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Theories of Human Communication

NINTH EDITION

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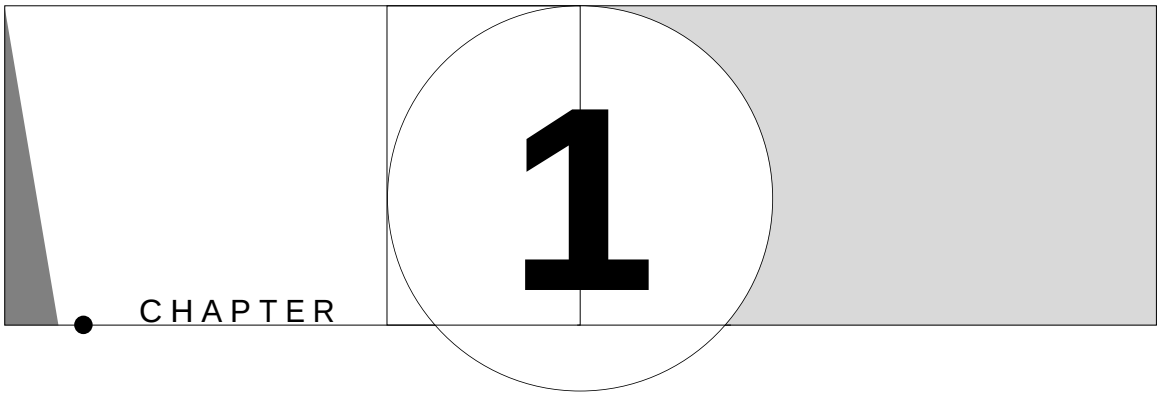

COMMUNICATION THEORY AND SCHOLARSHIP

As long as people have wondered about the world, they have been intrigued by the mysteries of human nature. The most commonplace activities of our lives—the things we take for granted—can become quite puzzling when we try to understand them systematically. Communication is one of those everyday activities that is intertwined with all of human life so completely that we sometimes overlook its pervasiveness, importance, and complexity. In this book, we treat communication as central to human life. Every aspect of our daily lives is affected by our communication with others, as well as by messages from people we don't even know—people near and far, living and dead. This book is designed to help you better understand communication in all of its aspects—its complexities, its powers, its possibilities, and its limitations.

We could proceed with this book in several ways. We could provide a set of recipes for improving communication, but such an approach would ignore the complexities and ambiguities of the communication process. We could offer some basic models, but this too offers a limited view of communication. Instead, we will focus on theories of communication, because theories provide explanations that help us understand the phenomenon we call communication. Our guiding question is how scholars from various traditions have described and explained this universal human experience. By developing an understanding of a variety of communication theories, you can be more discriminating in your interpretation of communication, can gain tools to improve your communication, and can better understand what the discipline of communication is about.[1]

Studying communication theory will help you to see things you never saw before, to see the unfamiliar in the everyday. This widening of perception, or unhitching of blinders, will enable you to transcend habitual thinking and to become increasingly adaptable, flexible, and sophisticated in terms of your approach to communication. The

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philosopher Thomas Kuhn explains the different way of seeing that knowledge of a field provides: "Looking at a contour map, the student sees lines on paper, the cartographer a picture of a terrain. Looking at a bubble chamber photograph, the student sees confused and broken lines, the physicist a record of familiar subnuclear events."[2] Theories, then, provide a set of useful tools for seeing the everyday processes and experiences of communication through new lenses.

Defining Communication

To begin our study of communication theories, we turn first to the task of defining *communication*—and communication is not easy to define.[3] Theodore Clevenger Jr. noted that "the continuing problem in defining communication for scholarly or scientific purposes stems from the fact that the verb 'to communicate' is well established in the common lexicon and therefore is not easily captured for scientific use. Indeed, it is one of the most overworked terms in the English language."[4] Scholars have made many attempts to define *communication,* but establishing a single definition has proved impossible and may not be very fruitful.

Frank Dance took a major step toward clarifying this muddy concept by outlining a number of elements used to distinguish communication.[5] He found three points of "critical conceptual differentiation" that form the basic dimensions of communication. The first dimension is *level of observation,* or abstractness. Some definitions are broad and inclusive; others are restrictive. For example, the definition of communication as "the process that links discontinuous parts of the living world to one another" is general.[6] On the other hand, communication as "a system (as of telephones or telegraphs) for communicating information and orders (as in a naval service)," is restrictive.[7]

The second distinction is *intentionality.* Some definitions include only purposeful message sending and receiving; others do not impose this limitation. The following is an example of a definition that includes intention: "Those situations in which a source transmits a message to a receiver with conscious intent to affect the latter's behaviors."[8] A definition that does not require intent follows: "It is a process that makes common to two or several what was the monopoly of one or some."[9]

The third dimension used to distinguish among definitions of communication is normative *judgment.* Some definitions include a statement of success, effectiveness, or accuracy; other definitions do not contain such implicit judgments. The following definition, for example, presumes that communication is successful: "Communication is the verbal interchange of a thought or idea."[10] The assumption in this definition is that a thought or idea is successfully exchanged. Another definition, on the other hand, does not judge whether the outcome is successful or not: "Communication [is] the transmission of information."[11] Here information is *transmitted,* but it is not necessarily *received* or understood.

