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Conceptual Foundations

◆ STANLEY DEETZ

◆ *University of Colorado at Boulder*

For all of recorded history, people have studied and discussed communication processes within their dominant organizations. In many respects, these discussions differ little from those present during the past three decades of institutional organizational communication study. They have been concerned with the systematic manners by which communication practices can be used to help coordinate and control the activities of organizational members and relations with external constituencies. Our current situation is one of rapid social and organizational change putting great pressure on researchers today to continually develop useful concepts and studies to match the complex interactions characteristic of contemporary workplaces.

Organizational communication research is itself a rich communicative process. Researchers have developed and used their theories and research activities for many positive organizational outcomes. But their work also accomplishes a variety of intertwined life purposes, including the distinction of the researcher and the development and advancement of specific group interests. Fundamental assumptions about the nature of the world, methods of producing knowledge, and values are developed and advanced in the discourse of researchers. Such assumptions are necessary to produce any kind of understanding and knowledge and are usually most contested during periods of rapid change. While fundamental assumptions themselves are not open

to refutation, they are to exploration. Scholars rightfully ask of any research program, "To solve what problems?" "To what ends?" "Whose meanings?" "Whose knowledge?"

This essay hopes to foster useful discussions regarding how different scholars construct knowledge and justify practices about organizations, and also about the values, hopes, and groups' interest that they support. To that end, I begin with an overview of how the term *organizational communication* is used—what it delimits, organizes, or draws our attention to. Following this introduction, the central part of the chapter will develop a two-dimensional scheme for directing attention to similarities and differences among research programs. I will argue that the most interesting differences among social research programs can be displayed through looking at (1) the type of interaction particular researchers favor with other groups, characterized as *local/emergent* versus *elite/a priori* conceptions; and (2) the moves the research activity and report make toward closure or indeterminacy in that interaction, characterized as *consensus* seeking versus *dissensus* seeking. These two dimensions when put together provide a two by two matrix characterizing differences in research programs. I will discuss each of four "ideal type" research programs produced in this grid. Finally, I will conclude by looking at the researcher's choice processes in the contemporary context and looking at future research agenda.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

What is organizational communication? The possibility of a shared answer to that question seems to be implied in producing a handbook of organizational communication or in detailing conceptual foundations for organizational communication studies. Clear and simple answers can be given. I could just provide a definition, compare it with alternative definitions, and get on with a review. Defini-

tions are nice; they set clear boundaries and justify my looking at the things I am interested in, and excluding the rest. But such definitions are inevitably arbitrary, usually provide political advantage for some group, and can as easily produce blinders as insight. Not only is debate possible over alternative definitions but also over the act of defining (Deetz, 1992, chap. 3; Smith, 1993; Taylor, 1993). Ultimately, the question "What is organizational communication?" is misleading. A more interesting question is, "What do we see or what are we able to do if we think of organizational communication in one way versus another?" Unlike a definition, the attempt here is not to get it right, but to understand our choices. Rather than killing the bird ("definition" definitio, to kill or make final) and getting on with the dissection, perhaps we should watch it fly for a while.

Three very different ways of conceptualizing "organizational communication" are available. Each of these provides different "attentions" and different boundaries regarding what should be covered in this volume and this chapter. Such conceptions guide research and teaching as well as provide an identity to a group of scholars. First, the focus could be on the development of organizational communication as a speciality in departments of communication and communication associations. Organizational communication study is whatever anyone does who is a member of these divisions or publishes in particular journals (see, e.g., Smeltzer, 1993). Like with other "sociologies of fields," time can be spent looking at the history of this development, what members of these divisions have studied and published, how many students major or achieve advanced degrees in this speciality, and how many jobs are available (see Redding, 1979). These are not unimportant concerns and such a conception either explicitly or implicitly has been used to determine what is or is not an organizational communication study in many if not most literature reviews (see Krone, Jablin, & Putnam, 1987; Meyers, Seibert, & Allen, 1993; Putnam & Cheney, 1985; Redding & Tompkins, 1988;

Richetto, 1977; Wert-Gray, Center, Brashers, & Meyers, 1991).¹ From these reviews we often gain more understanding of people, their relations, careers, and university politics than we do about the underlying conceptions of organizations and communication. Moving from reviews of studies to examining alternative theories in organizational communication studies and the social problems such studies address is often difficult. It is not surprising that these reviews often contain laments about the disunity of the field. This may well be an artifact of the organizing principle used.

A second approach to conceptualizing organizational communication focuses on communication as a phenomenon that exists in organizations. If such an object can be defined, then anyone who looks at or talks about that object is studying organizational communication. This is the logic behind many textbook definitions of organizational communication. Within this logic, any number of individuals from different academic units might study this phenomenon. In such a case, interdisciplinarity might be expected. With this focus one might ask what is "communication" in the organization and what is something else, what are the ways the phenomenon can be usefully subdivided, what are the variables that affect it or it affects, and what theories adequately explain it. Handbooks like this one usually work from this type of conception (see Krone et al., 1987). They assume that a unified phenomenon exists, and they form chapters based on subdivisions of the phenomenon or alternative sites where it appears. Introductory chapters like this one typically focus on the variety of ways that the same phenomenon has been examined.

Unfortunately for such a tack, many of the contemporary theories of organizations and communication deny that a unitary phenomenon exists out there. Thus, the phenomenon—organizational communication—is different for different theories. "Organizational communication" is not one phenomenon with many explanations; each form of explanation may conceptualize and explain a different

phenomenon. Fixed subdivisions are always a kind of theoretical hegemony (where one theory's "organizational communication" is privileged over undiscussed others). When this happens, theory debate is reduced to methodological perspectivalism. When thought of as a distinct phenomenon, the conception of "organization" is often reduced to a "site" and the conception of "communication" often becomes narrow with social interaction conceptually reduced to empirical acts of information transfer, often the lowest common denominator (or dominator) in organizational communication (for discussion, see Axley, 1984; Putnam, Phillips, & Chapman, 1996; Smith, 1993; Taylor, 1993).

A third way to approach the issue is to think of communication as a way to describe and explain organizations. In the same way that psychology, sociology, or economics can be thought of as capable of explaining organizations' processes, communication might also be thought of as a distinct mode of explanation or way of thinking about organizations (see Deetz, 1994a; Pearce, 1989). Communication theory can be used to explain the production of social structures, psychological states, member categories, knowledge, and so forth rather than being conceptualized as simply one phenomenon among these others in organizations. The focus would be on the process of organizing through symbolic interaction rather than on "communication" within an "organization" (Hawes, 1974). From such a perspective the interest is not in theories of organizational communication but in producing a communication theory of organizations (Deetz, 1994a). Historically, few scholars in the academic units of organizational communication have approached the issue this way. Until recently, psychological or social-cultural explanations have been more often used in most studies. Gradually, since the early 1980s, scholars in communication departments as well as a large number of non-U.S. scholars and some scholars from other academic units have focused on organizations as complex discursive formations where discursive

sive practices are both “in” organizations and productive of them. Because of the tendency to delimit organizational communication as a professional unit or a distinct phenomenon, until recently non-U.S. and non-communication scholars were often absent from reviews (e.g., the various works of Knights, Willmott, Hollway, Cooper, Burrell, Gergen, Power, Townley, and Alvesson).

In this review, I will accept this third way of thinking about organizational communication. The recursiveness of this position means that the production of the field as an academic unit and organizational communication as a distinct phenomenon are themselves discursive accomplishments. My analysis will thus work at a metalevel from which conceptions of organizations and processes in them by researchers and “organizational members” can themselves be seen “communicationally.” This view allows a deeper analysis that can display how study results are produced rather than just providing here another review of results from different research programs. The duality of studying human interaction in a specific location and the assumption that human interaction is a core formative feature of world construction complicates analysis much but also greatly enriches it.

Largely I follow the instruction given by Bourdieu (1991):

The social sciences deal with prenamed, preclassified realities which bear proper nouns and common nouns, titles, signs and acronyms. At the risk of unwittingly assuming responsibility for the acts of constitution of whose logic and necessity they are unaware, the social sciences must take as their object of study the social operations of *naming* and the rites of institution through which they are accomplished. (p. 106)

Attention can be drawn to how both they who study and they who participate “in” organizations produce phenomena in the world such as “organizations,” “communication,” “needs,” “motivations,” “information,” “profits,” and various personal and social divisions

such as “men” and “women,” “workers” and “management.” Following this tack requires some understanding of a nonrepresentational or constitutive view of language that cannot be developed here at any length but ought to be familiar enough to most readers that a short development will suffice (see Deetz, 1992, chap. 5).

