

Chapter 1

Social Construction in Communication: Re-Constituting the Conversation

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Abstract

In this essay, we offer a response to Shotter and Gergen's (1994) proposal in *Communication Yearbook* for social construction (SC) as a framework for communication by reconstituting its impact in our field. We provide an overview of social construction research in the communication discipline to illustrate the ways in which scholars have developed specifically communication-oriented SC approaches. After wresting SC from the realm of epistemology and placing it into that of practical theory, we select three areas of research and praxis where social constructionist thinking about communication makes a dramatic difference in thinking and practice. These areas-- gender, crisis, and therapy-- allow us to move beyond the confines of an American academic forum and engage the concerns of an audience of practitioners in a more global exchange. Additionally, these three topics give us the opportunity to address relevant and still pressing critiques that we take to be consequential to both SC and communication-- materiality, agency, and critical applications of practical theory that allow social construction scholars to speak politically on matters heretofore considered extradiscursive. A section on future directions for and challenges to social constructionism concludes our reflection.

Chapter 2

Theorizing Resistance in a Global Context: Processes, Strategies, and Tactics in Communication Scholarship

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Abstract

In recent years, we have witnessed an increase in scholarship documenting the relevance of theorizing resistance in communication scholarship in globalization contexts. Historically, communication scholars have studied resistance in organizational communication, public relations, health communication, gender, and rhetoric. Our review of this research documents the common threads among distinct yet interdependent lines of scholarship, and we identify additional ways in which communication theorists have explored resistance (and processes for communicating resistance) in the contexts of power, ideology, and hegemony. We conclude our chapter by discussing the need to theorize power, subordination, and resistance as complex and intertwined in light of globalization and unfold in the complicated terrains of transnational hegemony. In so doing, we suggest an overarching framework for locating studies of resistance in the realm of globalization politics and connecting resistance theories in communication to the possibilities for transformative politics.

Chapter 3.

Theoretical Contributions of Interpretive and Critical Research in Health Communication

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Abstract

Health communication researchers have made great strides in developing theoretically-grounded research, resulting in more complex understandings of communication in health contexts. Integral to these developments has been the burgeoning use of interpretive and critical perspectives. Yet, we still lack a broader description and assessment of the contributions of interpretive and critical research to theory and practice in health communication. Such an

assessment is important, given that the nature of these contributions differ at times from post-positivist research (in some cases overlapping, in others acting complementarily, and still others antagonistically). Thus, in this essay, we describe the unique elements of interpretive and critical contributions in the extant literature and assess these contributions in order to identify ways in which they can be strengthened. Although we primarily draw on U.S. literature, this scholarship comprises interdisciplinary, international, multi-methodological, and cross-cultural research in an array of communication contexts (intra and interpersonal, small group, organizational, mass-mediated). Thus, this chapter not only provides a comprehensive review of the ways in which interpretive/critical approaches have been utilized in health communication research across a range of global contexts and concerns; it also builds an over-arching argument with regard to the contribution of interpretive and critical approaches that is germane to the study of communication in general.

Chapter 4

Meaningful Work and Personal/Social Well-Being: Organizational Communication Engages the Meanings of Work

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Abstract

This essay argues for a broadening of organizational communication scholarship through the consideration of meanings of work including meaningful work. First, we define meaningful work especially within the frame of a broader examination of meanings of work. Along the way, we consider the concept of meaningful work within a constellation of terms that includes job enrichment, work-life balance, career path, leisure, life satisfaction, and so forth. Second, we consider the historical-cultural contexts for our understanding of meaningful work. Here we treat both synchronic and diachronic perspectives on the meaning of work and bring into view matters of difference, such as race, nationality, gender, and class, particularly to the extent that the extant literature treats these dimensions. Third, we consider contemporary discourses in and around workplaces concerning meaningful work--especially in advanced industrial societies. In particular, we interpret recent trends in work and workplace restructuring and how stakeholders discuss them in various parts of the world. Although this review can in no way be comprehensive, we try to identify prevailing themes in the popular and quasi-popular literatures on the subject. Fourth, we argue for a communication-based perspective on meaningful work as distinct from more familiar sociological and psychological perspectives. Here we draw upon extant and projected research in the areas of interpersonal/family communication, health communication, and religious/spiritual communication, in addition to the more usual emphasis on organizational communication. Fifth and finally, we point to three main avenues for communication research into this important area, including relationships between public discourses about work and work-related identities, re-conceptualizations of work beyond paid employment, and ways that organizational cultures can foster meaningful work.