Debates over what communication is and the dimensions that characterize it will undoubtedly continue. Dance's conclusion is appropriate: "We are trying to make the concept of 'communication' do too much work for us."[12] He calls for a family of concepts, rather than a single theory or idea, that collectively defines communication. These definitional issues are important, as Peter Andersen reminds us: "While there is not a right or wrong perspective, choices regarding [definitions] are not trivial. These perspectives launch scholars down different theoretical trajectories, predispose them to ask distinct questions, and set them up to conduct different kinds of communication studies."[13] Different definitions have different functions and enable the theorist to do different things.

A definition should be evaluated on the basis of how well it helps scholars answer the questions they are investigating. Different sorts of investigations require separate, even contradictory, definitions of communication. Definitions, then, are tools that should be used flexibly. In

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this book we do not offer a single definition of communication but instead look at a range of theories that defines communication in a variety of ways. We hope this range of definitions will help you determine what communication means to you as you begin to explore the many arenas of communication theory.

The Academic Study of Communication

Communication has been systematically studied since antiquity,[14] but it became an especially important topic in the twentieth century. W. Barnett Pearce describes this development as a "revolutionary discovery," largely caused by the rise of communication technologies (such as radio, television, telephone, satellites, and computer networking), along with industrialization, big business, and global politics.[15] Clearly, communication has assumed immense importance in our time.

Intense interest in the academic study of communication began after World War I, as advances in technology and literacy made communication a topic of concern.[16] The subject was further promoted by the popular twentieth-century philosophies of progress and pragmatism, which stimulated a desire to improve society through widespread social change. This trend is important because it grounds communication firmly in the intellectual history of the United States during the twentieth century. During this period, the nation was "on the move" in terms of efforts to advance technology, improve society, fight tyranny, and foster the spread of capitalism. Communication figured prominently in these movements and became central to such concerns as propaganda and public opinion; the rise of the social sciences; and the role of the media in commerce, marketing, and advertising.

After World War II, the social sciences became fully recognized as legitimate disciplines, and the interest in psychological and social processes became intense. Persuasion and decision making in groups were central concerns, not only among researchers but in society in general because of the widespread use of propaganda during the war to disseminate oppressive ideological regimes. Communication studies developed considerably in the second half of the twentieth century because of pragmatic interests in what communication can accomplish and the outcomes it produces.

At first, university courses related to communication were found in many departments—the sciences, the arts, mathematics, literature, biology, business, and political science.[17] In fact, communication is still studied across the university curriculum. Psychologists study communication, for instance, as a particular kind of behavior motivated by different psychological processes. Sociologists focus on society and social processes and thus see communication as one of many social factors important in society. Anthropologists are interested primarily in culture, treating communication as a factor that helps develop, maintain, and change cultures. There has been considerable cross-fertilization between communication and other disciplines: "While many disciplines have undoubtedly benefited from adopting a communication model, it is equally true that they, in turn, have added greatly to our understanding of human interaction."[18]

Gradually, however, separate departments of speech, speech communication, communication, and mass communication developed. Today, most departments are called departments of communication or communication studies, but whatever the label, they share a focus on communication as central to human experience. In contrast, then, to researchers in other fields like psychology, sociology, anthropology, or business, who tend to consider communication a secondary process—something important for transmitting information once other structures are in place—scholars in the discipline of communication consider communication as the organizing element of human life.

As communication became a discrete discipline, organizations such as the National Communication Association and the International Communication Association, as well as many regional and specialized associations, developed to assist in articulating the nature of the discipline. Journals in which scholars publish their work also have become prolific and also help

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define what the field of communication is.[19] And despite its interdisciplinary origins and continued interdisciplinary flavor, communication is producing theories of its own rather than relying on sister disciplines for theoretical starting points, as was the case when the field first began. In fact, the evolution of this textbook offers evidence of this shift from reliance on other disciplines to disciplinary autonomy. In earlier editions of *Theories*, theories from other disciplines were featured heavily since that was where communication scholars directed their attention and drew their inspiration. Now, we try to include primarily theories developed within the discipline itself—theories that center communication in ways other disciplines do not.