In line with modern discourse theory, conceptions are always contests for meaning (see Epstein, 1988; Weedon, 1987). Language does not name objects in the world; it is core to the process of constituting the indeterminate and ambiguous external world into specific objects. The appearance of labeling or categorizing existing objects is derived from this more fundamental act of object constitution through language. The world thus can be constituted in many ways depending on alternative systems of valuing. The most significant part of this contest for object constitution is the capacity to enact the lines of distinction producing some things as alike and others as different. Only secondarily is the contest over the positive or negative valance ascribed to the produced things. For example, feminist writers for years have shown how male dominance is maintained by the dominant group’s ability to define the dimensions of difference and position themselves at the positive end of each dimension (see Treichler, 1989; Weedon, 1987). Marginalized groups, following this analysis, are defined as “the other” thus acquiring an identity and valued functions but only as given by the opposition pole in the dominant group’s conceptual map (e.g., “emotionally supportive” rather than “rational” or “private” rather than “public”). They acquire a type of autonomy but only in a language/conceptual game not of their own choosing. In accepting the state of “other,” they have little self-definition and the game is stacked (see Bourdieu, 1977, 1991).

From the communicative metaperspective taken here, the core process in understanding alternative research programs is to understand their discourse—how they perceive, think, and talk about organizational life. Understanding a discourse includes identification of

the object distinctions they make, whose language is used in making those object distinctions, what and whose values and interests are carried with those distinctions, and how the conflicting descriptions of the world are handled as well as exploring their processes of self-justification and distinction from alternative research programs. Further, research programs differ in the extent to which they recognize and make explicit their own constitutive activities. Many researchers assume that they are merely discovering and naming real-world objects. To the extent that this is done much of the micropractice of research is missed.

MAPPING APPROACHES TO ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Trying to produce any organizing scheme of these discourses accounting for different theoretical conceptions, methodological preferences, and value commitments is filled with difficulties. Each research program might well use different ways of comparing and contrasting itself with other programs. In fact a primary way that any research program establishes itself is in its means of distinction, both in the sense of producing a difference and giving itself the positive terms (see Bourdieu, 1991).

Many schemes have been proposed for organizing and thinking about alternative research programs. Most of these classify studies based on subdivisions of the organizational communication phenomenon or differences in research methods. For example, Wert-Gray et al. (1991) suggest three dominant areas of work: (1) information flow and channels, (2) climate, and (3) superior/subordinate. And Redding and Tompkins (1988) divide the work into (1) formal channels, (2) superior/subordinate communication, (3) informal channels, and (4) measuring and data collection. Putnam and Cheney (1985) suggest (1) channels, (2) communication climate, (3) superior/subordinate, (4) network analy-

sis, and (5) communication media with additional emerging perspectives. And in perhaps the most exhaustive study, Allen, Gotcher, and Seibert (1993) review 17 areas of work: (1) interpersonal relations, (2) communication skills, (3) culture and symbolism, (4) information flow and channels, (5) power and influence, (6) decision making and problem solving, (7) communication networks, (8) communication and management styles, (9) organization-environment interface, (10) technology, (11) language and messages, (12) structure, (13) uncertainty and information adequacy, (14) groups, (15) ethics, (16) cross-cultural, and (17) climate. These divisions and study counts are interesting and represent ways of thinking about the field that are fairly common. But such approaches tend to reify topical divisions that are the constructed outcomes of discursive processes thus treating them as natural rather than produced, hiding values and assumptions, and disowning the way these divisions preference particular studies of communication. Let us consider for a moment these preferences.

First, the topical orientation is itself not a neutral classification tool. It assumes and reproduces a particular view of communication and organizations. For example, it assumes an atomistic orientation to the world like the 19th-century natural science model and advantages studies that follow that model. Studies based in holistic assumptions, such as ethnographic approaches, may get put in a category like "culture" or "climate." This makes "culture" into one phenomenon among others in organizations that can be studied. Not only do cultural studies deny that culture is one thing among many *in* organizations, the classification buries the important things that ethnographic researchers said about organizations' structures and activities like channels and interpersonal relations. Only studies that explicitly study channels and interpersonal relations as isolated phenomena appear in those categories. Ethnographic researchers rarely study a topic, they study a particular site. What would we learn if we classified by site,

the social problem considered, group allegiance, or the moral stance rather than topic? Topical divisions probably made sense when the vast majority of researchers believed that the elements of organizations were atomistic rather than holistic, that organizations were primarily a thing rather than a process, and that communication was a phenomenon among others rather than an approach one takes to organization studies. As these change so must our ways of accounting for similarities and differences in organization studies.

Second, the devices of data collection shape the review in further ways. In some of these reviews, the data pool is limited to *studies* published in "communication" journals and the manner of display is usually the number of essays. The classifying processes match assumptions of the natural science model thus both normalizing its preferred manner of report and overemphasizing its impact. The "field" looks different in reviews that consider scholarly book chapters, scholarly books, and/or unpublished research reports to companies instead of journal articles. Further, the concept of "studies" itself tends to get defined in terms of data collection, thus analytic and conceptual work, which often have great impact on the field and its practices, tend to be left out. And further yet, the concept of the "communication field" has often led to the omission of non-North American studies that organize "fields" differently and important "communication studies" on topics that are definitionally excluded. For example, the discursive studies in such journals as *Organization* or *Organization Studies*, communication-based studies in *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, and interaction studies in "sociology" are left out, and works by authors in management schools in such journals as *Management Communication Quarterly* are included. The tendency is to bias the counts toward studies from a psychological and managerial perspective. And finally, *quantity of studies* as a measure favors narrow quantitative analyses. What if we measured significance of impact, transformative

potential, or applicability to wider stakeholder interests? Each of these would provide different pictures of "our" studies and contribution and pressure the field's development in different ways.

I think we get further if we look at the practice of research and researcher commitments rather than looking at topics as if they could be freed from the researcher's orientation. As we become more diverse as a people and as researchers, a consideration of general research assumptions becomes more instructive. Reviewers looking at research assumptions and orientations have tended to focus more on methodological/epistemological differences than study topics. And rarely have they gone beyond methodological choices to a full consideration of the way theoretical and value commitments are carried with them.

Reviews that have considered research orientations have fairly high agreement in categories of classification. Putnam (1982; Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983), for example, describes studies as functionalist, interpretive, and critical. Redding and Tompkins (1988) describe them in a parallel fashion as modernist, naturalistic, and critical (a scheme followed by Wert-Gray et al., 1991, in their methodological orientations). These authors would probably add "postmodernist" if they were writing these essays today. I suspect that these divisions are largely a result of the influence of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) popular discussion of sociological paradigms as functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist, and radical structuralist. Their paradigm descriptions have been very influential in management and communication studies, and the influence is well deserved. While I believe fundamentally flawed, their approach serves as a useful point of departure for further development (see Deetz, 1996).

Importantly, Burrell and Morgan's discussion of paradigmatic differences in the late 1970s gave legitimacy to fundamentally different research programs and enabled the development of different criteria for the evaluation of research. Their exhaustive review was

not only valuable in itself, but they were able to provide an analysis that probed deeply into the assumptions on which different research programs were based. But harms were also created. I believe that there are reasons for this significant influence beyond the clarity of presentation and exhaustive compilation of literature. When the grid and discussion were published in 1979, those of us doing alternative work readily embraced the grid for it gave each of us a kind of asylum. While some of us were uncomfortable with the dimensions and philosophical analysis, we happily accepted the new-found capacity to present ourselves to mainstream critics as doing fundamentally different, but legitimate, kinds of research and began to work on concepts and evaluation criteria within our now produced as different and unitary communities. Many of those doing more mainstream work also found it appealing since, as I will argue, the conceptual distinctions Burrell and Morgan used to produce the grid were the same distinctions the mainstream tradition had used to discuss different research agendas. Thus, they reaffirm that tradition's conceptual map and provide a "safe" understanding of the developing alternatives. Further, the conception of paradigms as distinct schools of thought with their own problem statements and evaluative criteria could be used by the dominant "functionalists" to protect themselves from growing criticism (the isolationist strategy noted by Reed, 1985). They too would have a safe and separate place (see Rodríguez & Cai, 1994).

But as organization science and organizational communication research have continued to evolve, problems with the Burrell and Morgan grid and its adaptations have become more pressing. While not primarily a result of the original analysis, the four-paradigm solution has often led to quick categorizations and to debates around paradigm commensurability and appropriate use of the different paradigms (Hassard, 1991; Jackson & Carter, 1991; Parker & McHugh, 1991; Willmott, 1993). Some of these problems and debates arise from the tendency to reify concepts, es-

pecially in educational programs and materials. The Burrell and Morgan grid can easily produce four unitary paradigms, rather than provide two lines of differentiation that draw attention to important differences in research programs. Burrell and Morgan invite reification by claims of paradigmatic incommensurability, by staying at the level of theory and reconstructed science, and by accepting Kuhn's loose conception of paradigms. The dimensions of contrast can be used as a way of focusing attention to differences that make a difference rather than as a means of classification, but few writers and teachers have done so.

