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Threads of Intersection and Distinction: Joining an Ongoing Conversation within Organizational Communication Research

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In any given discipline, there seems to be an ongoing battle of definition, a certain degree of consternation about who we are and where we fit. In this review we argue that the discipline of organizational communication is no different. In fact, journals and handbooks have published several special issues that have attempted to tackle this same challenge. These moments of identity crisis hold significance in both their frequency—in many ways they mark time as it passes—and function—they serve as markers of trends and currents of thinking between and amongst scholars.

It should come as no surprise to note that academic disciplines spend so much time considering their identities. The context of a constantly changing society virtually demands refining a disciplinary identity. With economic crises, an explosion in technological advancement, and increased awareness of our existence within a global community, disciplines like organizational communication must consider how they fit within the larger social structure and systems to remain current, relevant, and significant. Therefore, it is not only salient but also essential to occasionally take a moment to step back and survey the research and pub-

lications within a discipline to discern how that discipline's identity evolves along with society.

As a construct of organizational communication, identity is that which makes an organization distinct. Yet at the same time, establishing an organization's identity is not simply about what makes one different, but it is also about what makes one the same as others with whom the organization engages and interacts. In the end, identity makes one the same but different. In this essay, we take up the identity question once again—but in a renewed way—approaching the question as joining an ongoing conversation and seeking to position organizational communication as simultaneously the same and different from other disciplines in communication and the same and different from ongoing conversations on key issues and topics that shape our world. Toward this end, we take up the questions of identity as the field of organizational communication has traditionally addressed it over the past decade, then we look to points of intersection in current research both with traditional disciplines and with current topics, trends, and issues. Finally, we acknowledge where we find the points of distinction that lead the conversation down a slightly different path.

1. Organizing Disciplinary Identity: A Framework

Definitions at their heart are statements of identity (Gioia, 1998). As such, seeking to delineate research trends involves at its essence an act of identity construction. Disciplines construct their identities through the research, publication and commentaries that comprise the field. That said, in reviewing organizational communication literature, by definition we seek to understand the identity of organizational communication as a discipline. To be certain, the task of defining any scholarly field or discipline presents a

daunting challenge. However, in many ways, a review of organizational communication research with an eye toward understanding what constitutes “organizational communication” seems particularly well suited for a framework revolving around identity. We situate this review around identity because, as with all fields, organizational communication is evolving and changing as society changes. In addition, identity itself forms a key area of inquiry within organizational communication.

In order to use organizational identity (in this sense) as a guiding framework for this review, we must first ask to what extent we might consider an academic discipline as an “organization” in need of an identity. This move requires adopting a particular understanding of the concept of “organization,” one that takes a stance of organization as a verb—or rather as a process. Drawing from Karl Weick’s *Social Psychology of Organizing* (1979), an orientation toward communication as constitutive of organizations marks, in part, organizational communication in the past decade (see Deetz, 2001). This shift in perspective opens space for considering organizational communication beyond the contexts of organizations as containers (Smith, 1993; Smith & Turner, 1995). This leads to an understanding of organizations as something other than physical structures. Instead organizations become particular patterns of interactions (Cheney, Christensen, Zorn, & Ganesh, 2004). In this light, disciplines are indeed particular organizations with particular identity narratives.

While we have long associated identity with individuals, with increasing frequency organizational communication scholars recognize that organizations themselves have particular identities (e.g., Cheney & Christensen, 2001; Pratt & Foreman, 2000). Organizational members actively seek to communicate a particular identity to both internal and external audiences. The most often cited definition of organizational communication comes from Albert and Whetten (1985) who suggest that an organization’s identity consists of the statement of what is central, distinct, and enduring about the organization. This, largely discursive, perspective on identity comes from the view that identity acts as both the medium and outcome of discursive acts (Kuhn & Nelson, 2002). The research in any given area constitutes a particular discourse about that discipline. These discourses serve as the material resources from which we might begin to understand the identity of the discipline.

A. Identifying organizational communication

The discipline of organizational communication does not differ from the many things whose identities are contested and constantly in flux (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Scott & Lane, 2000). Scholars have devoted a number of manuscripts, chapters, and journal issues to the question of the nature of organizational communication as a discipline. We offer here a brief history of organizational communication along with an outline of a few of the key perspectives on organizational communication as a discipline.

Redding (1985) contends that the move to adopt and use the term organizational communication marked the most significant conceptual shift for the field. The use of the term organizational communication, which Redding attributes to the Organizational Communication Conference of 1976 at the Marshall Space Center, repositioned the study of organizational communication in two ways. First, the use of the term moved away from viewing organizations solely as business or industrial entities. Second, it broadened our perspective on communication beyond training and the development of speaking skills. Redding and Tompkins (1988) saw organizational communication coming from concepts and proto-theories that derived from three primary sources: (a) traditional rhetorical doctrine, (b) the old version of “human relations” theory, and (c) various components of management-organization theory. From here, many of the goals of this discipline have formed. The discipline has continued to evolve from this point, adopting Weick’s conception of organizing (1979), integrating the interpretive turn (Weick & Daft, 1983), incorporating a systems perspective, and finally addressing a critical perspective. For complete histories see Meisenbach and McMillan (2006).

While these histories begin to sketch out a clearer sense of organizational communication’s identity, scholars have sought to construct an identity and to establish organizational communication as a discipline through a series of models, classification, schemes, and key problematics. Deetz (2001) suggests that in seeking to understand the foundations of organizational communication we must recognize that each scheme gives us a particular means of “perceiving, thinking about, and talking about organizational life” (p. 6). In offering his scheme for organizational communication he looks at paradigms of research; in this he offers four discourses of organizational communication (normative, interpretive, critical, and dialogic). In contrast, Krone, Jablin, and Putnam (1987) offer four somewhat functional categories for understanding organizational communication research: mechanistic, psychological, symbolic-interpretive, and systems-interactive. Conrad (1999) offers yet another perspective that suggests we best understand organizational communication by understanding the relationship between an organization’s structure and the action of individuals within these structures. Putnam, Phillips, and Chapman (1996) propose a series of metaphors for understanding organizational

communication (conduit, lens, linkage, performance, symbol, voice, and discourse). Finally, Mumby and Stohl (1996) provide an often-cited set of key problematics in organizational communication (voice, rationality, organization, and organization society).

A number of key texts and expositions on organizational communication have taken up Mumby and Stohl's problematics. However, as noted, identity construction is an iterative process and the process is ongoing. And so, in the last 10 years, key themes in publications in the area of organizational communication focus on determining the nature of organizational communication, interrogate the role of the organizational communication scholar, and question the place for engaged scholarship in organizational communication (e.g., Allen, 2002; Cheney, 2007; Jones, Watson, Gardner, & Gallois, 2004).

B. Organizational communication as difference and sameness

While much of the discussion on organizational identity focuses on identity construction processes as a boundary setting process (Christensen & Cheney, 1994), Cheney and his colleagues point out the extent to which, historically, identity as a concept finds its roots in an understanding of sameness. From this historical vantage the community ascribed identity onto an individual. That is, the community was needed in order to fully understand the identity of the individual. In this vein, organizational identity functions at the

same time as a statement of difference ("the unique") and sameness ("the held in common"). Indeed, in terms of establishing an organizational identity understandable in a broader context, organizations need other organizations. We define one organization against the identity of other organizations. And so, we need definitions of other disciplines to add clarity to any definition of organizational communication.