The development of the discipline of communication took different forms and foci in different parts of the world. Communication theory has had a different history in Europe, in Asia, and in Africa than in the United States, for example.[20] In the United States, researchers began by studying communication quantitatively, seeking to establish communication as a social science. Although these researchers were never in complete agreement on this objective ideal, quantitative methods were the standard for many years. European investigations of communication, on the other hand, were influenced more by Marxist perspectives and came to rely on critical/cultural methods. Within the contemporary discipline of communication, however, there is considerable interaction both ways, with scientific procedures developing a toehold in Europe and critical and other qualitative perspectives gaining prominence in North America.

Communication scholars have also begun to attend to distinctions between Western and other forms of communication theory.[21] Eastern theories tend to focus on wholeness and unity, whereas Western perspectives sometimes measure parts without necessarily being concerned about an ultimate integration or unification of those parts. In addition, much Western theory is dominated by a vision of individualism: people are considered to be deliberate and active in achieving personal aims. Most Eastern theories, on the other hand, tend to view communication outcomes as largely unplanned and natural consequences of events. Even the many Western theories that share the Asian preoccupation with unintended events tend to be individualistic and highly cognitive, whereas most Eastern traditions stress emotional and spiritual convergence as communication outcomes.

Eastern and Western views of communication also differ because of their perspectives on language. In the East, verbal symbols, especially speech, are downplayed and even viewed with skepticism. Western-style thinking, which values the rational and logical, is also mistrusted in the Eastern tradition. What counts in many Asian philosophies is intuitive insight gained from direct experience. Such insight can be acquired by not intervening in natural events, which explains why silence is so important in Eastern communication. Relationships, too, are conceptualized differently in the two traditions. In Western thought, relationships exist between two or more individuals. In many Eastern traditions, relationships are more complicated and contextualized, evolving out of differences in the social positions of role, status, and power.

Some scholars seek to develop larger (or meta) theories that are specific to a certain culture or region. Molefi Asante's work on Afrocentricity and Yoshitaka Miike's efforts to describe an Asiacentric theory of communication are two examples. By outlining theoretical concepts and constructs, research materials, and methodologies from such perspectives, scholars like Miike and Asante seek to introduce alternatives to the Eurocentric paradigm in the field of communication.[22]

Like all distinctions, however, the cultural, racial, or regional distinctions among communication theories should be viewed with caution. Although general differences can be noted, what is important to remember is that similarities abound. We could take each of the aforementioned characteristics of Eastern thought and show how each is manifest in Western thinking and vice versa. And no members of a cultural group all communicate in the same way, no matter how much they share a common background. Communication is so broad that it cannot be essentialized or confined within a single paradigm.

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In this text, we focus on communication theories as they have emerged in the Western discipline called communication or communication studies. We are interested in presenting (1) the theories that have been formative in the discipline; and (2) the contemporary evolutions of those theories. This is not to say that the perspectives developed in other areas of the world are not important; we simply cannot cover all of the traditions in one book. Increasingly, however, the theories in the discipline are cognizant of cultural and contextual factors of all kinds, suggesting a greater integration of diverse theories from many communication perspectives.

In a landmark article, Robert T. Craig proposes a vision for communication theory that takes a huge step toward unifying this rather disparate field and addressing its complexities.[23] Craig argues that communication will never be united by a single theory or group of theories. Theories will always reflect the diversity of practical ideas about communication in ordinary life, so we will always be presented with a multiplicity of approaches. Our goal cannot and should not be to seek a standard model that applies universally to any communication situation. If this impossible state of affairs were to happen, communication would become "a static field, a dead field."[24]

Instead, Craig argues, we must seek a different kind of coherence based on (1) a common understanding of the similarities and differences, or tension points, among theories; and (2) a commitment to manage these tensions through dialogue. Craig writes, "The goal should not be a state in which we have nothing to argue about, but one in which we better understand that we all have something very important to argue about."[25]

The first requirement for the field, according to Craig, is a common understanding of similarities and differences among theories. More than a list of similarities and differences, we must have a common idea of where and how theories coalesce and clash. We need a *metamodel*. The term *meta* means "higher" or "above," so a *metamodel* is a "model of models." The second requirement for coherence in the field is a definition of *theory*. Rather than viewing a theory as an explanation of a process, it should be seen as a statement or argument in favor of a particular approach. In other words, theories are a form of *discourse*. More precisely, theories are discourses about discourse, or *metadiscourse*.

As a student of communication theory, you will find these twin concepts useful in sorting out what this theory-making enterprise is all about. If you can find a useful metamodel, you will be able to make connections among theories, and if you see communication theory as metadiscourse, you will begin to understand the value of multiple perspectives in the field. In other words, communication theories will look less like a bunch of rocks laid out on tables in a geology laboratory and more like a dynamic computer model of the way the earth was formed.