But my main concern is not paradigm commensurability or reification but rather the dimensions of contrast themselves. A deeper and more interesting understanding of contemporary research practices and debates is possible by focusing on other contrastive dimensions. The question is not: Are these the right categories or who fits in each? but: Are these differences that make a difference? Do these dimensions provide insight into genuine differences in research programs? I hope to aid rethinking the differences and similarities among different research approaches, with the aim of making our conflicts and discussions more productive rather than simply replacing four boxes with four different boxes. In many ways, the various adaptations of Burrell and Morgan have hampered the development of new research agenda and led to less than productive conceptions in the field.

Burrell and Morgan, and subsequently many organizational communication scholars, largely accepted the conceptual distinctions from sociological functionalism and its supporting philosophy of science. Burrell and Morgan performed a political intervention as they spoke on behalf of the oppositions, the negative terms, the "others" in "sociological functionalism's" conceptual map. For example, they accepted the traditional functionalist "subjective/objective" distinction but provided a careful development of "subjective" research. Thus, using the dominant concep-

tions, they merely asked, "Who is 'other'?" and "In what ways are they 'other'?" But they never questioned whether distinctions based on such conceptions as "subjective/objective" were useful at all (see Deetz, 1994a). In contrast to their analysis, each "other" (each marginalized paradigmatic group like "interpretivists" or "radical humanists") would have defined its difference from the dominant functionalist conceptions differently, that is, if they accepted their "groupness" at all (see Bernstein, 1983; Natter, Schatzki, & Jones, 1995). This positioning, as I have suggested, partly accounts for the rapid acceptance of the Burrell and Morgan's grid into the mainstream of management science and organizational communication discussions.

Further, this move protected functionalist researchers from the most damning critiques (and ones they would not understand, e.g., the "artificial" quality of their "facts") in favor of their preferred battles (e.g., between their "objectivity" and others' "subjectivity"). At the same time, the most innovative of the new researchers found it now even more difficult to express what they did since they had to use a language in which their meanings did not fit (e.g., critical theorists and phenomenologists who did not accept "subject/object" dualism had to accept the classification as "subjective humanists" if they were to have a home at all). They had to choose between misrepresenting themselves clearly through Burrell and Morgan or representing themselves well but being considered obscure or bad writers. Thus, the effect was to normalize the emerging research paradigms favoring rather traditional directions even within them. For example, when Burrell and Morgan, and subsequently Putnam and others, provided "interpretive" work with the "subjective" ascription (even if now positively valued) they, perhaps unwittingly, tended to favor cultural studies that focused on member's meanings that were more subject to cultural management and managerial control. At the same time the "objective" ascription protected "functionalist" studies

from a thorough analysis of their hidden values and sources of subjectivity, as if they might be too objective—a preferred flaw—rather than too subjective—a flaw they would not understand. Similarly, the many critical theorists with strong suspicions of humanist philosophies suddenly found themselves either conceptualized as radical humanists or invisible (lost in some hole in paradigmatic space). The Frankfurt school's attack on the subjective domination in science all too often got lost in the radical humanist conception. My point is not that Burrell and Morgan and their followers were representationally wrong in the presentation of organization and organizational communication studies (for there are many representationally "right" schemes and surely the nearly 20 years since their work has led to many changes), but their conceptions continue to foster less interesting and productive conflicts and developments than are possible. The processes of differentiation in mainstream functionalist sociology must be abandoned before more challenging differentiations are possible and alternative research programs can be given a full complementary role.

By focusing on the constitutive moves of discourse in organizational research and organizational practice rather than in psychological, sociological, or economic theories of organizational behavior, more interesting differences can be displayed. In my development below, I will privilege programmatic differentiations rooted in what I will develop as a "dialogic" perspective. What Burrell and Morgan called "functionalist" research will thus be implicitly represented as an "other." In doing so, both the lines of division and the arguments that extend from this can be redrawn. "Functionalist" style work can be reclaimed as legitimate and useful (though neither cumulative or "true") in specifiable ways as reunderstood from dialogic conceptions. Nondialogic research programs will not be seen as alternative routes to truth, but as specific discourses that specify and provide answers to specific types of problems. By setting

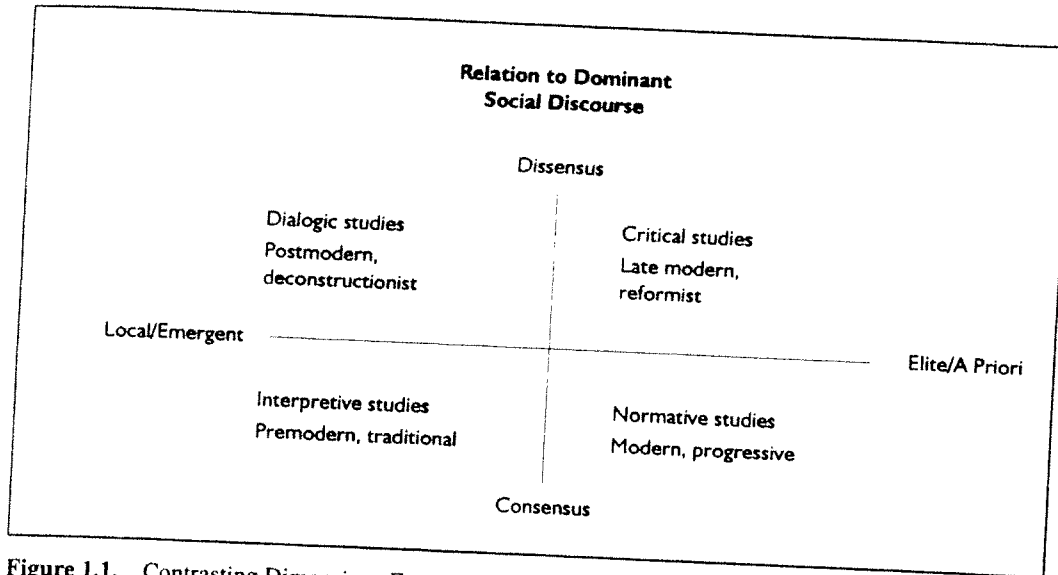


Figure 1.1. Contrasting Dimensions From the Metatheory of Representational Practices
 SOURCE: Adapted from Deetz (1994d).

aside typical research claims of universality and/or certainty, different research traditions can provide productively complementary and conflictual insights into organizational life. The test of my suggested differentiations is not whether they provide a better map, but whether they provide an interesting (or what Rorty, 1989, developed as “edifying”) way to talk about what is happening in research programs.

ALTERNATIVES FROM A COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE²

A more contemporary look at alternative communication research programs can be gained by locating research differences in what was conceptualized earlier as “discourses”—that is, the linguistic systems of distinction, the values enacted in those distinctions, the orientations to conflict and relations to other groups. Two dimensions of contrast will be developed here. Later in the essay, four prototypical discourses or research approaches—*normative, interpretive,*

critical, and *dialogic*—will be developed from these conceptions. See Figure 1.1.

First, differences among research orientations can be shown by contrasting “local/emergent” research conceptions with “elite/a priori” ones. This dimension focuses on the origin of concepts and problem statements as part of the constitutive process in research.

Second, research orientations can be contrasted in the extent to which they work within a dominant set of structurings of knowledge, social relations, and identities (a reproductive practice), called here “consensus” discourse, and the extent to which they work to disrupt these structurings (a productive practice), called here “dissensus” discourse. This dimension focuses on the relation of research practices to the dominant social discourses within the organization studied, the research community, and/or wider community. I see these dimensions as analytic ideal types in Weber’s sense mapping out two distinct continua. While categories of research programs are derivatively produced by the dimensions, the intent here is to aid attention to meaningful differences and similarities among different research activities rather than classification.

