean, not understanding "why and how the media influence the behaviour of people" were misusing the media and subsequently undermining the national transformation needed for true independence.[44] Brown observes:

> The mass media of communications are a vital industry within the consumer economy, used to advertise goods and services within the profit-making milieu. Disseminating news and information and providing entertainment are ancillary functions to this primary purpose.[45]

In his classes, Brown argued that revolutionaries must inevitably challenge abstractions. Brown references Freire and Fanon as revolutionaries who challenged the abstractions of [h]istory, which the hegemon typically treats as absolute and universal. For genuinely independent young nations to experience transformation, we must understand that all human action and interaction is *mediated* through tools of signs, symbols, language, and media hardware. However, more importantly, "people are required to perform tasks they never performed before and may never have thought themselves capable. From passive observers of the process, they are impelled to become active participants. From being mere objects of [h]istory, they become subjects creating [H]istory."[46]

Much of what was shared in the classes then was oral, sporadically documented and largely informal. As the relevant citations indicate, Brown did go on to publish much of his insight. His PhD dissertation *Color, Class and Politics in Jamaica* provided a significant platform for redefinitions and resignifications in our understanding of class, which has always been a central concept in considering Caribbean societies.[47] Brown's work demonstrated what Hall himself identified as the impact of the peculiarities of the plantation on West Indian culture and its institutions through the reification of race and class in local political and power systems.[48] Brown redefined class from the limitations of Marxist and neo-Marxist articulations, which Hall suggested could not adequately explain how "thought" and idea could be definitively tied to socio-economic class.[49] Brown

[40] Brown, 162.

[41] Brown, 162.

[42] Brown, 159.

[43] Jan Servaes, *Communication for Development: One World, Multiple Cultures* (New York: Hampton Press, 1999).

[44] Aggrey Brown, "The Dialectics of Mass Communication in National Transformation," *Caribbean Quarterly* 27, no. 2–3 (1981): 40.

[45] Brown, "Mass Media of Communications," 47.

[46] Brown, "The Dialectics of Mediated Communication," 160.

[47] Brown, *Color, Class and Politics*.

[48] Hall, "Pluralism, Race and Class in Caribbean Society"; Stuart Hall, "Negotiating Caribbean Identities" in *New Caribbean Thought: A Reader*, ed. Brian Meeks and Folke Lindahl (Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2001).

proposed that "class" be understood based on the direction of human energy regarding society. In every society, therefore, only three classes could be found to exist: 1) a conservative class that exerted its energies (performed tasks) aimed at maintaining the status quo, 2) a destructive class that simply destroyed the status quo without any idea of alternatives, and 3) a transformative class that pursued dialogue and a collaborative search for justice.[50] The relevance of Brown's ideas for a critical Caribbean perspective on communication and media theorizing is evident. One of the many questions is why it did not come to drive and shape the distinctive body of literature and institutionalize the field in the region beyond media and journalism training.

[49] Stuart Hall, "The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues,* ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996).

[50] Brown, *Color, Class and Politics*, 8, 9.

In 1994, CARIMAC launched the first graduate program, a taught master's in Communication Studies. In 1998, the graduate program offering added an MPhil/PhD program in Communication Studies. Hopeton Dunn was the chief architect of that program, working closely with Aggrey Brown and Marjan DeBruin. Professor of Communications Policy and Digital Media, Dunn was Director of CARIMAC from 2012 to 2018 and is one of the most extensively published researchers on media and ICT in the Anglophone Caribbean. A former head of UWI's Mona ICT Policy Centre (MICT), Dunn extended Communication Studies to incorporate telecommunications developments through research into technology policy reforms, new media in the Global South, telecommunications for development, and broadcasting regulation. Dunn's contribution was particularly significant in its response to infrastructural relics of the colonial period, e.g., Cable and Wireless Jamaica, which held a monopoly over Jamaican telecoms for centuries until the twenty-first century. Having earned his PhD at City University London in 1991, his dissertation was entitled "Telecommunications and Underdevelopment: A Policy Analysis of the Historical Role of Cable and Wireless in the Caribbean." Courses in policy and governance were added to the curriculum.

As an advocate for critical thought, Dunn also advocated the need for new insights and new approaches, that perspectives for Caribbean scholarship "must come from all parts of the world and not just from the privileged North."[51] His scholarly collaboration with African scholars infused Caribbean Communication Studies with fresh thought and new deliberations on the de-westernization and indigenization of theory from the Global South.

[51] Dunn, "Reimagining," 6.