As a basic premise for a metamodel, Craig says that communication is the primary process by which human life is experienced; communication *constitutes* reality. How we communicate about our experience itself forms or makes our experience. The many forms of experience are made in many forms of communication. People's meanings change from one group to another, from one setting to another, and from one time period to another because communication itself is dynamic across situations. Craig describes the importance of this thought to communication as a field: "Communication . . . is not a secondary phenomenon that can be explained by antecedent psychological, sociological, cultural, or economic factors; rather, communication itself is the primary, constitutive social process that explains all these other factors."[26]

Craig suggests that we move the same principle to another level. Theories are special forms of communication, so theories constitute, or make, an experience of communication. Theories communicate about communication, which is exactly what Craig means by metadiscourse. Different theories are different ways of "talking about" communication, each of which has its powers and limits. We need to acknowledge the constitutive power of theories and find a shared way to understand what various theories are designed

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to address and how they differ in their forms of address. Because every communication theory ultimately is a response to some aspect of communication encountered in everyday life, the dialogue within the field can focus on *what* and *how* various theories address the social world in which people live.

Craig describes seven traditional standpoints that provide different ways of talking about communication: (1) the rhetorical; (2) the semiotic; (3) the phenomenological; (4) the cybernetic; (5) the sociopsychological; (6) the sociocultural; and (7) the critical. These traditions are described in greater detail in Chapter 3 and constitute the frame we use to organize this book.

The Process of Inquiry in Communication

A Basic Model of Inquiry

A starting point for understanding communication as a field and its theories is the basic process of inquiry itself. Inquiry is the systematic study of experience that leads to understanding, knowledge, and theory. People engage in inquiry when they attempt to find out about something in an orderly way. The process of systematic inquiry involves three stages.[27] The first stage is asking questions. Gerald Miller and Henry Nicholson believe that inquiry is "nothing more . . . than the process of asking interesting, significant questions . . . and providing disciplined, systematic answers to them."[28] Questions can be of various types. Questions of *definition* call for concepts as answers, seeking to clarify what is observed or inferred: What is it? What will we call it? Questions of *fact* ask about properties and relationships in what is observed: What does it consist of? How does it relate to other things? Questions of *value* probe aesthetic, pragmatic, and ethical qualities of the observed: Is it beautiful? Is it effective? Is it good?

The second stage of inquiry is *observation*. Here, the scholar looks for answers by observing the phenomenon under investigation. Methods of observation vary significantly from one tradition to another. Some scholars observe by examining records and artifacts, others by personal involvement, others by using instruments and controlled experimentation, and others by interviewing people. Whatever method is used, the investigator employs some planned method for answering the questions posed about communication.

The third stage of inquiry is *constructing answers*. Here, the scholar attempts to define, describe, and explain—to make judgments and interpretations about what was observed. This stage is usually referred to as *theory*, and this stage is the focus of this book.

People often think of the stages of inquiry as linear, occurring one step at a time—first questions, then observations, and finally answers. But inquiry does not proceed in this fashion. Each stage affects and is affected by the others. Observations often stimulate new questions, and theories are challenged by both observations and questions. Theories lead to new questions, and observations are determined in part by theories. Inquiry, then, is more like running around a circle and back and forth between different points on it than walking in a straight line. Figure 1.1 illustrates the interaction among the stages of inquiry.

Types of Scholarship

The preceding section outlines the basic elements of inquiry, but it ignores important differences. Different types of inquiry ask different questions,

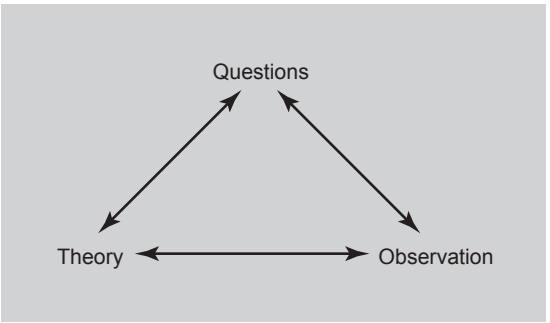

FIGURE 1.1

The Stages of Inquiry

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use different methods of observation, and lead to different kinds of theory. Methods of inquiry can be grouped into three broad forms of scholarship—scientific, humanistic, and social scientific.[29] Although these forms of scholarship share the common elements discussed in the previous section, they also have major differences.[30]

Scientific Scholarship. Science is often associated with objectivity, standardization, and generalizability. The scientist attempts to look at the world in such a way that all other observers, trained the same way and using the same methods, will see the same thing. Replications of a study should yield identical results. Standardization and replication are important in science because scientists assume that the world has observable form, and they view their task as discovering the world as it is. The world sits in wait of discovery, and the goal of science is to observe and explain the world as accurately as possible.