TABLE 1.1 Characterizations of the Local/Emergent–Elite/A Priori Dimension

<i>Local/Emergent</i>	<i>Elite/A Priori</i>
Comparative communities	Privileged community
Multiple language games	Fixed language game
Particularistic	Universalistic
Systematic philosophy as ethnocentric	Grounded in hoped for systematic philosophy
Atheoretical	Theory driven
Situationally or structural determinism	Methodological determinism
Nonfoundational	Foundational
Local narratives	Grand narrative of progress and emancipation
Sensuality and meaning as central concerns	Rationality and truth as central concerns
Situated, practical knowledge	Generalizable, theoretical knowledge
Tends to be feminine in attitude	Tends to be masculine in attitude
Sees the strange	Sees the familiar
Proceeds from the other	Proceeds from the self
Ontology of "otherness" over method	Epistemological and procedural issues rule over substantive assumptions

The Local/Emergent–Elite/A Priori Dimension

The key questions this dimension addresses are, where and how do research concepts arise, and thus, implicitly *whose* conceptions are used? In the two extremes, either concepts are developed in relation with organizational members and transformed in the research process or they are brought to the research "interaction" by the researcher and held static through the research process—concepts can be developed *with* or applied *to* the organizational members and activities being studied. This dimension can be characterized by a set of paired conceptions that flesh out contrasts embedded in the two poles. Table 1.1 presents an array of these contrasts. The choice of and stability of the language system are of central importance since the linguistic/conceptual system directs the statement of problems, the observational process itself in producing objects and highlighting and hiding potential experiences, the type of claims made, the report to external groups, and the

likely generalizations (whether appropriate or not) readers will make.

The local/emergent pole draws attention to researchers who work with an open language system and produce a form of knowledge characterized more by insight into empirical events than large-scale empirical generalizations. Central to their work is the situated nature of the research enterprise. Problem statements, the researcher's attention, and descriptions are worked out as a play between communities. The theoretical vocabulary carried into the research activity is often considered by the researcher as sensitizing or a guide to getting started constantly open to new meanings, translations, and redifferentiation based on interactions in the research process. Produced insights into organization processes may be particularistic regarding both time and place even though the emerging analytic frame is designed to aid in the deeper understanding of other particular settings. Cumulative understanding happens in providing stories or accounts that may provide insight into other sites rather than cumulative universal as-

piring claims. The research attends to the feelings, intuitions, and multiple forms of rationality of both the researched and researcher rather than using a single logic of objectification or purified rationality. The study is guided more by concept formation than concept application. Distantiation and the "otherness" of the other (the way people and events exceed categories and classifications of them) are sought by the researcher to force reconception and linguistic change. This is considered more valuable than the identification and naming of preconceived traits, attributes, or groupings. Objectivity, to the extent that it is considered at all, arises out of the interplay and the constant ability of the researched to object and correct. The researcher is more a skilled collaborator in knowledge production than an expert observer.

The elite/a priori pole draws attention to the tendency in some types of research programs to privilege the particular language system of the researcher and the expertise of the research community as well as hold that language system constant throughout the research process. Such research tends to be heavily theory driven with careful attention to definitions prior to the research process. The experiences of the researched become coded into the researcher's language system. Demands of consistency and/or reliability require changes in the conceptional system to take place outside of rather than in the research process.

Whether intentional or not, the conceptual system of the researcher is considered better or more clearly represents what "really" is the case than that of everyday people and seeks generality beyond the various local systems of meaning. In privileging a language system, there is further a tendency to universalize and justify such moves by appeals to foundations or essentialist assumptions. Research claims, thus, are seen as freed from their local and temporal conditions of production. In most cases, these research approaches follow an enlightenment hope for producing rational knowledge not constrained by tradition or par-

ticular belief systems of the researcher or researched. The produced knowledge is treated as progressive or reformist in conception leading to increased capacities or well-being. The more "normative" versions openly proclaim "objectivity" and value neutrality based on the shared-language game and research methods, and tend to overlook the positions of their own community or alliances with other groups. The more "critical" versions quickly note the presence of values and distortions in normative work, and hold out the hope for a better, purer form of knowledge based in processes that include more interests and means of analysis in the work.

Focusing on the origin of concepts and problems using a dimension of "local/emergent-elite/a priori" allows three important gains. First, it acknowledges linguistic/social constructionism in all research positions and directs attention to whose concepts are used in object production and determination of what is problematic (see Deetz, 1973). Second, the focus on the origin of concepts helps distinguish fundamentally different kinds of knowledge. Elite/a priori conceptions lead more to the development of "theoretical codified" knowledge, a kind of "book" knowledge or "knowing about." Local/emergent conceptions lead more to the development of "practical" knowledge, a kind of "street wisdom" or a "knowing how." Third, this dimension helps us remember that both the application and discovery of concepts can demonstrate implicit or explicit political alliances with different groups in the organization or larger society. For example, to the extent that organizational researchers' concepts align with managerial conceptions and problem statements and are applied a priori in studies, the knowledge claims are intrinsically biased toward these interests as they are applied within the site community (Mumby, 1988). The knowledge claims become part of the same processes that are being studied, reproducing worldviews and personal identities and fostering particular interests within the organization (see Knights, 1992).

TABLE 1.2 Characterizations of the Consensus-Dissensus Dimension

<i>Consensus</i>	<i>Dissensus</i>
Trust	Suspicion
Hegemonic order as natural state	Conflicts over order as natural state
Naturalization of present	Present order is historicized and politicized
Integration and harmony are possible	Order indicates domination and suppressed conflicts
Research focuses on representation	Research focuses on challenge and reconsideration (representation)
Mirror (reflecting) dominant metaphor	Lens (seeing/reading as) dominant metaphor
Validity central concern	Insight and praxis central concern
Theory as abstraction	Theory as way of seeing
Unified science and triangulation	Positional complementarity
Science is neutral	Science is political
Life is discovery	Life is struggle and creation
Researcher anonymous and out of time and space	Researcher named and positioned
Autonomous/free agent	Historically/socially situated agent

The Consensus-Dissensus Dimension

The "consensus-dissensus" dimension draws attention to the relation of research to existing social orders. Consensus or dissensus should not be understood as agreement and disagreement but rather as presentation of unity or of difference, the continuation or disruption of any prevailing discourse. See Table 1.2 for conceptualization of this dimension. This dimension is similar to Burrell and Morgan's use of the traditional sociological distinction between an interest in "change" and "regulation," but enables some advantages. Rather than being class based, contemporary concerns with conflict and power focus on the ways predominant discourses (though often disorganized and disjunct) place limitations on people in general including managers and limit the successful functioning of organizations in meeting human needs. The focus is more on the suppression of diverse values and the presence of destructive control processes than on conflict among groups. The processes of domination today are less often seen as

macrosociological and more often seen as arising in normative or unobtrusive controls (see Barker, 1993; Etzioni, 1961; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985) and instantiated as routine micropractices in the work site itself (Ashcraft & Pacanowsky, 1996; Deetz, 1994b, 1994c, 1998; Knights & Willmott, 1989). The focus on discursive rather than group relations aids the understanding of domination and the various ways important organizational stakeholders are left out of discussions as well as the ways such forms of decisional skewing are reproduced.

The consensus pole draws attention to the way some research programs both seek order and treat order production as the dominant feature of natural and social systems. With such a conception, the primary goal of the research is to display a discovered order with a high degree of fidelity or verisimilitude. The descriptions hope to "mirror" entities and relations that exist out there in a relatively fixed state reflecting their "real" character. In the "normative" version this reality is treated like the natural world while in "interpretive" work it is a social world. Language is treated as a

system of representations, to be neutralized and made transparent, used only to display the presumed shared world. Existing orders are largely treated as natural and unproblematic. To a large extent through the highlighting of ordering principles, such orders are perpetuated. Random events and deviance are downplayed in significance in looking at norms and the normal, and attention is usually to processes reducing deviance, uncertainty, and dissonance. In most cases where deviance is itself of attention, it tends to be normalized through looking at the production of deviant groups (i.e., other orders). Conflict and fragmentation are usually treated as system problems and attention is given to how orders deal with them in attempts at maintenance.

The dissensus pole draws attention to research programs that consider struggle, conflict, and tensions to be the natural state. Research itself is seen as inevitably a move in a conflictual site. The existing orders indicate the suppression of basic conflicts and along with that the domination of people and their full variety of interests. Research aims at challenging mechanisms of order maintenance to reclaim conflicts and tension. The nonnormative aspects of human conduct and extraordinary responses are emphasized along with the importance of largely random and chance events. Rather than language naming and describing, researcher conceptions are seen as striking a difference, de- and redifferentiating experience (Cooper, 1989; Cooper & Burrell, 1988; Deetz, 1992; Martin, 1990; Weedon, 1987). The "mirror" gives way to the "lens" as the dominant metaphor for language and theory noting the shifting analytic attempt to see what could not be seen before and showing the researcher as positioned and active (Deetz, 1992, chap. 3; Rorty, 1979). For dissensus style research, the generative capacity (the ability to challenge guiding assumptions, values, social practices, and routines) of an observation is more important than representational validity (see Gergen, 1978). The research is, in Knights's (1992) sense, "antipositive." Dissensus work does not deny

the significance of an ordered observed world, rather it takes it as a powerful (power filled) product and works to break reifications and objectifications to show fuller potential and variety than is immediately apparent. For example, consensus orientations in cultural studies seek to discover the organizational culture or cultures. Dissensus orientations show the fragmentation inherent in any claim of culture and the work required for site subjects to maintain coherence in the face of this as well as subjects' own forms of resistance (see Calás & Smircich, 1991; Holmer-Nadesan, 1996; Martin, 1990, 1992; Smircich & Calás, 1987; Trethewey, 1997). Consensus orientations apply role and identity classifications and relate them to other variables; dissensus orientations see identity as multiple, conflictual, and in process.