To date, most of the writing that seeks to set out a definition of organizational communication has focused on difference—for example, Mumby and Stohl's problematics focus on what makes organizational communication different from other communication disciplines. We agree on this useful and necessary step in understanding the identity of organizational communication. Yet, at the same time, we wish to heed Cheney's call to remember identity contains within it a sense of sameness. We will use the sameness/difference dichotomy as a means for organizing this literature review.

Traditionally, literature reviews may not subscribe to a particular method. However, in an attempt to identify key points of intersection with other disciplines and primary points of distinction from these same disciplines and to discern organizational communication's trends from a vantage point other than our own direct experience, we sought to systematically review work in organizational communication over the past 12 years (1998–2009). We searched the indexes of all of the ICA and NCA affiliated (national and

Journal	Publisher
<i>Human Communication Research</i>	International Communication Association
<i>Communication Theory</i>	International Communication Association
<i>Journal of Communication</i>	International Communication Association
<i>Journal of Computer Mediated Communication</i>	International Communication Association
<i>Communication Monographs</i>	National Communication Association
<i>Journal of Applied Communication Research</i>	National Communication Association
<i>Communication and Critical / Cultural Studies</i>	National Communication Association
<i>Communication Research Reports</i>	Eastern Communication Association
<i>Communication Quarterly</i>	Eastern Communication Association
<i>Western Journal of Communication</i>	Western States Communication Association
<i>Communication Studies</i>	Central States Communication Association
<i>Communication Research</i>	Sage
<i>Journal of Management</i>	Sage
<i>Journal of Business Communication</i>	Sage
<i>Management Communication Quarterly</i>	Sage
<i>Journal of Business and Psychology</i>	Springer

Table 1. Index of Reviewed Journals (1998-2009)

regional) journals during this time period along with *Management Communication Quarterly*, *Journal of Business Communication*, and the *Journal of Business and Psychology*, seeking to identify research that focused on topics traditionally associated with organizational communication and to locate articles published by scholars who traditionally identify as organizational communication scholars. (See Table 1 on page 6 for the complete list.) While we sought to be thorough, we recognize the necessary incompleteness of our catalogue and the certain degree of subjectivity that arises when we seek to draw such boundaries. After we identified the articles, we examined the topics, issues, and discussions to discern themes that emerged. As we read, re-read, grouped and regrouped this body, we did so against the backdrop of the principle that we use to frame this discussion: the areas of

intersection between this set of organizational communication materials and other areas of communication research (i.e., other communication disciplines) and the points where the perspectives point to distinctions. In what follows we provide an overview of the points of intersection and areas of distinction in turn. Our goal here is not to be comprehensive in addressing every bit of research that has been published. Rather, we seek to provide an overview of the types of research done across the discipline in the past 12 years. In presenting these points of distinction, we provide a catalogue and description of the topics, issues, and kinds of research that has been conducted most recently, stopping short of examining the details of each finding. In essence, we seek to provide a map of the landscape of organizational communication research from a broad and expansive viewpoint.

2. Identity in Sameness: Organizational Communication's Intersection with Subdisciplines of Communication Studies

In adopting a view of identity construction rooted in the recognition that identity entails both sameness and difference and situated within a systems perspective, a number of intersections not surprisingly appear between organizational communication research over the past 12 years and communication theories and perspectives associated with the larger communication discipline as a whole. First, research over the past 12 year reveals connections between specific subdisciplines of communication and organizational communication. Second, the review of literature demonstrated the degree to which organizational communication scholars grapple with some issues and topics that have universally captivated the imagination of communication scholars across the disciplines.

As we surveyed research in organizational communication, we discovered streams of research that intersect with several key subdisciplines of communication (e.g., rhetorical communication, interpersonal communication, and critical/cultural studies of communication). These intersections point to a first key aspect of the identity of organizational communication as a discipline—its solid situation within the communication discipline as a whole. All communication research ultimately has an interest in interaction and meaning. Rather than focusing on drawing borders between organizational communication and other areas

of communication, recent trends in research suggest a foregrounding of commonalities. This itself clearly reveals the interdisciplinary potential of organizational communication.

A. Organizational communication and rhetoric & discourse studies

Identifying interactions between rhetorical studies and organizational communication proves an easy task. As Meisenbach and McMillan (2006) note, a rhetorical perspective on organizational communication has existed since the inception of organizational communication as a distinct area of communication study. However, many scholars feared that a focus on organizational rhetoric had stagnated. But it seems that the tide has turned as recent research includes a resurgence in rhetorical perspectives. In this, organizational communication scholars have taken up rhetorical devices as a particular object of study and further make use of the tools of rhetorical analysis as a mode of inquiry. A series of articles in 2008 (Conrad & Malphurs, 2008; Hartelius & Browning, 2008; Whittle, Mueller, & Mangan, 2008) took up the question of rhetoric as a particularly salient perspective for understanding managerial perspectives.

The use of rhetoric from a management perspective stands in contrast to perhaps a greater understand-

ing of organizational life from a rhetorical perspective, which comes from surveying the research done in the area using particular rhetorical tools. Scholars have examined topics that range from exploring maternity discourse using Burke's classic pentad (Meisenbach, 2008), to understanding how organizational rumors might be understood within the context of guilt and purification (Scheibel, 1999), to addressing workplace bullying by analyzing associated metaphors (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2006), to examining labor unions' uses of rhetorical strategies to advance their causes (Brimeyer, Eaker, & Clair, 2004).

While focusing on organizational rhetoric is a valid endeavor in its own right, the past 12 years have yielded a few particular focus points. First, organizational communication scholars look to narrative as a means of considering how organizational members frame meanings and establish identities for both individuals and the organizations themselves. Lucas and Buzzanell (2004) provide an exemplar of this focus on narrative in their examination of the stories told by miners as they construct and make sense of the meanings embedded in work experience. The stories of the miners function as a means of socializing miners into their occupations and in the end contribute to an overall process of identity construction. In like manner, narratives of managers have been examined to establish the means by which managers use stories to exercise power (Coopman & Meidlinger, 2000; Smith & Keyton, 2001), resolve conflict and influence decision making (Jameson, 2001), and manage multiple meanings of workplace experience (Barge, 2004). Related work on narrative in organizations looks beyond traditional forms of storytelling to understand the ways in which everyday organizational phenomena such as list making (Ziegler, 2007) and suggestion boxes (Opt, 1998) both function as narratives themselves and generate stories that ultimately shape the organizational culture.

Beyond considering particular narratives, organizational communication research has moved to include narrative analysis as a particular means of interrogating organizational life. In 2001, *Management Communication Quarterly* incorporated a special forum that provided analyses of best-selling management books (Boje, 2001; Carlone, 2001; Jackson, 2001). This forum used classical rhetorical methods to uncover the ways in which the discourses of the popular press served to construct larger societal meanings of workplace and organizational life. The use of rhetorical

analysis extends beyond traditional texts as organizational scholars also interrogate the use of nontraditional media to create or construct particular meanings for organizational life (e.g., Gossett & Kilker, 2006).

Taking several of these views of narrative together, Boje and Rosile (2003) demonstrate how entire episodes of organizational discourse can be understood within the traditional narrative frameworks. Boje and Rosile examined the case of Enron and argued that the events played out largely as an epic tragedy. In this, they used rhetorical methods to identify narrator, storyline, and characters in order to understand the way in which narrative can function as a means of absolving public actors of accountability for the events that occurred.