Chapter 5

Reconceptualizing Virtual Teaming from a Constitutive Perspective: Review, Redirection, and Research Agenda

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Abstract

Despite the growing importance of virtual teams in modern organizations and the fundamental role played by discursive practices in enacting such teams across time, space, and cultural

boundaries, the burgeoning literature on virtuality and virtual teams tends to be predominantly confined to management, computer science, and information systems journals; whereas, communication research has paid scant attention to virtual team interaction and processes. As a result, such research tends to take a functionalist approach, which regards communication as a variable, rather than examining how virtual teamwork is constituted through communicative practices. This chapter synthesizes the existing research on virtual teams and provides a critical reassessment of the literature from a constitutive perspective. We propose a conceptual framework that situates communication processes centrally as an alternative to the dominant inputs-processes-outcomes model and suggest a programmatic agenda of future research for communication scholars across a variety of areas--organizational, interpersonal, group, mediated, and intercultural communication.

Chapter 6

“Oxygen of Publicity” and “Lifeblood of Liberty”: Communication Scholarship on Mass Media Coverage of Terrorism for the Twenty-First Century

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Abstract

Scholarly literature concerning terrorism and the media spans decades and disciplines with a dramatic increase post 9/11. This state of the art review assesses strengths, limitations, and gaps in recent scholarship on mainstream mass mediated news coverage of terrorism and outlines an agenda for research that cuts across traditional context-based divisions of communication research. It begins by synthesizing various conceptions of terrorism as communication and discussing models of terrorism’s relationship to the media. It then considers empirical studies of media content in television, print, internet, and multimodal contexts. Finally, it identifies the need for expanded studies of multi-modal international news coverage of terrorism that cut across interpersonal, organizational, religious, and new media subfields of the communication discipline.

Chapter 7

Exposing the Spectrum of Whiteness: Rhetorical Conceptions of White Absolutism

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Abstract

This essay continues a practice introduced by critical communication scholars to produce insightful analyses of whiteness. Specifically, this essay synthesizes a body of rhetorical studies in which rhetors explicitly offered ideal white racial identities and cultural norms to establish and justify white supremacy in Western societies. I call this discourse “white absolutism,” which consists of absolutist religious and scientific appeals, tribalism and scapegoating. White absolutism centers white masculinity and justifies restoring white patriarchal heterosexual control by negating black, nonwhite and feminine archetypes that offer motives to conquer, control, and kill nonwhites. White absolutism still exists in coded and postmodern forms, and its scholarly analyses have generated four important areas of communication research: (1) cyberspace hate rhetoric, (2) cultural (re)productions of white superiority, (3) historical studies of whiteness, and (4) new, redemptive and innocent white identity studies.

Chapter 8

Mapping Media Literacy: Key Concepts and Future Directions

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Abstract

This chapter examines how different researchers define media literacy; i.e., what people need to know about the media and their use in order to be deemed media literate. As opposed to previous reviews, this chapter attempts to structure the multitude of definitions using a schematic representation of media production and use. Such a construction provides a thematic overview of diverse definitions of media literacy. Thus, it specifies key aspects of the media and their use in terms of media literacy and corresponding emphasis in the media literacy literature. This analysis reveals that the vast majority of researchers consider understanding how media content is created to be a central aspect of media literacy. Scholars treat the ability to handle the media in a constructive manner as far less important, and the media literacy literature virtually ignores the fact that media producers are prone to media influence. Furthermore, this chapter indicates that little has changed in the field of media literacy in the past few decades, with the majority of the dimensions of media literacy present in definitions utilized in the 1970s and 1980s. Finally, this chapter also identifies the features of media literacy that require additional investigation, such as the relationship between media literacy and Internet-based technologies.

Chapter 9

Explaining Variations in the Effects of Supportive Messages: A Dual-Process Framework

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Abstract

Although some recipients benefit from exposure to sophisticated and sensitive support messages, the effects of these messages are moderated (sometimes substantially) by characteristics of the recipient, the helper, and the situation. Thus, enhancing the success of helpers who provide support requires a comprehensive explanation of why support messages are effective in some circumstances, but less effective in others. In order to understand why supportive messages work, we must understand how these messages are *worked on* (i.e., processed) by their recipients. This chapter uses a recently developed dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes to explain how and why multiple variables moderate the effects of supportive messages. We provide a comprehensive review of published research findings concerning the demographic, personality, cognitive, and situational moderators of supportive messages and show these moderators can be interpreted as (a) factors influencing the message recipient's ability and/or motivation to systematically process these messages, or (b) environmental cues that quickly trigger responses to the message.