While these differences can be characterized clearly in abstraction, in continuous time every consensus arises out of and falls to dissensus, and every dissensus gives away to emerging (if temporary) consensus. The issue is not the ultimate outcome desired nor likely but rather which part of this flow through time is claimed in the research process. For example, while critical theorists clearly seek a social consensus that is more rational, their research tries to produce this through the creation of dissensus in place of dominant orders. For example, ideological critique in the critical theory conception of the negative dialectic is to reclaim conflict and destroy a false order rather than produce a new one. Thus, I place them on the dissensus end. Critical theories differ from many dialogic or "postmodern" positions in the production of dissensus. In critical theories, dissensus is produced by the use of elite understandings and procedures (as in Habermas, 1984, 1987; Kunda, 1992; Mumby, 1987; or several essays in Alvesson & Willmott, 1992). While in dialogic research, deconstructive processes are used to unmask elite conceptions thereby allowing organizational activities to be given new, multiple, and conflicting descriptions (Calás & Smircich, 1991; Kilduff, 1993; Laclau &

Mouffe, 1985; Linstead, 1993; Martin, 1990). The dialogic outcome requires a constant dedifferentiation and redifferentiation for the sake of demythologizing and enriching natural language and consequently opening to reconsideration the most basic and certain experiences of everyday work life.

PARADIGMS LOST, ORIENTATIONS STILL

The grid produced from these two dimensions provides a spatially and visually convenient, discursive four-space solution (hence we should always be easily reminded of its arbitrary and fictive character). I will describe these as different discourses to note a way of articulating arguments and engaging in research practices rather than a means of reconstructive self-naming. Each discourse provides an orientation to organizations, a way of constituting people and events in them, and a way of reporting on them. I hope that this also leads us to think about which discourse is being used or how it is joined with others rather than pigeonholing specific authors. Table 1.3 provides sketchy prototypical descriptions of each research orientation related to a dozen dimensions of interest shaping organizational communication research programs.

Calling these discourses "paradigms" would be a mistake for several reasons. First, each of these four discourses, which are provisionally held apart for viewing, is filled with internal conflict and strife—including theory debates, moments of incommensurability, dilettantes, and tyrants. Second, the edges are not demarcated. Most researchers and teachers do not cluster around a prototype of each, but gather at the crossroads, mix metaphors, and borrow lines from other discourses, dodging criticism by co-optation. Often practicing researchers happily move from one discourse to another without accounting for their own location. They operate like other organizational members borrowing on discourses that

suit their immediate purposes and the fashions of the moment (see Deetz, 1994b). There are certainly more and less serious plays across the lines, but the issue is not crossing but the seriousness of the play. Third, the discourses are not themselves sealed off from each other. They pose problems for each other and steal insights across the lines. For example, the philosophical fights between Habermas and Gadamer, Habermas and Lyotard, Habermas and Luhmann, and Foucault and everybody have left their traces in each one's work. From these struggles, the various organizational communication research programs based in these works have gained enriched conceptions of power, knowledge, agency, and political action (see, e.g., Mumby & Putnam, 1992).

Provisional ordering of discourses is not to police the lines, but to provide a view of the social resources from which researchers draw and an understanding of the stock arguments used in developing and justifying research activities and claims. The ideal types aid the understanding of differences that matter that are hard to see in the flow of research activity. Clarifying the tendencies in specific types of research positions helps clarify debates and the relation of different groups to them. For example, the interpretive, critical, and dialogic critiques of normative research are quite different. Normative researchers who are accustomed to making arguments against subjectivity and traditionalism simply miss the point of each of these critiques; they often reduce them to abstract and confused presentations of what they think "opponents" should be saying rather than concrete but different arguments from what they expected.

Further, while most researchers are not purists, their work carries assumptions and responsibilities that are central to understanding and evaluating their work, but are rarely explicit in study reports. For example, many feminists' writings carry a general sympathy with the conceptual and analytic power of *dialogic* research programs, while they still wish to have a political agenda that requires *critical* preconceptions that assume social di-

TABLE 1.3 Prototypical Discursive Features

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Discourse</i>			
	<i>Normative</i>	<i>Interpretive</i>	<i>Critical</i>	<i>Dialogic</i>
Basic goal	Lawlike relations among objects	Display unified culture	Unmask domination	Reclaim conflict
Method	Nomothetic science	Hermeneutics, ethnography	Cultural criticism, ideology critique	Deconstruction, genealogy
Hope	Progressive emancipation	Recovery of integrative values	Reformation of social order	Claim a space for lost voices
Metaphor of social relations	Economic	Social	Political	Mass
Organization metaphor	Marketplace	Community	Polity	Carnival
Problems addressed	Inefficiency, disorder	Meaninglessness, illegitimacy	Domination, consent	Marginalization, conflict suppression
Concern with communication	Fidelity, influence, information needs	Social acculturation, group affirmation	Misrecognition, systematic distortion	Discursive closure
Narrative style	Scientific/technical, strategic	Romantic, embracing	Therapeutic, directive	Ironic, ambivalent
Time identity	Modern	Premodern	Late modern	Postmodern
Organizational benefits	Control, expertise	Commitment, quality work life	Participation, expanded knowledge	Diversity, creativity
Mood	Optimistic	Friendly	Suspicious	Playful
Social fear	Disorder	Depersonalization	Authority	Totalization, normalization

visions and gender-based domination to be general (see Flax, 1990; Fraser & Nicholson, 1988; Mumby, 1996). Such works (e.g., Martin, 1990, 1992) can be classified as dialogic, but the ethical and political character of many of these studies cannot be justified easily with dialogic conceptions alone. The distinctions developed in this essay can help display the tensions and the resources from which such researchers draw to conduct and justify their work.

This can further be shown using my own work as an example. I often draw on conceptions from critical and dialogic writings. For me, critical theory conceptions of ideology and distorted communication provide useful sensitizing concepts and an analytic framework for looking for micropractices of unwarranted control, discursive closure, ideology, and skewed representation in organizational sites. But rarely are these conceptions closely tied to the full critical theory agenda. They re-

quire considerable reworking in specific sites, and the results of my studies aim more at finding and giving suppressed positions a means of expression than realizing an ideal speech situation or reaching a purer consensus (see Deetz, 1995b, 1998). What is important is not whether I am a late-modern critical theorist or a dialogic postmodernist, but rather the meaning and implications of concepts that I draw from these two competitive research orientations. My degree of consistency is of less interest than how I handle the tension and whether the two conceptual resources provide an interesting analysis or intervention. Some clarity and general understanding in alternative research orientations provide guidance and accountability or at least a common stock of material for building and evaluating new arguments in these cases. Further, exploring general orientations can help reveal assumptions hidden in one's own way of working since they remain unproblematic in one's own research community.

In an ideal research program, we might identify a complementary relation among research orientations with each asking different questions at different moments and each, at the appropriate moment, answering to the specific criteria of a particular orientation. This might operate in a rotation among incompatible orientations without any orientation being privileged or any orientation being reduced to a preliminary or supplementary role. For example, my work relies much on a conception of discursive closure, a conception that draws attention to places where cooperative decision making is hampered by arbitrary limits enacted in the discussion (see Deetz, 1992, pp. 187ff.). As a *critical* researcher I must show how these closures are intrusions of power relations usually based in or supporting social divisions that lead to distorted communication and a false consensus. My study appeals to reason, logical analyses, and a coherent demonstration. As a *dialogic* researcher I see these closures as the suppression of conflicts and see my own concerns with consensus and appeals to reason as simply different acts of

privilege and potential closure. My analysis is now judged by the way indeterminacy is allowed to reemerge and the compelling quality of recovered claims and voices. But at another moment yet, I may well pose *normative* questions: Which means of closure are used most often? Who uses them? When are they used? Can people be taught to avoid them? A study designed to answer such questions now appeals to standards of definition, measurement, sampling, and quantitative data analysis. And further yet, there are *interpretive* concerns: What sense do these discursive moves have in a community? To what ends are they used? How are they self-understood and justified? What are their actual consequences in specific circumstances? Interpretive research standards are now relevant.