Thinking in terms of intersections, a consideration of organizational rhetoric lends itself to a particular focus on public relations scholarship and its connection to organizational communication. An explicit focus on the rhetorical in organizational communication in many ways blurs the lines between public relations scholarship and organizational communication. One may go as far as to argue that one way of viewing public relations scholarship sees it as a subset of organizational rhetoric. As such, it is salient to note the scholarship that draws from a rhetorical perspective while addressing the relationship between organizations and their publics. Scholars commonly employ the rhetorical perspective when considering how organizations address crisis situations (e.g., Ulmer, 2001). In addressing crisis response from a decided rhetorical perspective Rowland (2004) examines the rhetorical tool of apology.

Expanding this further, a related thread of research—on organizational discourses and their role in creating meaning for organizational life—also marks organization communication research over the past decade. Examining discourse does not exclusively fall under the rhetorical tradition; however, clear points of intersection emerge as a focus on discourse includes a focus on the way in which people construct meaning through systems of organizational messages. Like specific rhetorical studies, some work focuses on theorizing the nature of organizational discourse and its functions in organizations. First, some work establishes typologies of organizational discourses (Tracy, 2007). Sillince (2007) goes beyond typologies of the discourse itself to argue that discourse is meaningless without context; as such he argues for viewing the particular discourses that themselves construct context. Finally,

Bisel (2009) focuses on the degree to which discursive studies take a dualistic approach; in response Bisel calls for more organizational communication research that adopts a more holistic or dialectic perspective.

In taking a discursive approach, scholars view organizational communication both broadly by identifying the ways in which organizational discourses (in general) contribute to the construction of an organization's culture (Ruud, 2000) and more narrowly by looking at discourses surrounding particular issues as did Scott (2008) who examined specific discourses tied to organization risk, considering how firefighters made sense of this risk through touch. Finally, others regard discourse as a resource used by organization members for reaching goals. For example, Gordon and Stewart (2009) examine the specific discursive strategies used within appraisal interviews.

Beyond looking at discourses as objects of study or at particular strategies used by organizational communication, organizational communication research has evolved to a point that organizations themselves become discursive structures. Fairhurst and Putnam (2004) advance this claim as they argue that viewing organizations as having discourses forms only one of three perspectives that one might take in examining discourse in organizations; a second perspective views discourse as shaping organizational practice; and finally, a third perspective sees discourses as themselves creating organizations.

In all of these perspectives that focus on rhetoric and discourse, organizational issues remain in the foreground, thus establishing what they regard as unique and distinct to organizational communication. Yet, at the same time, these studies highlight a view held in common with particular sub-disciplines of communication. Like rhetorical studies, as it has evolved, organizational communication has continued to link its identity to a belief that understanding an organization at the broad discursive level gives us greater understanding of the human experience.

B. Interpersonal communication

Whereas organizational communication's ties to the rhetorical emphasize a macro level perspective, intersections with interpersonal communication draw largely upon a microlevel perspective. This shift turns the focus of organizational communication to look more specifically on the interactions between individuals in organizations. Themes that emerge in looking at the intersection with organizational communication fall

into work that looks at particular types of communication relationships and strategies, and work that looks at larger issues tied to relational development and family communication.

Organizational communication scholars have a general interest in the kinds of relationships that develop in organizations and how they impact organizational satisfaction (Avtgis & Brogan, 1999), the relationship between relationship quality and information received (Sias, 2005), relational development as a means of understanding how organizational members integrate into workplaces (Teboul & Cole, 2005), and the connection between trust and peer relationships (Myers & Johnson, 2004).

Beyond the particular effects associated with workplace relationships, scholarship in this area further solidifies the intersection with interpersonal communication. Organizational communication scholars take up many of the same issues found within general communication research but they focus on these issues in an organizational context. Sias (2004) examines the ways in which individuals disengage from relationships but in a workplace context. Henningsen, Braz, and Davies (2008) interrogate flirting behaviors in the organizational context. Finally, other work takes up interpersonal topics that extend beyond relational development to look at conflict negotiation strategies within organizations (Jameson, 2004; Oetzel, Meares, Myers, & Estefana, 2003).

While retaining a tie to interpersonal communication in its focus on the role of communication in relationship development, organizational communication research extends understanding to focus on those particular relationships most commonly considered within organizational contexts. The first, a focus on leadership communication, still draws on a salient tie to interpersonal communication. Despite the time that has passed since its introduction, leader member exchange (LMX) continues to serve as a key construct used to investigate leader behaviors in organizations. LMX posits that the quality of the relationship between leaders and followers can impact followers' perceptions of the organization. Toward this end, research has focused on LMX in the contexts of job and organizational satisfaction (Fix & Sias, 2006; Mueller & Lee, 2002), organizational justice (Lee, 2001), gender (Lee, 1999), and intercultural exchanges (Botero & Van Dyne, 2009).

LMX as a theoretical construct continues to have relevance in current research. However, recent work in the area of leader/follower relationships also looks at

the extent to which organizational communication needs new perspectives on leadership (Chen, 2008; Tourish, 2008). One proposal includes discursive (making connections with other perspectives on organizational communication) views of leadership (Fairhurst, 2008; Krone, 2008; Svennevig, 2008); another perspective on leadership advances conceptions of leadership that embrace reflexivity (i.e., a consideration of how one's values and viewpoints influence actions) and courage (Barge, 2004; Jablin, 2006).

Related to, but distinct from the leader/follower relation is the relationship between superiors and subordinates. Research on superior/subordinate communication falls into three basic categories: (a) supervisor communication style, (b) the relationship between the perceived quality of interaction with supervisors and particular organizational outcomes, and (c) supervisory/subordinate communication in stressed organizations. First, scholars have addressed issues of supervisor style (Lee, 1998; Sager, 2008) including a focus on humor as a specific managerial style (e.g., Rizzo, Booth-Butterfield, & Bekelja Wanzer, 1999). Second, research has addressed specific tactics used in conflict (Martin, Anderson, & Sirimangkala, 1999) or negative interactions such as sanctions and reproaches (Carson & Cupach, 2000; Kobayashi, Grasmick, & Friedrich, 2001). Finally, work in supervisory/subordinate communication continues research historically associated with organizational communication, for example, the examination of the connection between perceptions of the quality of interactions with supervisors and satisfaction (Ellis & Shockley-Zalabak, 2001; Teven, 2007); perceptions of supervisor effectiveness, credibility, or attractiveness (McCrosky & Richmond, 2000; Neuliep, Hintz, & McCrosky, 2005); and perceptions of trust (Ellis & Shockley-Zalabak, 2001).

Studies of supervisor/subordinate communication remain largely focused on supervisory communication behaviors. However, this topic has expanded to consider the strategies used by subordinates to influence their managers (Olufowote, Miller, & Wilson, 2005). In particular, the question of employee expressions of dissent has generated a great deal of research in the past 12 years. Much of the work in dissent stems from the investigations of Kassing and his colleagues (Kassing, 2000, 2001, 2007, 2009; Kassing & Armstrong, 2002; Kassing & Avtgis, 2001). Kassing's research focuses on supervisory communication strategies and events that trigger dissent as well as the strategies used by subordinates to express dissent.