Because there is no absolute way to know how accurate observations are, the scientist must rely on agreement among observers. If all trained observers using the same method report the same results, the object is presumed to have been accurately observed. Because of the emphasis on discovering a knowable world, scientific methods are especially well suited to problems of nature.

In its focus on standardization and objectivity, science sometimes appears to be value free. Yet, this appearance may belie reality, as science is based on many implicit values. Humanistic scholarship is a tradition that more deliberately acknowledges the place of values in research.

Humanistic Scholarship. Whereas science is associated with objectivity, the humanities are associated with subjectivity. Science aims to standardize observation; the humanities seek creative interpretation. If the aim of science is to reduce human differences in what is observed, the aim of the humanities is to understand individual subjective response.[31] Most humanists are more interested in individual cases than generalized theory.

Science focuses on the discovered world, and the humanities focus on the discovering person. Science seeks consensus while the humanities seek alternative interpretations. Humanists often are suspicious of the claim that there is an immutable world to be discovered, and they tend not to separate the knower from the known. The classical humanistic position is that what one sees is largely determined by who one is. Because of its emphasis on the subjective response, humanistic scholarship is especially well suited to problems of art, personal experience, and values.

Science and the humanities are not so far apart that they never come together. Almost any program of research and theory building includes some aspects of both scientific and humanistic scholarship. At times the scientist is a humanist, using intuition, creativity, interpretation, and insight to understand the data collected or to take research in entirely new directions. Many of the great scientific discoveries were in fact the result of creative insight. Archimedes discovered how to measure the volume of liquid using displacement when he stepped into his bathtub; Alexander Fleming used, rather than threw away, the mold in the Petri dish—which, in fact, produced penicillin. Ironically, the scientist must be subjective in creating the methods that will eventually lead to objective observation, making research design a creative process. In turn, at times the humanist must be scientific, seeking facts that enable experience to be understood. As we will see in the next section, the point where science leaves off and the humanities begin is not always clear.

Social-Scientific Scholarship. A third form of scholarship is the social sciences. Although many social scientists see this kind of research as an extension of the natural sciences in that it uses methods borrowed from the sciences, social science is actually a very different kind of inquiry.[32] Paradoxically, it includes elements of both science and the humanities but is different from both.[33]

In seeking to observe and interpret patterns of human behavior, social-science scholars make human beings the object of study. If human

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behavior patterns do, in fact, exist, then observation must be as objective as possible. In other words, the social scientist, like the natural scientist, must establish consensus on the basis of what is observed. Once behavioral phenomena are accurately observed, they must be explained or interpreted—and here's where the humanistic part comes in. Interpreting is complicated by the fact that the object of observation—the human subject—is an active, knowing being, unlike objects in the natural world. The question becomes, Can "scientific" explanations of human behavior take place without consideration of the "humanistic" knowledge of the observed person? This question is the central philosophical issue of social science and has provoked considerable concern and debate across disciplines.[34] In the past, social scientists believed that scientific methods alone would suffice to uncover the mysteries of human experience, but today many realize that a strong humanistic element is needed as well.

Communication involves understanding how people behave in creating, exchanging, and interpreting messages. Consequently, communication inquiry makes use of the range of methods, from scientific to humanistic.[35] The theories covered in this book vary significantly in the extent to which they use scientific, social-scientific, or humanistic elements.

How Scholars Work

Although standards vary from one academic community to another, scholars follow a fairly predictable pattern of inquiry and theory development. First, a scholar or group of scholars becomes curious about a topic. Sometimes the topic relates to something personal in the scholar's own life. Sometimes it is an extension of what the individual has been reading in the literature. Often a conversation with mentors or colleagues provokes an interest in a particular subject. Sometimes professors are challenged by questions that come up in class.

Because they genuinely care about communication, communication scholars are motivated to investigate subjects of interest to them; their professional advancement may depend on such investigations as well. These scholars must develop their curiosity into research topics of their choice for their doctoral dissertations. They often cannot get pay raises, tenure, or promotion without engaging in research and theory building. Many other incentives exist as well, including the ability to get grant money, travel, be recognized as leaders in the field, earn awards, and so forth.

Thus, while the theory-making process begins with curiosity about a topic, it does not end there. The results of reading, observing, and thinking—of scholarly investigation—must be shared with others. On the most informal level, scholars share their work with students. They may bring some of their latest work into the classroom as a lecture or basis for discussion, which can be helpful in refining ideas. Graduate students are aware of this, but undergraduates often do not realize that their professors "test" their theoretical ideas in classes. In the process of preparing a lecture on a topic, the weaknesses as well as the strengths of the argument become apparent.