One can easily see how such a rotation through orientations might be constant and productive without losing the separation and tension among them. Such tensions could help enrich work from each orientation. Yet, to be honest, few research programs are treated this way and most researchers, like myself, follow their own lines of interest, commitments, and training, which either leads to an eclipse of questions and concerns from other orientations or at least leaves them for someone else who is interested in those problems. Taking seriously other works does not mean that we find other groups' issues and procedures as necessarily interesting or helpful nor should we naively believe that all of them are. But our claims and the relation between our claims and study procedures should be clear so that objections and conflicts can be on those grounds rather than on imposed traditional problem statements and methods. The point is for the researcher to be clear about what type of questions or claims drives the work at any particular time and how the work addresses the standards and criteria appropriate to it.

A basic understanding of alternative research orientations enables shorthand accounts and helps distinguish intentional and/or productive ambiguities from careless and/or unproductive ones. As a reviewer, I am

often frustrated by nonreflective mixing of metaphors and conceptions in submitted essays. Often the claims made would require a different kind of study based on different assumptions and research activities. Partly, I think this arises from authors trying to anticipate reviewer needs for normative type generalizations while being committed to a nonnormative research orientation, but it also comes from inattention to what makes different kinds of research different. Clearly, a balance must be struck between (1) reifying research orientations through simplistic grids and subsequent overcharacterizations and rigid standards and (2) having each study try to be totally self-justifying and cut loose from any community. While I do not think there is any easy way out of this tension, having good dimensions of contrast and good characterizations helps. A very brief sketch of the four orientations aids further in highlighting differences and similarities in these community discourses along the suggested dimensions of difference.

The Discourse of Normative Studies

Normative research tends to accept organizations as naturally existing objects open to description, prediction, and control. Goals established by some specific group, usually upper management, are largely accepted as the goals of the organization and most often the research either implicitly or explicitly supports more efficient accomplishment of these goals. Because of this, commercial corporations are usually discussed in economic terms with issues discussed in relation to "rational" economic goals. The researchers producing this discourse have been described as functionalists, covering-law theorists, or simply practicing the variable analytic tradition. I describe this discourse as "normative" to emphasize the centrality of codification, the search for regularity and normalization, and the implied prescriptive claims (see Deetz, 1973; Hollway, 1984). This discourse is

largely dominant in North America and in applied organizational research everywhere. Articles published by U.S. researchers employed by communication departments and published in "communication" journals have been mostly of this sort, though the mix is changing. Most textbooks are written in this discourse emphasizing topical divisions and research findings even when they review research established in other traditions.

The discourse is decisively modern in Gergen's (1992) sense and the knowledge is considered positive, cumulative, and progressive. A grand narrative of progressive emancipation from disease, disorder, and material deprivation is shaped by a commitment to make a better world through discovery of fundamental processes and increased production (Lyotard, 1984). While the organization is usually treated as an existing object produced for instrumental ends, usually making money, some conception of the invisible hand makes that goal well-integrated with other social goals of development and widespread availability of goods and services. Generally, the research is expressly apolitical and value neutral, but as already shown, values reside in elite conceptions, choice of problems to study, and relation to other groups.

Most of this work has implicitly supported an orderly, well-integrated world, with compliant members and regulated conflicts, and has accepted without examination existing organizational goals and member positions. They represent communication primarily in information and administration terms (see Beniger, 1986). Much of the discussion of communication in "information" terms assumes a control orientation and theories of persuasion and information transfer dominate much of the concern with most frequently studied topics such as supervisor/subordinate communication, compliance gaining, networks, power, and relations with the public. Normative works appear in three basic varieties each with distinct assumptions and goals of their own—covering laws, systems theory, and skill development.

Covering Laws

Research modeled on the search for lawlike generalizations in organizations until fairly recently has dominated organizational communication study. Research of this type was most explicitly defended in communication studies by Berger (1977) and reconstructed and well justified in Donaldson (1985; see also Barley & Kunda, 1992; DiMaggio, 1995; O'Keefe, 1976). The research practices mirror 19th-century conceptions of the natural sciences often involving the most recent advances in operationalization, hypothesization, statistical data reduction, and pattern "recognition" processes. Conceptions of operationalization, "objectivity," and lawlike relations are merely the most obvious form of practice. Conventional practices and methodological ("as if") determinism have in most cases replaced any strong allegiance to the positivist philosophy of science that grounds many of the methods and assumptions.

The "objects" constructed by the practices of this science are given qualities of constancy and permanence (universal across time and place), as if nature endowed them with specific attributes. The combination of a priori conceptions and the focus on consensus leads to the artifacts of these research practices to be described as facts. This discourse typifies the development of many data retrieval systems and information technologies since information can be treated as fixed truth claims freed from the time, place, and procedures of production. Facts become commodities and communication can be reduced to a transmission/retrieval process (for discussion of consequences, see Boland, 1987; Coombs, Knights, & Willmott, 1992; Lyytinen & Hirschheim, 1988).

Theory and theory testing are central to the logic of the research and many of the statistical procedures of data reduction. Normative studies of this type are explicitly dependent on theory, though in practice the theoretical concerns may be reduced to a mere reference list of prior studies and theory testing to merely

adding to a list of relations among variables of interest. One characteristic self-criticism is the lament over the lack of development or use of theory. Most of the studies work *as if* they were in a deductive theory testing mode even when their theoretical commitments are less than clear. Recently, Sutton and Staw (1995) demonstrated how references, data, variables, diagrams, and hypotheses are often used to cover up the lack of theory and actual theory testing.

This discourse is exemplified in studies of compliance gaining (e.g., Sullivan & Taylor, 1991), strategic message design and persuasion (e.g., Alexander, Penley, & Jernigan, 1991), supervision/subordinate interaction (Infante, Anderson, Martin, Herington, & Kim, 1993; Jablin, 1979; Sias & Jablin, 1995), and other places more completely described by Burrell and Morgan (1979) in their discussion of "functionalist." But it is also clearly present in those advocating the management of culture (e.g., Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Schein, 1992) through their conception of culture as an object to be strategically deployed (as Barley, Meyer, & Gash, 1988, have shown, this became very common in the 1980s). Most of the work on culture, climate, or varieties of total quality management (TQM) in organizational communication are more normative than interpretive owing to the way culture is treated as a variable or objective outcome within a larger strategic move of cultural management (see Shockley-Zalabak & Morley, 1994). Many of those working with new conceptions of organizations as "postmodern" (rather than post-modern approaches; Parker, 1992) have a discourse primarily structured in a normative fashion (e.g., Bergquist, 1993; Peters, 1987). Many Marxist studies, especially those done in contexts of Marxist domination of social discourse, use normative themes, but the elite group that gives rise to the concepts differs from those supporting most European and North American studies. Lenin's embracing of scientific management was in no way inconsistent. Strategic management in virtually every way is highly dependent on this discourse (Knights, 1992; Knights

& Morgan, 1991). Often team, quality, and participation programs are assessed using research procedures grounded in this perspective (e.g., Gordon, Infante, & Graham, 1988; Miller & Monge, 1985).

Studying communication in the organizational context poses some unique problems for this approach. The complexity and interdependence of organizational relationships challenge the rather atomistic and unidirectional models of both the theories and methods. And such relations are hard to duplicate in laboratory settings and control for numerous "extraneous" factors. Researchers have responded to this with much more sophisticated modeling and statistical analysis. Unfortunately, the outcomes of this are fairly abstract relations that lead to questions of validity and usefulness. Further, much of the research has turned to data collection from self-report interviews and survey questionnaires rather than direct observation (see Knapp, Putnam, & Davis, 1988). This has led to a preoccupation with measurement devices and with many studies that are more instrument than theory driven leaving the results difficult to understand or use in any systematic way.

Finally, most researchers conduct such studies primarily for generalization and use statistical significance tests, which allow generalization from the research sample to some population. But the question is often raised as to what is the appropriate "population" for the generalization. Many of the studies draw a sample from a single organization; presumably, this would indicate that this particular organization is the population about which the generalization is proposed. But most researchers want to generalize their findings to organizations in general. There the sample/population relation does not hold. Rarely has any program of work drawn a sample of enough organizations to warrant the type of generalizations made allowable within the assumptions of the studies themselves. Perhaps the Aston studies and the "communication audit" sponsored by the International Communi-

cation Association modeled after the Aston studies are partly used exceptions. The important point is that many normative style studies use the rhetorical power of the natural science model and principles of generalization and verification, but often cannot support their studies in organizations based on it. The discourse often conceals this (see Sutton & Staw, 1995). Many attempts have been made to summarize findings across studies, often using meta-analysis. Such studies are often contradictory and inconclusive and even further remove findings from theoretical commitments and specific site characteristics (see Baker, 1991; Miller & Monge, 1985; Wagner & Gooding, 1987; Wilkins & Anderson, 1991).