The examinations of dissent highlight that not all interactions are positive. Organizational communication scholarship in part has taken up this issue in its exploration of workplace bullying, aggression, and employee mistreatment. In keeping with a focus on interpersonal interaction, this stream of research retains a focus on interactions between individuals. While bullying in the workplace has long existed as an unwelcome phenomenon, research in the area has only recently emerged. When considering bullying, scholars seek to understand the strategies used by victims to resist bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006) or alternately to consider metaphors that capture the emotions experienced by the targets of bullying (Tracy et al., 2006). In a topic related to bullying, studies of abusive workplaces have emerged in the past 12 years (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2008; Meares, Oetzel, Torres, Derkacks, & Ginosar, 2004). Whether considering employee abuse or bullying, this line of research addresses emotionally scarring interactions in the context of structural and systemic issues. In this approach, these topics demonstrate the degree to which, while overlapping with interpersonal issues, organizational communication research takes a decidedly different stance.

Bullying and abusive relationships certainly take an emotional toll on organizational members; emotion forms a key aspect of interpersonal interaction. And so organizational communication scholarship shares this interest in emotion with Miller (Miller, 2004, 2007, 2008; Miller, Considine, & Garner, 2007) providing the primary voice on the topic of emotion in the workplace. Her work highlights the degree to which organizational life includes intense emotional experiences that people and organizations must manage within the contexts of organizational interactions. Beyond acknowledging the intensity of these experiences, other scholars suggest that the management of emotion constitutes a particular kind of labor (Shuler & Davenport, 2000). Focus on emotion and emotional labor reveals the degree to which daily interaction within organizational contexts intersects with theoretical perspectives relevant in the realm of interpersonal communication.

Conversation about emotion in the work place often leads to a consideration of individual experiences that extend beyond the workplace. Here family issues hold the key place. Communication and negotiation of family relationships and issues have long provided a focal point of interpersonal scholarship; this area then represents a final point of intersection between organi-

zational communication and interpersonal communication as organizational communication scholars have taken up the issue of work/life balance in a variety of contexts. Organizational communication scholars have a strong interest in the means by which organizational members negotiate their responsibilities at home with their work lives (Butler & Modaff, 2008; Buzzanell, Meisenbach, Remke, Liu, Bowers, & Conn, 2005; Cowen & Hoffman, 2008; Golden, 2009; Medved, 2004). These studies all focus on the degree to which employees (most often mothers) develop communication patterns and routines that allow them to make sense of both roles—as parent and employee. Focusing on sensemaking at the individual level provides only part of the picture of the work/life balance issue; other scholars have taken up this issue at the level of policy and discourse. In this, rather than considering how individuals communicatively establish routines and boundaries, these scholars give attention to how organizations construct policies and the ways in which broader discourses shape the meaning of work/life balance (Hoffman & Cowan, 2008; Kirby & Krone, 2002; Medved & Kirby, 2005).

In looking at this line of research, the intersection between interpersonal communication and organizational communication becomes clear as both sub-disciplines take the role of communication seriously in establishing and negotiating relationships between individuals. In this sameness, the differences become clear at the same time as scholars in organizational communication pay particular attention to the interplay of organizational context with relational issues.

C. Critical/cultural communication

Taking up the research on work/life balance as a transitional point, we now turn to intersection between organizational communication and critical cultural studies of communication. As organizational scholars have examined the ways in which policies are enacted and the ideologies embedded within work/life discourse (Hoffman & Cowan, 2008; Kirby & Krone, 2002), they began to push into the kind of cultural critique employed by the growing area of critical/cultural studies within communication studies. Critical/cultural studies in communication focus on the role of power and ideology in society on a variety of levels. Drawing on both critical neo-Marxist and postmodern theories, this subdiscipline chooses “culture” as its object of study. It assumes that culture permeates all aspects of life and that power and ideology infuse culture and as

such shape the way culture influences our life. Organizational communication research has included a critical/cultural perspective for over 20 years, and this trend has continued in the past decade. Identifying the discrete themes tied to the critical/cultural perspective on communication poses a challenge because of the great diversity of critical communication research and because it simultaneously falls within other topic areas of organizational communication. For this review, we have focused on two primary issues addressed by critical/cultural organizational communication scholars—power/resistance and gender and race studies—as they seem most representative of this particular intersection.

When the first author met Dennis Mumby, one of the leading critical organizational communication scholars, he suggested that, in his view, communication was all about “power, power, power.” While his comment occurred in jest, this perspective is not altogether inaccurate. Organizational communication scholars who have taken up the critical perspective hold a particular interest in the ways in which organizations enact power through particular communication behaviors and, further, in the ways in which organizational members resist this power. First, an examination of power occurs at the organizational level. For example, Zoller (2003, 2004) examined the ways in which health promotion programs draw upon larger managerial discourses that delimit the employees’ experiences and that encourage hegemonic responses. Other studies in this vein have examined the ways organizational discourses function to delimit and control organizational members identity construction processes (Tracy, 2000) and the means by which they are able to participate in organizational processes (Thackaberry, 2004). Critical/cultural studies as a sub-discipline focuses on larger societal discourses and their influence on a variety of institutions. Some organizational communication scholars situate their work at the intersection of these discourses and organizational issues. Any number of societal discourses influence organizational life, but a primary focus for organizational communication in the United States remains the discourse of capitalism. Research in this vein examines the ways in which capitalism as a discourse becomes embedded in organizational practice and also the extent to which these discourses shape our understanding of organizational issues. In particular, organizational communication scholars have taken up the question of capitalism in the context of communicative labor (Carlone, 2008; Dempsey, 2009).

The recognition of the existence of power by organizational communication scholars does not denote a mindset in which organizational members lack recourse. A number of studies examine the ways in which individuals resist the power of discourses both on the macro-level as activists challenge the representations offered by Nike, for example (Knight & Greenberg, 2002); as employee groups resist organizational policies via websites (Gossett & Kilker, 2006); or as individuals resist broader social discourses centered on the process of ageing for female professionals (Trethewey, 2001). Studies of power and resistance have a broad reach in organizational communication and, as such, the past 12 years have also provided an opportunity to revisit earlier discussions of resistance and power—affirming, modifying, and extending this research agenda. In particular, *Management Communication Quarterly* (2008) devoted an entire issue (Volume 21) to exploring the power/resistance dynamic in organizational life. Beyond this, Dixon (2007), Nadesan (2001), and Cloud (2001) all suggested ways in which study of power and culture in organizational communication could expand to include postmodern and post-fordist perspectives. In a call for a different kind of expansion, other scholars have identified a need for integrating more global (Ganesh, Zoller, & Cheney, 2005) and post-colonial perspectives (Broadfoot & Munshi, 2007) into power/resistance communication research.

As a key aspect of critical/cultural studies, this last issue of expanding critical studies of organizational communication to include alternative perspectives holds particular salience because of its interest in drawing attention to the experience of individuals marginalized in some way. For example, focusing on racial diversity within organizations provides one means of fulfilling this goal. Clearly a number of studies examine racial diversity in organizations but not from a critical perspective (e.g., the language dilemma case and responses in *Management Communication Quarterly*, 2002; Grimes & Orlando, 2003). Yet, when considering research that focuses on diversity in terms of race, the dominant perspective within the past decade has taken a critical perspective. Indeed, Ashcraft and Allen (2003) argue for an examination of the racial foundations of organizational communication. In particular, they note the extent to which the very ways people address race often functions to preserve “organized Whiteness.” In like manner, Grimes (2002) challenges the ways in which whiteness retains its position of cen-

trality even within diversity management literature. While examination of race within critical organizational communication appears to lag behind studies of gender, Parker (2001, 2002) has contributed research that examines the ways in which African American women negotiate identities and resist dominant racial discourses in the workplace.