Ultimately, a scholar's work must go out for peer review. One of the first formal theory "tests" a scholar uses is the convention paper. The researcher writes a paper and submits it to a professional association, so the paper can be presented at a regional or national meeting. Most of these convention submissions are reviewed by a panel of peers. This peer review can help scholars determine if they are on the right track. Universities usually encourage professors to submit papers by agreeing to pay their travel expenses if they have a paper accepted.

When a paper is given at a convention, the presentation permits at least two other forms of peer assessment. Often a designated critic delivers comments about several papers to the audience right after the papers are presented; this is the most formal kind of critique. Less formal feedback consists of the comments that colleagues make after hearing the presentation—during the question-and-answer session following the paper presentation, in the hallway after the session, later that evening in the hotel bar, or at the airport. Colleagues may even enjoy a phone call or e-mail exchange about their work after the convention is over.

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Conventions are very valuable for scholars as an initial testing ground for ideas. Not only do convention attendees have the opportunity to hear the most recent research but the presenters can refine their work based on the reactions they receive. Often a group of researchers will present various iterations of their work several times at conventions before they submit the work for publication.

Two forms of publication are most valued in the academic community. The first is a journal article, and the second is a monograph, or book. Literally thousands of academic journals are published around the world, and every field, no matter how small, has at least one (and usually several) journals. A glance through the bibliography of this book will reveal several of the most important journals in the communication field. One of the most important publications for introducing communication theories is a journal *Communication Theory*. Indeed, if you scan the notes of each chapter of this book, you will see just how important this journal has become. But many other journals are also highly recognized, including, for example, *Human Communication Research, Critical Studies in Media Communication,* and *Communication Monographs.*

Members of the communication field subscribe to these journals, use their contents as background for their own research, and learn about the latest and best developments in the field. Usually, the articles in a journal are refereed, meaning that they are formally reviewed and judged by a panel of peers for quality. Since only the best articles are published, the majority of papers submitted to journals do not appear in print. This rigorous form of review is the primary force establishing what is taken seriously within an academic community.[36]

Since no universal, objective scale can be found, peers must judge potential publications subjectively. Evaluation is always a matter of judgment, and consensus about the value of a piece of scholarship is rare. Just as a group of students might disagree about whether their professor is a good or bad teacher, scholars also disagree about the merits of particular research and theory. The references and footnotes in essays show the history of research and theory in that area. These notes are an excellent place to start researching a topic; they show the work that is valued in that area of the discipline.

Through this process of convention presentation and journal publication, the scholarship considered most interesting, profound, useful, or progressive "bubbles up" and forms the body of recognized work within the community of scholars. As this work develops, various scholars begin to develop more formal explanations that tie the work together. Initially, these explanations may be mere interpretations of research findings, but as theorists give more convention papers and publish more articles on their work, the explanations offered by the other scholars involved in this line of research become more formal and codified.

Many scholarly projects find their way to another level of publication—the scholarly book. After a group of scholars develops a line of research and theory in some detail by presenting numerous convention presentations and publishing journal articles, they may publish a book that provides the theory and its various permutations in one volume. In contrast to textbooks written primarily to help students learn the content of certain courses, scholarly treatises are published for the benefit of other scholars; such volumes serve as a convenient way to make available the results of a major research program. And once a theory—or emerging theory—is identified and codified, other scholars may use it to guide additional research, which adds, in turn, to the body of research and theory accepted as standard within the community.

One final level of publication further elaborates a theory. After a group of scholars has established a name for itself, the scholars are often invited to write about and summarize their work in edited volumes—books of essays written by a group of scholars about a particular subject. This form of publication is very useful because it helps students and professors access the current state of theory in a particular area of the field.

In the end, then, theories are made. Scholars label the concepts in the theory, decide what

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connections or relationships to feature, determine how to organize the theory, and give the theory a name. They then use the theory to talk about what they experience. The creation and development of a theory is a human social activity: people create it, test it, and evaluate it. As a social activity, theory making is done within scholarly communities that share a way of knowing and a set of common practices. Ultimately, the community of scholars or practitioners decides what works for them and what theories prevail. Because the communities vary tremendously, they differ in what they consider to be valid and valuable. A theory widely adopted by one community may be rejected entirely by another. So creating a theory is largely a question of persuading some community that the theory fits and has utility for its purposes.