The first cohort of graduate students in the MA in Communication Studies were PR practitioners, a trade unionist turned HR director (who would later go on to become a member of Parliament and a minister of government), a university lecturer (a trained journalist who had also worked in advertising and public information), a

newspaper columnist who described himself in his by-line as a communication consultant even though his formal academic credentials were in the natural sciences, and one who described himself as a "working journalist." Most of the cohort had formal journalism/mass communication training locally or overseas. Unlike the diploma and bachelor's degree, the MA in Communication Studies curriculum taught no production skills. It involved interdisciplinary incursion into political science, sociology, policy, and research with a significant influence from the literature of the British Cultural Studies movement and mainstream material from North America and Europe. An overview of the courses in the program evinces the intent of the course designers:

> Caribbean Media Communication & Society; Socio-Cultural Issues in Caribbean Communication: Race, Class, Ethnicity and Gender; Communications Policy & Technology in the Caribbean, Communication Theories, Design & Methods in Communication Research; Communications & Media Management; Research Design and Fieldwork.

Much of the deliberations, themes and issues germinating in the undergraduate program returned in 1994. However, much had changed in the global environment, and the internet was well on its way to redefining what we formerly knew as mass media. The Thatcher and Reagan years had also redefined the discourse and Democratic Socialism, and Manley had retired from the Jamaican landscape. New political leaders overtly affirmed their commitment to the capitalist economy, and it was not insignificant that the new Jamaican prime minister, Edward Seaga, who replaced Manley, was the first foreign leader to be invited to meet with the newly elected President Ronald Reagan.

## *Working with the Hegemon: Knowledge Transfer over Knowledge Generation*

By 1994, the revolutionary moment was behind us. The neoliberal orthodoxy was by then the hegemon, and much of what had emerged as "critical" thought had gone into retreat. Disciplines like economics and government that had a "rich tradition of critical thought" in Caribbean scholarship experienced retreats and recessions "in the face of the economic power of the IMF and the World Bank, the prestige of the Washington Consensus among political leaders, and the generation of economists that succeeded the New World thinkers, and the military might of the United States."[52] Witter describes how UWI's departments replaced academic literature in the curriculum with resources that reflected the new economic hegemon:

[52] Witter, "Caribbean Economic Thought," 473.

> Sectoral studies, particularly monetary studies that sought to contribute to the management of the economy defined conventionally balanced budgets, stable prices, low debt. The rationale was that these conditions would somehow lead to economic growth, the benefits of which would trickle down to the masses of the population.[53]

[53] Witter, 473.

It would not be accurate to say that critical thought also receded in Communication Studies as that definable body of Caribbean theory comparable to Caribbean thought and scholarship in economics and other disciplines had never materialized. Most of the graduate students who passed through the Communication Studies program would return to jobs in the corporate world, the public sector, and non-governmental organizations to function as managers of communication, information, and PR departments. Few would go on to focus on theory and research, and not many could be absorbed by these departments to pursue the kind of writing and study that generates literature that will define a "school" of thought. Fewer than fifteen PhD graduates have come out of UWI's PhD in Communication Studies program since it started in the 1990s. Our output has been modest and has primarily been the application of existing theories to local and or regional contexts. Graduates of higher degrees typically pursue consultancies. The application of existing mainstream theories to local and regional contexts generally attracts more funding and corporate support.

The economic role of mass media in our emerging consumer economies obliged the UWI to consider its role in the regional economy and its responsibility in the job market. The leading employers of labor, large private-sector enterprises, the public sector, and other training and educational institutions recognized UWI as necessary for the job market. UWI also had to ensure that their certification was respected in the North American job markets, owing to high levels of migration and international mobility of the Jamaican middle class and lower middle class.[54] While some reports laud the university as the space for resistant thought and counter-hegemonic thinking,[55] which was reflected as much in media commentaries as it was in lecture and tutorial rooms, UWI was also the space for much tension between resistant and counter-hegemonic thinkers. Stone articulates this tension in his review of public perspectives on the UWI.

> All societies reproduce their political institutions and structures of power partly through the impact of dominant social, economic and political ideologies and belief systems which reinforce and consolidate the status quo. Additionally, societies experience the challenge to change partly induced (among other things) by the impact of questioning ideologies, which become a basis for critical evaluation of the status quo. Universities generate and reproduce both types of ideological currents and therefore will be seen by subsectors of national public opinion as

[54] Carl Stone, "Public Opinion Perspectives on the University of the West Indies," *Caribbean Quarterly* 29, no. 3–4 (1983): 22.

[55] DeBruin, "IAMCR and the Caribbean"; Verene Shepherd, "Obstacles to the Creation of Afrocentric Societies in the Commonwealth Caribbean" (presentation at the 10th session of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, Geneva, Switzerland, March–April, 2011).

> either strengthening or weakening the existing structure of power and institutionalized authority in the society.[56]

[56] Stone, "Public Opinion," 23.