Studies of gender in organizational communication have followed the same basic trajectory as research on racial diversity. However, feminist issues in organizing have received much more attention. Like racial diversity, work on gender does not restrict itself to the critical perspective (e.g., Gribas, 1999; Lizzio, Wilson, Gilchrist, & Gallois, 2003; Martin, 2004), yet the preponderance of work in this area does devote itself to critical feminist critique of “gendered” workplaces. Research in feminist organizing addresses both the experience of women in the workplace and in the discursive construction of gender in workplaces. Identity forms a key construct in feminist organizing. Scholars investigating this issue focus particularly on the ways in which women negotiate a sense of identity within the context of organizational cultures and narratives that may limit their options (e.g., Jorgenson, 2002; Trethewey & Corman, 2001). Related to focus on identity, feminist organizational communication scholars such as Edley (2000), Gibson and Schullery (2000), and Meisenbach (2008) each challenge the role of discourse in organizing workplace communication where that discourse subordinates women’s experiences. Each of these studies offers suggestions for ways in which a feminist perspective might offer alternative communication practices that would give women more options. Still other feminist scholars look beyond the negotiation of meaning within women’s experiences to see how societal discourses construct particular policies and understandings of women in the workplace (Buzzanell, 2001; Buzzanell & Liu, 2005; Perriton, 2009). Finally, critical organizational communication scholars have extended research on gender to include an understanding of masculinity and sexuality (e.g., Mumby, 1998; Forbes, 2002, 2009; Tracy & Scott, 2006).

The intersection between organizational communication and critical/cultural communication studies is a fruitful one. Both sub-disciplines share an interest in understanding the relationship between broader cultural structures and the daily lives of individuals. Research at this intersection scrutinizes discourses of power with an eye toward unveiling sources of power,

identifying the influences of this discourse, and, finally, in agitating for change. Within these points of similarity, this review of literature has highlighted the ways in which organizational communication researchers distinguish their subdiscipline. Rather than aimed at a general cultural critique, critical organizational schol-

arship specifically focuses its goal on identifying ways to give voice to marginalized organizational members. Further, we have seen that critical organizational communication scholars ultimately focus their efforts on opening space for greater participation in organizational communication dynamics.

3. Identity in Distinction: How Organizational Communication Enacts Difference

As we have surveyed the landscape of organizational communication research from the past decade, we have noted the extent to which the identity of the discipline has roots in similarities to several sub-disciplines of communication studies. Identifying what the areas hold in common helps refine our understanding of the contributions of organizational communication to broader conversations about human interaction processes and meaning. But along with similarity, we find difference. While organizational communication scholars do employ some of the same theories, concepts, and analytical tools and do interrogate some of the same issues and questions as other communication disciplines, the approach of organizational communication research is decidedly different. We have alluded to these points of distinction along the way: an interest in the creation of meaning as a particular organizing process and a focus on the interplay between structure and communication processes. In what follows, we address each of these issues in greater detail, highlighting some particular streams of research that exemplify these dynamics.

A. Negotiations of meaning

While meaning holds a central place in the study of communication in general, organizational communication scholars most often consider meaning from a sensemaking perspective. That is, organizational communication research in the past 12 years has emphasized the degree to which meaning results from active negotiation between individuals, between individuals and organizations, and between organizations and societies.

This tendency to conceptualize meaning as the result of negotiation follows from the adoption of Weick's view of organization. When considering organization as a verb (as Weick does), one emphasizes the degree to which language/communication functions to organize meaning. Organizational communica-

tion scholars deploy this perspective in research in order to examine the organization of meaning in a variety of perspectives. It would not be possible to delineate each context here as the range in topics extends from work on the way in which medical organizations accomplish authority through interaction (Benoit-Barne & Cooren, 2009) to unpacking the meaning of blue collar work (Mills, 2002) to understanding how people construct the meaning of customer satisfaction (Turner & Krizek, 2006). When examining the ways in which scholars study the negotiation of meaning, the methods employed include a full range of qualitative methods (e.g., conversation analysis, rhetorical criticism, discourse analysis) (Cooren, 2004).

Instead of attempting the insurmountable task of cataloging all work that addresses meaning as an active negotiation process, we will focus on identity construction as one particular line of research that encompasses both the breadth and depth of viewing meaning construction as sensemaking and negotiation. If any one topic seems to dominate the landscape of organizational communication in the past decade, it is research on identity construction. Scholars approach "identity" as a construct on two different levels—that of the individual and that of the organization.

In looking at individual identity, we begin by noting that the absence of an operational definition curiously marks this area of research. That is, few have made attempts to define what constitutes identity. Tracy and Trethewey (2005) fill this void as they provide a review of work on identity construction. They argue that many scholars have contributed to a discussion of identity from a post-structuralist perspective and in this they address identity as fluid and constituted in discourse. Tracy and Trethewey critique treatments of identity that perpetuate a real self ↔ face self dichotomy. They conclude that this tendency results in three responses on the part of individual ("engaging in strategized subordination, crafting perpetually deferred

selves, and practicing auto-dressage” p. 178)—each of these responses represents a particular form of negotiation. In the end they suggest a view of identity as a crystallized self instead. The crystallized self is one that, while solid, may take on differing forms depending on the context.

Beyond theoretical discussions and meta-analyses of identity, a series of publications address identity construction processes in the context of ideological discourses at work in organizations. Jorgensen (2002) and Tyler and McCullough (2009) address the ways in which individuals negotiate a sense of self in the context of gendered organizations. Parker (2002) addresses issues of both gender and race in her analysis of African American women’s strategies of negotiating workplace interactions. Taking an even broader view, Lair, Sullivan, and Cheney (2005), Tracy (2000), and Ganesh (2003) analyze identity construction in the context of market discourses, emotional labor, and technology, respectively. Both of these series of studies situate identity construction as an active negotiation process in which individuals must make sense out of organizational and societal discourses.

In a more narrow focus, scholars have addressed meaning making and identity from the perspective of role negotiation. In this context, organizational communications scholars have examined how people negotiate particular roles within the organization—in this sense they focus not on an encompassing identity but rather on the fulfillment of a particular function in the organization (e.g., Kramer, 2009; Miller & Johnston, 1999). Scholars have also applied this same perspective to the question of how individuals make sense of their identities as professionals or in the context of a particular career (Barge & Hackett, 2003; Canary & Canary, 2007; Meisenbach, 2008).

Consistent with the guiding framework for this literature review on the question of identity of organizational communication as a discipline, we note that the past 12 years have seen several rounds of commentaries on the status of the discipline (e.g., Allen, 2002; Cheney, 2007; Jones, Watson, Gardner, & Gallois, 2004). Each of these represents an identity negotiation in its own right. These commentaries have come in the context of forums and invited reviews that have addressed the role of the academic/scholar in the context of a profession. Further, scholars have grappled with the idea of organizational communication scholars as engaged scholars. Finally, they discussed the identity of the field in the context of how a

communication scholar might function in an applied context. These forums represent a particular discourse that serves as an enactment of the very sensemaking/negotiation of meaning perspective that we argue is a distinguishing and defining feature of organizational communication.

Consideration of identity does not only apply to the individual alone. Organizational communication scholars also give attention to the ways in which organizations establish identities for themselves. The approach most often taken in understanding organizational identity is rhetorical. In this scholars have considered values (Aust, 2004), mission statements (Feldner, 2006), and the role of rhetoric (Sillince, 2006) in communicating a particular identity for organizations. Organizational communication research in this vein rests on the premise that organizations themselves function as actors with individual identities.