A body of theory is really just a snapshot in time. It provides a brief glance at a moment in the evolving history of ideas within a community of scholars. The body of theory helps members of the community identify their primary areas of interest and work; it brings them together as a community and provides a set of standards for how scholarly work should proceed. The "body" metaphor is good because it captures the qualities of growth, change, development, aging, and renewal that characterize theory. The theories scholars come to respect and use in graduate school, for example, will not be the same set of theories they use in mid-career, and probably will not resemble very closely what is valued later in their careers. In Chapter 2, we will define *theory* more specifically and discuss the particular processes at the heart of theory construction.

NOTES

1. For the importance of studying diverse theories, see Robert T. Craig, "Communication Theory as a Field," *Communication Theory* 9 (1999): 119–61.
2. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 111.
3. There are 126 definitions of communication listed in Frank E. X. Dance and Carl E. Larson, *The Functions of Human Communication: A Theoretical Approach* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1976), Appendix A.
4. Theodore Clevenger, Jr., "Can One Not Communicate?: A Conflict of Models," *Communication Studies* 42 (1991): 351.
5. Frank E. X. Dance, "The 'Concept' of Communication," *Journal of Communication* 20 (1970): 201–10.
6. Jürgen Ruesch, "Technology and Social Communication," in *Communication Theory and Research,* ed. L. Thayer (Springfield, IL: Thomas, 1957), 462.
7. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1986), 460.
8. Gerald R. Miller, "On Defining Communication: Another Stab," *Journal of Communication* 16 (1966): 92.
9. F. A. Cartier, "The President's Letter," *Journal of Communication* 9 (1959): 5.
10. John B. Hoben, "English Communication at Colgate Re-examined," *Journal of Communication* 4 (1954): 77.
11. Bernard Berelson and Gary Steiner, *Human Behavior* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1964), 254.
12. Dance, "The 'Concept' of Communication," 210.
13. Peter A. Andersen, "When One Cannot Not Communicate: A Challenge to Motley's Traditional Communication Postulates," *Communication Studies* 42 (1991): 309.
14. See, for example, John Stewart, *Language as Articulate Contact: Toward a Post-Semiotic Philosophy of Communication* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 33–101; W. Barnett Pearce and Karen A. Foss, "The Historical Context of Communication as a Science," in *Human Communication: Theory and Research,* ed. Gordon L. Dahnke and Glen W. Clatterbuck (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1990), 1-20; Nancy Harper, *Human Communication Theory: The History of a Paradigm* (Rochelle Park, NJ: Hayden, 1979).
15. W. Barnett Pearce, *Communication and the Human Condition* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989).
16. This brief history is based on Jesse G. Delia, "Communication Research: A History," in *Handbook of Communication Science,* ed. Charles R. Berger and Steven H. Chaffee (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1987), 20–98. See also Donald G. Ellis, *Crafting Society: Ethnicity, Class, and*

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Communication Theory (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1999), 16–19; Gustav W. Friedrich and Don M. Boileau, "The Communication Discipline," in *Teaching Communication*, ed. Anita L. Vangelisti, John A. Daly, and Gustav Friedrich (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1999), 3–13; John Durham Peters, "Tangled Legacies," *Journal of Communication* 46 (1996): 85–87; and Everett M. Rogers, *A History of Communication Study: A Biographical Approach* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