Systems Theory

During 1970s and 1980s, much theoretical attention was given to developing "systems" thinking in organizations, especially regarding the organization-environment relation spawned in part by the influence of Lawrence and Lorsch's (1967) work and the development of contingency theory (see Katz & Kahn, 1978; Monge, 1977, 1982; Monge, Farace, Eisenberg, Miller, & White, 1984). More recently, this work has become theoretically more sophisticated through conceptions of self-organizing systems and chaos theory (see Bellman & Roosta, 1987; Contractor, 1994; Senge, 1990; Weick, 1979).

While systems approaches continue the search for order and regularity and ultimately increased control by advantaged groups, they tend to emphasize holism over atomism and dynamic mutual causality over lawlike unidirectional causality. Rather than seeking surface-level, predictive variables the focus is on the deep processes of transformation that produce and interpret overt patterns of behavior—the processes of organizing rather than organizations. As Pettigrew (1990) described: "What is critical is not just events, but the underlying logics that give events meaning and significance . . . logics which may explain how and why these patterns occur in particular chronological sequence" (p. 273). In some

cases, in Weick's work, for example, the focus is so strongly on emergent properties, the particular setting, and interpretive processes that the research begins to sound much like *interpretive* studies (see Daft & Weick, 1984). But still, the work is heavily guided by researcher conceptions, the search for regularities anticipated by the researcher, the interpretation of patterns in the researcher's logic, the view from the outside, the hope for enduring regularities, and the assumption of managerial goals. The assumptions and regularities sought differ, however, from those sought by covering laws and even early systems theories.

Contractor (1994) has done an excellent job of making these differences clear. Five conceptions are important.

1. **Dynamic inferences:** Covering-law theorists develop hypotheses that posit a direct or indirect causal link between variables. These can be tested using rather standard statistical packages (SPSS). Dynamic hypotheses, however, posit an underlying logic or relational mathematical rather than quantitative connection. Similar hypotheses developed by covering-law and systems theorists are the same only when one of two central covering-law assumptions are empirically present (or methodologically produced): (a) There is no change in the two variables over time, or (b) the change is exactly equal.
2. **Mutual causality:** While covering-law theories posit unidirectional causality, systems theory suggests that many variables exist in mutual or circular causal relations. In such cases, there can be no separation between independent and dependent variables since the casual relation between the variables runs both ways.
3. **Historicity:** Systems theory suggests that the relation between variables is often time dependent, hence universalizing claims or even generalizations cannot be assumed across time and place. Thus, variable relations (e.g., between trust and compliance) present early in the history of an organiza-

tion can become quite different as the organization ages. A generalization about organizational communication must always reference the time in the organization's history during which it was true.

4. **Time irreversibility:** Most covering-law models assume that social systems work like closed mechanical systems, hence if an increase in the quantity of a variable leads to an expected outcome then decreasing the quantity of that variable will lead to less outcome. Rarely, however, are organizational relations simply transitive or stable like this.
5. **Discontinuity:** Covering-law theories assume that changes are usually quantitative and incremental. Systems theorists display the presence of sudden qualitative changes at certain thresholds.

Systems conceptions have clearly changed the way people and scholars think about organizations. Much theoretical writing is present. But generally, the empirical research has been more disappointing. Part of this arises from the dominance covering-law conceptions have had on defining the nature of "empirical" research. Frequently, process conceptions in systems theory are reduced to conceptions where covering-law data gathering and statistical analysis are applicable (see Everett, 1994; Monge, Cozzens, & Contractor, 1992). In many respects, systems conceptions are more productive in providing interesting and useful conceptions of complex organizational processes and interventions into them than they are in generating studies that result in journal publications (see Cecchin & Stratton, 1991). The conception of useful empirical work may well be biased in favor of covering-law style studies.

Communication Skills

The normative orientation not only guides much organizational communication research but also teaching and consulting activities. Arguably, much of the work going on under the

title "organizational communication" is more skill development than research directed. Included is everything from interpersonal and basic management skills to public speaking and public relation skills. While it is not my intent to provide any review of this work, I think that it is important to show how textbooks as well as training and development programs have traditionally been connected with the normative approach to organization studies.

In most cases, the implied pedagogy in the writings has been didactic and reliant on the presumption of an expert body of knowledge. And most of the research on skills has used covering-law style assumptions to test hypotheses and measure effectiveness. Further, while there is a directive quality to this work, the skills and the knowledge base from which they are drawn are usually treated as value neutral and as equally available and valuable for different organizational members. In doing so, the influence and control orientation of this work are treated as natural and self-evident, and other human goals and communication purposes are rarely considered. Usually, upper management's goals for the organization are accepted as given and legitimate. Even when the skills are promoted primarily for self-interests, generally those interests are seen as well integrated with upper management's organizational goals. Recently, as teams, stakeholder participation, and organizational creativity and learning have become of greater concern there is increasingly critical attention to understanding skill needs culturally, to the power relations in teaching and textbooks, and to the needs and perspectives of alternative organizational stakeholders (Argyris, 1994; Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993; Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Sprague, 1992).

The Discourse of Interpretive Studies

The number and importance of interpretive studies grew rapidly during the 1980s. For

most interpretive researchers, the organization is a social site, a special type of community that shares important characteristics with other types of communities. The emphasis is on a social rather than economic view of organizational activities. Traditional methods of studying communities are seen as especially useful. The expressed goal of many interpretive studies is to show how particular realities are socially produced and maintained through ordinary talk, stories, rites, rituals, and other daily activities. Most of the early attention for organizational communication researchers was derived from interest in the work of anthropologists such as Geertz (1973; see Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982), phenomenological and symbolic interactionist-inspired work in sociology (Bantz, 1983; Bormann, 1983; Douglas, 1970; Strauss, 1978), and the growing interest in hermeneutics and qualitative research methods (Trujillo, 1987).

While theoretical tensions and competitive traditions have grown along with this work, like these sources, much of the writings have a clear preservationist, naturalistic tone. Allow me to start with the more "naturalistic" assumptions held by interpretive researchers in their studies of organizational culture before turning to some of the tensions that have developed. Like many of the more naturalistic anthropological studies, interpretive research often appears motivated to save or record a life form with its complexity and creativity before it is lost to modern, instrumental life. The concern with community is often connected with the maintenance of a traditional sense of shared values and common practices and the presumed simple harmonious inner life of people who lived in such communities. Gergen (1992) described the romantic sense of this discourse with its depth and connection to the inner life bordering on sentimentality at times. Because of this I refer to the time frame as premodern in Table 1.3. This suggests more a concern with those aspects of life that have not yet been systematized, instrumentalized,

and brought under the control of modernism logics and sciences than a focus on the past.

Cultural studies in organizations are interpretive to the extent that they have not been captured by normative, modernist co-optations. Most interpretivists have taken culture to be an evocative metaphor for organizational life rather than a variable or thing that an organization has (Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg, & Martin, 1985, 1992; Smircich, 1983). Culture draws attention to what organizational members must know, believe, or be able to do in order to operate in a manner that is understandable and acceptable to other members and the means by which this knowledge, belief, and action routines are produced and reproduced. The interest in communication processes is far richer than that of meaning transmission present in normative work. Communication is considered to be a central means by which the meaning of organizational events is produced and sustained (Donnellon, Gray, & Bougon, 1986).

The basic function of interpretive work is "to translate the interests and concerns of one people into the interests and concerns of another" (Putnam, Bantz, Deetz, Mumby, & Van Maanen, 1993). The needs of translation require both a careful understanding of the other and an ability to present that understanding to one's own culture. A double hermeneutic (an interpretation of an interpreted world) and complex communicative process (metacommunication to the culturally different) is thus central to interpretive work and largely accounts for the situated and emergent nature of the understanding present in its texts (Barley, 1990).

The interpretive researcher often engages in some type of participant observation or other personal contact to collect material and work out understanding with the site community. Studies are usually done in the field and are based on a prolonged period of observation and/or depth interviewing. The interest is in the full person in the organization, thus social and life functions beyond the relation to the job are considered. The goals are much more open and emergent than in normative

work and much less connected to issues of efficiency and productivity. The workplace is seen as a site of human activity, one of those activities being "work" proper. The organization of the entire social community is of interest. While some writing might be somewhat impressionistic and focus on the surface feelings and meanings of either the cultural member or the researcher, generally, these would be considered weak and shallow studies. The point more often is to understand the social conditions of life giving rise to such feelings and meanings—the *deep* cultural read. Analytic attention is thus often directed to symbolism, metaphors, stories, jokes, advice and reason giving, narrative forms, rites and rituals, and the social functions of these activities (see, for examples and reviews, Brown, 1985; Browning, 1992; Goodall, 1990; Knuf, 1993; Smith & Eisenberg, 1987; Trujillo, 1987).