B. Interplay of meaning, structure, and process

In order to completely understand a sensemaking and negotiation-centered perspective on meaning as a distinguishing feature of organizational communication, we need to add the layer of the structure/process relationship. Organizational communication scholars cannot completely address meaning as a negotiation and sensemaking achievement without also incorporating an understanding of meaning making as a process mediated by particular structures. At its core, organizational communication rests on the assumption that organizational structures alter communication processes just as communication processes alter structure. While this defines structuration theory, an area of research within the discipline, we argue here that even research not explicitly conducted from a structuration perspective retains an orientation toward the interplay of process and structure. Organizational communication scholarship over the past 12 years rarely considers communication as a variable or event; rather organizational scholarship always casts communication as a particular process, one always situated in a particular organizational context. The organizational context in turn is central to any interpretation of the constructed meaning. To illustrate this identifying feature, we will review three threads of organizational communication research: organizational identification, socialization, and organizational change. All three of these research areas represent organizational phenomena that form the core communication processes shaped by structure of the organization itself.

In the previous section, we ended by considering how scholars conceive of and investigate identity within organizational communication at both the individual and the organizational level. Organizational identification as a topic of inquiry falls naturally in these areas of research in that organizational identification is a process through which organizational members begin to see themselves as sharing the same values and interests as the organization. In other words, as members make sense of their identity they see it fitting naturally with the identity of the organization. The process then exemplifies the interplay of structure and process. Identification evolves over time and is clearly tied to the structure of the organization itself. Scott, Corman, and Cheney (1998) outlined a theory of identification explicitly grounded in a structuration approach. Further, Scott (2007) connected theories of social identity to organizational identification. Both of these articles help to draw the lines between the meaning, structure, and process within organizations. As an exemplar of the interplay of structure and process and organizational identification, Larson and Pepper (2003) examined how organizational members made sense of their identities and identifications during times of transition in the organization. In this, as the structure of the organization changed, so too did the resulting identities with which organizational members identified.

Research in organizational identification over the past 12 years has focused in part on the organizational factors and attributes that contribute to the development of identification or, alternately, consider the outcomes of highly identified members. For example, scholars examined the relationship between organization identification and employee dissent (Kassing, 2000), identification and supervisory and subordinate communication (Myers & Kassing, 1998), and identification and organizational prestige (Ale, 2001). In addition, other research on organizational identification has considered the process in the context of various organizational types. Finally, organizational communication scholars interested in member identification have considered the process in the context of virtual organizations (Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 1999), as well as traditional business organizations (specifically agribusiness) (Morgan, Reynolds, Nelson, Johanningsmeier, Griffin, & Andrade, 2004). Research has also extended beyond organization type to consider the ways in which changes in an organization's environment may challenge traditional thinking on organiza-

tional identification. In particular, Scott (2001) explored the ways in which the new economy impacted both customer loyalty and employee identification, while Gossett (2002) challenged traditional thinking of organizational identification in the context of a growing contingent and temporary workforce.

Researchers have not yet formally advanced a connection between organizational identification and organizational socialization (also known as assimilation); yet, the ties seem clear. The process through which members learn the ropes in a new organization partly facilitates the beginnings of an individual's self-identity moving closer in line with an organization's identity. However, despite organizational socialization's remaining an area of interest since the 1970s, research in the area stagnated for some time until just before this decade began when *Communication Monographs* published a series of articles that both affirmed and challenged traditional approaches to the study of organizational communication socialization. One view suggested that traditional stage models bound the means of studying organizational communication too tightly (Kramer & Miller, 1999), while the other agitated for a change to embrace new perspectives on socialization (Bullis, 1999; Clair, 1999; Turner, 1999). These debates set the stage for the decade to come as work in socialization more or less falls along those two lines. First, scholars continued to investigate organizational socialization from traditional perspectives seeking to refine and apply measures of socialization (e.g., Lamude, Scudder, Simmons, & Torres, 2004; Myers & Oetzel, 2003; Myers, 2005) and considering how socialization functions in workgroups (Anderson, Martin, & Riddle, 2001; Myers & McPhee, 2006). At the same time, work in organizational socialization extended to consider socialization as an ongoing process (e.g., Kramer & Noland, 1999), within the context of nontraditional groups such as customers (e.g., Fonner & Timmerman, 2009) and as tied to advances in technology (Waldeck, Siebold, & Flanagan, 2004) and virtual organizations (Ahuja & Galvin, 2003).

Organizational socialization provides one process through which organizational members construct meaning for their organizational lives. But organizations remain constantly in flux and as their structures change, so too must the members' sensemaking process continue. Organizational change as an area of inquiry, then, matters both within the academy and beyond. Simply stated, in today's turbulent economy, organiza-

tions merge, “rightsized,” and restructure with frequency. Organizational communication scholars are rightfully sensitive to the impact that these changes have on both communication structures and processes. Zorn, Page, and Cheney (2000) provided a comprehensive review of the change literature as they offered a case study that examined change within a public sector organization. In this, they argued that even popular discourse reflects discussions of the change that impacts organizational life, and, as such, scholars must examine the various perspectives more closely. Other scholars have heeded this call as numerous studies have examined the change process in a variety of contexts. One of the most common ways of considering change emerges from the examination of communication behaviors and discourses surrounding downsizing, mergers, and acquisitions. In this, scholars look at these changes in terms of information needs (Tourish, Paulsen, Hobman, & Bordia, 2004; Zhu, May, & Rosenfeld, 2004), in terms of the contradictions that emerge in how managers frame downsizing (Fairhurst, Cooren, & Cahill, 2002), and in light of the uncertainty that

emerges during change (Kramer, Dougherty, & Pierce, 2004). Several methodological starting points present ways to examine organizational change; the past 12 years have given rise to an emphasis on the discourses, narratives, metaphors, and stories of change (Coopman & Meidlinger, 2000; Fairhurst, et al., 2002; Lewis, Schmisser, Stephens, & Weir, 2006).

These two ways in which organizational communication distinguishes itself from other subdisciplines in communication are interrelated. We cannot separate understanding meaning construction as sensemaking and ongoing negotiation from viewing organizations’ structures and processes as existing in a reciprocal relationship. Taken together, they contribute to particular identity for the discipline of organizational communication at this moment. That identity has its roots in a commitment to investigating human interaction at a variety of levels—rhetorical, interpersonal, and cultural—but in a way that focuses explicitly on how people and organizations organize meaning in practice and on the structures and communicative action that create these organizational structures and experiences.

4. Identity in Action:

Organizational Communication Scholarship Addressing Current Issues

Organizational communication scholarship both resembles and differs from the larger discipline of communication studies. This particular identity allows organizational communication scholars to participate in broader conversations about contemporary issues with a particular voice—a voice that has an orientation toward the active negotiation of meaning (sensemaking) and that emphasizes the interplay of structure and process. To that end, our research has identified three key topic areas that continually intersect with organizational communication: new communication technology use, globalization, and knowledge management. Each of these topic areas provides the discipline with additional depth of what it means to study organizational communication and provides us with a greater sense of our identity. Examining new communication technology (NCT) in the organizational context resembles studying the intersection of other communication disciplines (such as interpersonal communication or rhetoric) due to the breadth of impact that NCTs have had on communication in general. Secondly, one must only look to the recent economic crisis gripping the

globe to realize that the concept of globalization holds critical importance to the study of organizational communication today. Finally, knowledge management provides a thread that connects many aspects of organizational communication as expanded use of technology and globalizing forces have not only increased knowledge generated but also increased access to that knowledge.