17. The multidisciplinary nature of the study of communication is examined by Craig, "Communication Theory as a Field"; see also Stephen W. Littlejohn, "An Overview of the Contributions to Human Communication Theory from Other Disciplines," in *Human Communication Theory: Comparative Essays*, ed. Frank E. X. Dance (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 243–85; and W. Barnett Pearce, "Scientific Research Methods in Communication Studies and Their Implications for Theory and Research," in *Speech Communication in the 20th Century*, ed. Thomas W. Benson (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), 255–81.
18. Dean Barnlund, *Interpersonal Communication: Survey and Studies* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1968), v.
19. Regional associations include the Western States Communication Association, the Central States Communication Association, the Southern States Communication Association, and the Eastern States Communication Association. The Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender and the Organization for Research on Women and Communication are two specialized organizations focused on issues of gender. The journals published by the National Communication Association include the *Quarterly Journal of Speech, Communication Monographs, Critical Studies in Media Communication, Text and Performance Quarterly, Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies,* and *Communication Education.* The journals of the International Communication Association include *Human Communication Research, Communication Theory, Journal of Communication,* and *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*.
20. For more about distinctions between communication theory in the U. S. and Europe, see Robert Fortner, "Mediated Communication Theory," in *Building Communication Theories: A Socio/Cultural Approach,* ed. Fred L. Casmir (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1994), 209–40.
21. See D. Lawrence Kincaid, *Communication Theory: Eastern and Western Perspectives* (San Diego: Academic, 1987); Peter R. Monge, "Communication Theory for a Globalizing World," in *Communication: Views from the Helm for the 21st Century*, ed. Judith S. Trent (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1998), 3–7; Wimal Dissanayake, *Communication Theory: The Asian Perspective* (Singapore: Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Center, 1988); Wimal Dissanayake, "The Need for the Study of Asian Approaches to Communication," *Media Asia* 13 (1986): 6–13; Guo-Ming Chen, "Toward Transcultural Understanding: A Harmony Theory of Chinese Communication," in *Transcultural Realities: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Cross-Cultural Relations,* ed. V. H. Milhouse, M. K. Asante, and P. O. Nwosu (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001), 55–70.
22. For summaries of Asante's work, see Molefi K. Asante, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1988); and Molefi K. Asante, "An Afrocentric Communication Theory," in *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader,* ed. John L. Lucaites, Celeste M. Condit, and Sally Caudill (New York: Guilford Press, 1999), 552–62. For Miike's theory of Asiacentricity, see Yoshitaka Miike, "Toward an Alternative Metatheory of Human Communication: An Asiacentric Vision," in *Intercultural Communication Studies* 12 (2003): 39–63; "Rethinking Humanity, Culture, and Communication: Asiacentric Critiques and Contributions," *Human Communication* 7 (2004): 69–82; "Theorizing Culture and Communication in the Asian Context: An Assumptive Foundation," *Intercultural Communication Studies* 11 (2002): 1–21; and "Asian Approaches to Human Communication: A Selected Bibliography," *Intercultural Communication Studies,* 12 (2003): 209–18.
23. Craig, "Communication Theory as a Field." A similar effort is offered by James A. Anderson, *Communication Theory: Epistemological Foundations* (New York: Guilford, 1996).
24. Craig, "Communication Theory as a Field," 123.
25. Craig, "Communication Theory as a Field," 124.
26. Craig, "Communication Theory as a Field," 126.
27. The process of inquiry is described in Gerald R. Miller and Henry Nicholson, *Communication Inquiry* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1976).
28. Miller and Nicholson, *Communication Inquiry,* ix. See also Don W. Stacks and Michael B. Salwen, "Integrating Theory and Research: Starting with Questions," in *An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research,* ed. Michael B. Salwen and Don W. Stacks (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1996), 3–14.

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29. An excellent discussion of scholarship can be found in Ernest G. Bormann, *Theory and Research in the Communicative Arts* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965). See also Nathan Glazer, "The Social Sciences in Liberal Education," in *The Philosophy of the Curriculum*, ed. Sidney Hook (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1975), 145–58; James L. Jarrett, *The Humanities and Humanistic Education* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1973); Gerald Holton, "Science, Science Teaching, and Rationality," in *The Philosophy of the Curriculum*, ed. Sidney Hook (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1975), 101–108.
30. See, for example, C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and a Second Look* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).
31. James A. Diefenbeck, *A Celebration of Subjective Thought* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984).
32. See, for example, Charles R. Berger and Steven H. Chaffee, "The Study of Communication as a Science," in *Handbook of Communication Science*, ed. Charles R. Berger and Steven H. Chaffee (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1987), 15–19. For an interesting discussion of the scientific nature of communication research, see Glenn G. Sparks, W. James Potter, Roger Cooper, and Michel Dupagne, "Is Media Research Prescientific?" *Communication Theory* 5 (1995): 273–89.
33. See, for example, Robert T. Craig, "Why Are There So *Many* Communication Theories?" *Journal of Communication* 43 (1993): 26–33; Hubert M. Blalock, *Basic Dilemmas in the Social Sciences* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1984), 15; Anthony Giddens, *Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 133; Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and Its Relation to Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958).
34. See, for example, Klaus Krippendorff, "Conversation or Intellectual Imperialism in Comparing Communication (Theories)," *Communication Theory* 3 (1993): 252–66; Donald W. Fiske and Richard A. Shweder, "Introduction: Uneasy Social Science," in *Metatheory in Social Science: Pluralisms and Subjectivities*, ed. Donald W. Fiske and Richard A. Shweder (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 1–18; Kenneth J. Gergen, *Toward Transformation in Social Knowledge* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1982).
35. This position is developed in Thomas B. Farrell, "Beyond Science: Humanities Contributions to Communication Theory," in *Handbook of Communication Science*, ed. Charles R. Berger and Steven H. Chaffee (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1987), 123–39.
36. Publishing in journals is not an unbiased process. Based on the peer review process, the editor's overall judgment, disciplinary trends and interests, and the like, sometimes very good essays are overlooked and some of lesser quality are accepted. For an interesting discussion of this process, see Carole Blair, Julie R. Brown, and Leslie A. Baxter, "Disciplining the Feminine," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80 (1994): 383–409.

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