CARIMAC's diversification of program offerings in response to market and industry needs may have inadvertently relocated it within the dominant ideological current, in which communication and media studies are about skills for industry. Graduate offerings now include an MA in Communication for Social and Behaviour Change, an MA in Integrated Marketing Communication, and an MSc in Media Management. Student inflows to the more industry-related and "practice" oriented programs have resulted in the cessation (we hope temporarily) of the MA in Communication Studies offering. Of course, the PhD in Communication Studies remains a generic program for any candidate who wishes to conduct research related to media or communication.

Two other campuses of the UWI are now offering degrees in Communication that are presented as distinctive from CARIMAC's since CARIMAC is still widely perceived as a school for media training. Professor Godfrey Steele, the crafter of the undergraduate degree in Communication on UWI's St. Augustine campus in Trinidad, describes that institution's offering of Human Communication Studies as "an amalgamation of many things, but probably most notably, it seeks to understand how people create, exchange and share messages and meaning in every context and how the study of human communication relates to our humanity."[57] UWI's Cave Hill campus in Barbados offers an undergraduate minor seeking to develop student skills in rhetoric and rhetorical criticism.[58]

[57] Godfrey Steele, "Human Communication Studies: What, Why and How from a Caribbean Perspective," inaugural lecture, University of the West Indies at St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, January 27, 2022, YouTube video, 1:56:06.

[58] Belgrave, "Development of Communication Studies at the University of the West Indies."

The dominant perspective of the study of language, which is the study of communication, still thrives on the Mona campus in Jamaica. The Linguistics department offers a BA in Language, Communication, and Society, which:

> focuses on the social and communicative value of language and includes courses that develop a deeper understanding of the organising principles behind language structure. Some signature courses in this major include Language, Gender & Sex, The Language of Negotiation, and Language Planning, Phonology, Syntax, Structure of the English Language, and the Sociology of Language.

The understanding is that CARIMAC's communication offerings are to be understood as "mediated communication" or, more precisely, media production and journalism training and related research.

Communication as a field still presents significantly as taught courses, even at the graduate level. Several efforts at collaboration across institutions locally and regionally have occurred with limited success. Institutions delivering media and communication programs

seemed more focused on competing for the student market than developing the field.

Graduate students in research programs in communication study and graduates of these degrees have published and are publishing using the theories, methods, and approaches acquired from mainstream schools. The institutionalization of teaching and training for the job market and instruction in skills outpaces reflection, knowledge creation, and critical inquiry. Our scholars respond to pressing research needs and opportunities and the research needs of our graduate students with existing theoretical tools as that more often facilitates approval internally and externally. A systematic review and reflection of what our scholars and graduate students have been researching and publishing would be an essential first step towards at least being able to describe what we have been exploring and what themes and issues are present in our existing literature.

Surinamese writer Sankatsing defines the Caribbean experience of thought dependence as "envelopment and not true development":

> Achievements of the West, separated from their specific historicity, were transferred to other latitudes as universal, context-free yardsticks for the future of all geographic destinies and landscapes. Three continents, including ours, were reduced to "trailer societies" without the engine and heartbeat to shape their history.[59]

[59] Glenn Sankatsing, "The Caribbean between Envelopment and Development" (lecture, University of Quintana Roo, Mexico, May 15, 2003).

In almost fifty years of institutional operation as a facility for the study of media and communication, we have in the Anglophone Caribbean a rich tradition of insights and potential theoretical frameworks of thought that can shape an Anglophone Caribbean contribution to Communication Studies. Ideological and cultural stimuli driving the factors defining Communication Studies in the region compel an emphasis on practical skills for industry function to meet the needs of a third wave of globalization for a capitalist economy. Historically, we have yet to be acculturated to reflect. We have been primed to accept what is taken for granted and build with the tools others give us.

White suggests that change can only begin when Caribbean researchers start to reflect on their work and the rationale for their modes of inquiry.[60] Some worry that over the decades, we have become mired in reflection, redefinitions, discussion, and informal debate, but White is not alone in the call for reflection. Sankatsing suggests that

[60] White, "Charting the Course," 15.

> Caribbean scholars can . . . bring about a fundamental reflection, not to satisfy supreme academic interests, but to ensure the very survival of our societies and cultures in the Caribbean Basin; a crucial reflection to provide us with a viable plan for the society in an encounter of our

> present and future, starting with the genesis of the countries of the Caribbean.[61]

[61] Sankatsing, "The Caribbean between Envelopment and Development," 1.

In a media-dominated world and economy, a Caribbean response to knowledge generation and theorizing in Communication and Media Studies would be a strategic point of departure.

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