A. New communication technologies

In considering new communication technologies (NCTs) and computer-mediated communication (CMC), one struggles to determine whether technology forms a topic within a larger field or represents a field in its own right. In some respects, communication technology represents a broad pseudo-subdiscipline of communication that has intersections with nearly every aspect of human communication (see D’Urso, 2009), but at the same time technology forms a pervasive part of today’s society. The past 12 years of research at this intersection of NCTs and organizations has yielded a focus on three topic areas: organizational use and prevalence of NCTs,

virtual teams/groups/communities, and impacts associated with NCT usage in organizations.

NCT use over the decade has also changed and, as Vielhaber and Waltman (2008) noted, so have the users. While a great deal of organizational communication research on NCTs focuses on furthering our understanding of traditional communication theories, such as Media Richness, Channel Expansion, and others particularly as they apply to the selection and use of NCTs in organizations (D'Urso & Rains, 2008; Sheer & Chen, 2004; Stephens, 2007; Timmerman, 2003; Van den Hoof, Groot, & de Jonge, 2005), most of the research focuses its attention on the actual use of NCTs within the organizational setting (D'Urso & Pierce, 2009). Organizational communication scholars who focus on the use of technology often look to the ways in which technology facilitates, modifies, or expands previously examined communication processes such as organizational assimilation (Waldeck, et al., 2004), communication apprehension (Scott & Timmerman, 2005), work-life balance (Boswell, 2007), and the communication of negative information (Timmerman & Harrison, 2005).

In addition to research that extends established communication theories, scholars have investigated the ways in which groups have adopted or rejected technologies. Investigating two ends of the adoption spectrum, Stephens and colleagues (Stephens, Sornes, Rice, Browning, & Saetre, 2008) examined the expanded and coordinated use of NCTs, while Leonardi (2009) investigated rejection of NCTs and the potential impacts of those decisions. The reality is that NCT adoption on the whole is on the rise (e.g., D'Urso & Pierce, 2009). This increased use has changed the way that people work. Stephens and Davis (2009) provide a key example of this by exploring how NCTs enable multitasking by employees during meetings; they then tried to understand the impacts of such use. Another area of research in organizational NCTs lies in their use within alternative organizational structures, with particular emphasis on the virtual team/group/organization. Scholars have explored virtual organizations (Daugherty, Lee, Gangadharbatla, Kim, & Outhavong, 2005; Rothaermel & Sugiyama, 2001) in an effort to understand the intersections and distinctions between these newer structures and those of traditional organizations. As part of this research effort, other scholars have explored interpersonal aspects of organizational communication such as socialization (Ahuja & Galvin, 2003) and lead-

ership within NCTs (George & Sleeth, 2000). Other areas of interest focus on group processes' relationship with NCTs. For example, Markman (2009) looked at particular uses of NCTs such as chat-based virtual meetings; Rains (2005) provided a thorough review of group support systems (GSS) in organizations; and Tullar and Kaiser (2000) examined the use of virtual groups for training and development.

Great insights into organizational processes have emerged with the consideration both of the ways in which NCT use is meaningful and of the alternative structures particularly suited to NCT use; these areas contribute to a final aspect of NCT research in organizational communication, which focuses on the impact of NCT use. To see some of the potential impacts that NCTs have had on organizations over the past decade, people need only look around their workplace or even at their own computer screens to notice the changes. Current organizational communication research in technology also provides some clear evidence of some of the impacts of NCT use, such as Berry (2006) finding that the use of asynchronous communication technologies can actually improve team processes and decision-making in groups as compared to face-to-face conditions. Byron and Baldrige (2007) argued that personality can influence how individuals interpret non-verbal cues from e-mail messages sent to them, as well as their impressions of the sender. Finally, Jackson (2007) examined how emerging technologies might change the scholarship of business communication and offers a number of paths by which future research could be conducted.

Workplace surveillance has generated a good deal of renewed interest of late. Paralleling public concerns regarding surveillance, NCTs have also caused concern as they have the ability to act as tools of organizational surveillance. D'Urso (2006) examined this topic in depth and offered a model of how to measure the impact of surveillance that comes from the use of NCTs, as well as from an organization's structure and policies on surveillance. Allen, Coopman, Hart, and Walker's (2007) article employed the use of communication privacy management theory as a lens to understand the complexities of electronic workplace surveillance as they reviewed the dimensions of managing one's privacy in the organization. Finally, Snyder and Cornetto (2009) found that employees feel that a great deal of surveillance occurs via e-mail in the workplace and that this and other monitoring of employee communication is inappropriate. As individuals and organ-

izations become more connected to and dependent on NCTs, surveillance will likely remain a key area of both concern and potential research in organizational communication.

B. Organizational knowledge and networks

NCTs in the workplace provide greater ease in creating and managing knowledge in the organizational setting. A significant amount of work over the past decade has examined the creation of and management of knowledge in organizations. Both Schneider (2001) and Heaton and Taylor (2002) found that the creation of knowledge, particularly through the writing and reading of textual information, holds the key to understanding and maintaining the modern organization. Kuhn and Jackson (2008) offer up a framework that assists in the investigation of organizational knowledge and knowing. They posit a methodology rooted in social practice theory and focus on activities that generate knowledge communicatively. Additional research has explored both the sharing of (De Vries, Van den Hoof, & de Ridder, 2006) and retrieval of (Palazzolo, 2005) knowledge from the organization and related processes. Iverson (2008) examined the use of communities of practice as one potential method of understanding the knowledge process in organizations through a dynamic process of mutual engagement and interaction. In studying the potential impacts of knowledge management practices in organizations, Child and Shumate (2007) found that the perception that a work team accurately knew who held specific knowledge related positively to perceived team effectiveness.

One result of the increased knowledge is that more communication networks have emerged. Here, research often intertwines with research on NCTs, employee turnover, and interpersonal communication. Chang and Johnson (2001) analyzed communication networks using social contagion theory to predict the use of NCTs by organizational members. Feeley (2000) presented a communication network model to predict employee turnover based on network centrality. Finally, Raile, Kim, Choi, Serota, Park, and Lee (2008) explored the role of friendship networks at work and found a positive relationship with job satisfaction.

C. Interorganizational relationships

Another growing area of organizational network research falls under the heading of interorganizational relationships (IORs) and related communication practices. Oliver (1990) defines IORs as “the relatively enduring transactions, flows, and linkages that occur

among or between an organization and one or more organizations in its environment” (p. 241). Key work in this area includes Taylor and Doerfel’s (2003) look at the process of building IORs and the network dynamics among nongovernmental organizations in Croatia. Flanagin, Monge, and Fulk (2001) focused on the benefits of organizational federations, especially for those participants that actively communicate and interact with the IOR. Cooren (2001) utilizes another form of IORs, organizational coalitions, to create a new method of analysis to study the strengths and weaknesses of these IORs during their formation. Following the loss of the Space Shuttle Columbia, the investigation showed that the IORs at NASA acted as potential contributors to the accident. Garner (2006) investigated these IORs from a resource dependency and structuration perspective to understand the issues involved with the various relationships.

D. Organizational communication gone global

As NCTs contribute to knowledge generation, and as knowledge generation adds to the complexity of communication networks, all of these areas take place in the context of globalization. While the topic of globalization has held an important place in organizational communication research in recent decades and still attracts a great deal of research (Darling-Wolf, 2008; Weaver, 2001; Wiley, 2004; Zoller, 2004), a more interesting spin on global influence has emerged in recent years. In the field of organizational communication, research has often taken on an ethnocentrism, with the emphasis on the United States. Over the past decade, however, we find that scholars exert more interest and effort to examine the organizational communication on a more global level. The decade began with research examining management communication in Australia (More & Irwin, 2000), studies identifying issues facing Chinese organizations as they connected with the global economy (Chen, 2000), and research investigating organizational communication issues with Italian multinational corporations (Cesaria, 2000). Zaidman’s (2001) research crossed borders and cultures as it examined business communication interactions among Israeli and Indian business people. The focus returned to China in 2007 with Lin and Clair’s (2007) exploration of the impact of Mao Zedong on organizational communication practices in that nation. Research then went halfway around the globe and to the southern hemisphere with work that examined both the development of organizational communication and the challenges and future of research in the field in Brazil (do

Carmo Reis, 2009; Marchiori & Oliveira, 2009; Putnam & Casali, 2009). This increase in international organizational communication appears to continually gain interest among scholars globally. Notably, Nelson-Marsh, Broadfoot, Munshi, and colleagues (Broadfoot, K. J., Cockburn, Cockburn-Wooten, do Carmo Reis, Gautam, Maishe, Munshi, Nelson-Marsh, Okwori, Simpson, & Srinivas, 2008; Nelson-Marsh, Broadfoot, & Munshi, 2008) have sought to engage the research community with an international online community and conference (COMMUNEcation) devoted to this interest and have promoted collaborative efforts for more research.

The connections between these issues that currently (re)shape society matter in their own right. Even more, it is difficult to address any one of the topics of technology, knowledge, networks, or globalization without integrating perspectives and issues raised by the others. This reality alone merits the level of scholarly attention that they have received in orga-

nizational communication research. However, we include them here for reasons that extend beyond this. The extent to which these issues interest other disciplines and society in general again highlights organizational communication as similar to other fields. Yet, the way in which organizational communication scholars tackle these issues and the differences that distinguish organizational communication scholars from others are clear. NCT research in organizational communication does not focus on simply its use but rather it concerns the meaning of this use and the ways in which NCT alter both the structure and processes of organizations. In like manner, knowledge and knowledge network research sees the knowledge creation as part of negotiation process shaped in part by its organizational context. Finally, organizational communication research in global contexts considers how the meanings of communication structures and processes change within international and intercultural settings.

5. Organizational Communication: An Evolving Identity in a Changing Society

In this age of globalization, technological advancement, and the ever-increasing amount of knowledge and information that connects us all together, organizational communication has had to continually reinvent itself to remain a contributor to conversations both within the discipline and with society as a whole. In this, we hope that organizational communication will continue to think of the richness that exists in embracing sameness with other disciplines while continuing to enrich the conversation by participating with a particular voice that capitalizes on difference.

We conclude here by highlighting some threads of research that we believe might contribute to the ongoing construction of organizational communication's identity narrative. The combined influence of globalizing forces and technology have contributed to growing networks and growing access to information about organizations, with the result that organizations face increased scrutiny. Because of this, organizational communication has taken a closer look at corporate social responsibility initiatives (see MCQ special issue). We can only imagine that this trend will increase as greater access to organizational information leads to increased calls for transparency within

organizational practice. At the same time, scholars recognize the role that they can play as advocates for change and social justice (see MCQ issues on engaged scholarship). We believe that this results in the development of research on surrounding issues of voice, democracy, and participation—all areas in which work has already begun. Stohl and Cheney (2001) provided an analysis of participatory practices in organizations. Cheney also collaborated with Cloud to call for increased attention to democratic processes that give voice to employees and that call attention to labor issues. We anticipate this will continue as scholars turn to issues of the contingent work force (Gossett, 2001), labor unions (Cloud, 2001), and community-based organizations (Heath, 2007) as a means of providing voice to marginalized individuals and issues. As further evidence, we point to the growth in critical/cultural studies of organizational communication. In this organizational communication will seek to add to knowledge and understanding of the same issues that scholars, politicians, and citizens are tackling in today's societies but do so in different ways that allow the discipline to focus on making organizations more about the people who live and work within them.

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Book Reviews

Atton, Chris and **F. James Hamilton**. *Alternative Journalism*. London, Thousand Oaks, CA, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage Publications, 2008. Pp. 179. ISBN 978-1-4129-4702-2 (hbk.) \$89.95; 978-1-4129-4703-9 (pb.) \$42.95.

For more than a decade British scholar Chris Atton has been publishing alternative media titles, from his first *Alternative Literature* in 1996, to *Alternative Media* in 2002, and *An Alternative Internet* in 2004. His last book, this time co-written with James Hamilton, another very active scholar in this area of research, deals instead with *Alternative Journalism*.

Despite the limitations of dealing with a subject that might have a potentially very large scope, the book accomplishes the mission of giving students and scholars a very good resource that can inspire also further research and discussion in the classroom. The publication will appeal to students of journalism and new media, as well as those researchers working in the area of critical media studies, political economy of the media, and alternative media practice. Together with a number of key texts that have been published in increasing numbers in the last decade on community, citizen, and radical media, *Alternative Journalism* will be the complement to areas such as web, radio, and TV practices that have been covered before.

This is the first book-length study to bring together organically the investigation and analysis for forms of journalism that have been challenging mainstream news media and the commercial organization of its production. It is divided in three parts.

The first part traces the historical roots of alternative journalism from the early radical-popular press in early 19th century England, then analyzing the rise of

bourgeois journalism and its consolidation, before turning the attention to oppositional journalism in the early 20th century in the U.S., and the forms developed outside Western contexts as the samizdat, showing how, as a consequence of the changes in dominant practices, “the alternative that challenges it has changed as well” (p. 21).

The second chapter focuses on the political economy of alternative media by discussing the pressures that are shaping its practice, arguing that alternative journalism “is better seen as opposing but also enabled by the conditions in which it exists” (p. 22). The dilemmas that characterize its practice are, Atton and Hamilton state, patronage, commercial support, personal journalism, and collective and movement support. They warn though that its political economy can not be traced “through a set of static categories, but through an exceedingly complex field of limits and pressures that operate in a wide variety of often contradictory ways” (p. 40).

A socio-demographic survey of who actually are “alternative journalists” provides the object of analysis of the third chapter, which explores their backgrounds, motivations, and skills. However, as the authors warn, there are a limited number of research findings that can be relied upon and therefore this might only help to get the “fragments from which we can piece together a picture” (p. 43). What emerges then is the wide range of backgrounds and experiences that characterizes these journalists depending, for example, on the size of the target audiences, and their own take on professionalism and equality principles. At times, the authors say, alternative journalism will reproduce “prevailing conditions in the wider society” (p. 59), including its disparities and imbalances.

The second, and central, part of the book starts with the debate on the multiplicity of policies, forms, and challenges of this kind of journalism. A challenge that remains constant is surely the risk of absorption and incorporation that is present also in current initiatives that have been adopted from a number of news media outlets. Media corporations want to appear more open to public input and often invite citizens to send their own contributions, aiming to boost user participation in order to enhance their democratic credentials. The other three options adopted in relation to the “Dominant” are then described as the ones trying to challenge, reform, or subvert it.

Chapter 5 gives an overview of contemporary practices of alternative journalism ranging from partic-