Interpretive studies accept much of the representational and consensual view of science seen in normative writings, but shift the relation between theoretical conceptions and the talk of the subjects under study. People are not considered to be objects like other objects, but are active sense makers like the researcher. Theory is given a far weaker role here. While theory may provide important sensitizing conceptions, it not a device of classification or tested in any simple and direct manner. The key conceptions and understandings must be worked out with the subjects under study. Research subjects can collaborate in displaying key features of their world. But like normative research, the pressure is to get it right, to display unified, consensual culture in the way that it "actually" exists. The report is to display convincingly a unified way of life with all its complexities and contradictions (Goodall, 1990; Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982; Van Maanen, 1988). In DiMaggio's (1995) conceptions, theory in interpretive work is often a narrative account of social processes "with emphasis on empirical tests of the plausibility of the narrative as well as careful attention to the scope of the account" (p. 391).

One gets a sense in tracking this work over time that it is becoming less productive in it-

self and more treated as a supplement to other kinds of work. Barley et al. (1988) represented well how the early naturalistic and anthropological interest in organizational cultures gradually was eclipsed by a managerial interest in managing culture. Hence, much of the discussion of culture has been reduced to "cultural variables," and the studies became more normative and like the climate studies that preceded them. Data collection techniques and conceptions emergent in the field have been borrowed and then accepted a priori in coding and counting studies, for example, those correlating cultural characteristics with productivity measure or adaptation to change (e.g., Bastien, 1992; Fairhurst, 1993). And critical researchers often reinterpret interpretive studies adding critiques of meaning formations (Martin, 1992; Mumby, 1987). Still, interpretive work is an active and viable research orientation as it continues to evolve. A number of research approaches have been used to help sort out hidden meanings, often hidden as well from the site community participants owing to surface familiarity, and to organize the research process and the presentation of the study itself.

This essay will make no attempt to sort out the diverse ways that interpretive researchers have collected, analyzed, and reported the observations on which their work is based. Ethnography and similar conceptions of "naturalistic" inquiry already discussed remain the purest form of interpretive work. Specific site studies have been analyzed focusing on metaphors, symbols, and themes (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982; Smith & Eisenberg, 1987; Smith & Turner, 1995; Trujillo, 1987). Other studies have followed other traditions including dramaturgy (Goodall, 1990; Manning, 1992), negotiated order (Geist, 1995), structuration (Bastien, McPhee, & Bolton, 1995; Poole & McPhee, 1983), and rules theory (Schall, 1983). During the past 15 to 20 years, a rich array of studies has been completed. Together these have displayed how organizational cultures develop and change, how social groups conceive and han-

dle conflict, how institutional structures are challenged and/or reinstated, how cultures differ across national settings and management practices, and so forth (see Pepper, 1995).

Interpretive studies are also still evolving. Gradually, many researchers doing interpretive work have begun to question the logic of displaying a consensual unified culture and have attended more to its fragmentation, tensions, and processes of conflict suppression (Frost et al., 1992; Marcus & Fischer, 1986; Martin, 1992). In this sense the work has become more dialogic in character. And works following structuration theory have become more critical than interpretive in character (Banks & Riley, 1993; Howard & Geist, 1995; Riley, 1983).

Since the mid-1980s, much of the self-reflection in interpretive work has focused on the relation of the research to the site community and the "voice" taken in the research report. Of importance are both the politics of representation and the role of the report author (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Conquergood, 1991; Kauffman, 1992). Van Maanen (1988) summarized these relations as alternative tales. Further with greater attention to the relation to the community and action potential in research, interpretive work has become more participatory (Whyte, 1991). Reason (1994) described different types of participatory inquiry. These changes have continued to move much interpretative work to be more dialogic and critical in its account of itself and the type of work done.

The Discourse of Critical Studies

Critical researchers see organizations in general as social historical creations accomplished in conditions of struggle and power relations. Organizations are largely described as political sites, thus general social theories and especially theories of decision making in the public sphere are seen as appropriate.

While organizations could be positive social institutions providing forums for the articulation and resolution of important group conflicts over the use of natural resources, distribution of income, production of desirable goods and services, the development of personal qualities, and the direction of society, various forms of power and domination have led to skewed decision making and fostered social harms and significant waste and inefficiency. Either explicit or implicit in their presentation is a goal to demonstrate and critique forms of domination, asymmetry, and distorted communication through showing how reality can become obscured and misrecognized. Such insights help produce forums where the conflicts can be reclaimed, openly discussed, and resolved with fairness and justice.

Critical research aims at producing dissensus and providing forums for and models of discussion to aid in the building of more open consensus. Of special concern are forms of false consciousness, consent, systematically distorted communication, routines, and normalizations that produce partial interests and keep people from genuinely understanding or acting on their own interests. Of the four orientations, critical studies have the most explicitly stated value commitments and the most explicit attention to moral and ethical issues. With this, much of the discourse has a suspicious and therapeutic tone, but also a theory of agency that provides an activist tone, a sense that people can and should act on these conditions and that improved understanding as well as access to communication forums is core to positive action. Theory development in critical theory often has an "enlightenment" quality, in DiMaggio's (1995) sense, whereby euphemisms are developed or exposed "clearing away conventional notions to make room for artful and exciting insights" (p. 391; see also Bourdieu, 1991, for the power of re-naming).

The central goal of critical theory in organizational communication studies has been to create a society and workplaces that are free

from domination and where all members can contribute equally to produce systems that meet human needs and lead to the progressive development of all. Studies have focused both on the relation of organizations to the wider society and their possible social effects of colonization (rationalization of society) and domination or destruction of the public sphere (Deetz, 1992; DuGay, 1997), and on internal processes in terms of the domination by instrumental reasoning, discursive closures, and consent processes (e.g., Alvesson, 1993; Clair, 1993a, 1993b; Forester, 1989; Mumby, 1987, 1988). As indicated they tend to enter their studies with a priori theoretical commitments, which aid them analytically to ferret out situations of domination and distortion. Critical studies include a large group of researchers who are different in theory and conception but who share important discursive features in their writing. They include Frankfurt school critical theorists (see Alvesson & Willmott, 1992, 1996; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1988; Mumby, 1988), conflict theorists (Benson, 1977; Dahrendorf, 1959), some structurationists (Banks & Riley, 1993; Giddens, 1984, 1991; Howard & Geist, 1995), some versions of feminist work (e.g., Allen, 1996, 1998; Benhabib, 1992; Ferguson, 1984, 1994), some Burkeans (Barker & Cheney, 1994; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985), and most doing labor process theory (Braverman, 1974; Burawoy, 1979, 1985; Knights & Willmott, 1990).

Critical theorists sometimes have a clear political agenda focused on the interests of specific identifiable groups such as women, workers, or people of color, but usually address general issues of goals, values, forms of consciousness, and communicative distortions within corporations. Their interest in ideologies considers disadvantaged groups difficulties in understanding their own political interest, but is usually addressed to people in general, challenging consumerism, careerism, and exclusive concern with economic growth (Allen, 1998; DuGay, 1997). Compared to Marxism, critical theory is not

antimanagement per se, even though one tends to treat management as institutionalized and ideologies and practices of management as expressions of contemporary forms of domination. Two principal types of critical studies can be identified in organization studies: Ideological critique and communicative action.

Ideology Critique

Most of the critical work has focused on ideology critique. Analyses of ideologies show how specific interests fail to be realized because of people's inability to understand or act on their own interests. Some identified ideologies are group specific and others are held by people in technological-capitalist society in general. Ideological critique is guided by a priori researcher conceptions and aims at producing dissensus with the hope that the recovered conflicts and explicit concern with values will enable people to choose more clearly in their own interests.

The earliest ideological critiques of the workplace were offered by Marx. In his analyses of work processes, he focused primarily on practices of economic exploitation through direct coercion and structural differences in work relations between the owners of capital and the owners of their own labor. However, Marx also describes the manner in which the exploitative relation is disguised and made to appear legitimate. This is the origin of ideology critique. Clearly, the themes of domination and exploitation by owners and later by managers have been central to ideology critique of the workplace in this century (see works as varied as Braverman, 1974; Clegg & Dunkerley, 1980; Edwards, 1979). These later analyses became less concerned with class-based coercion and economic explanations through focusing on why coercion was so rarely necessary and on how systemic processes produce active consent (e.g., Burawoy, 1979, 1985; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1988; Deetz & Mumby, 1990; Gramsci, 1929-1935/

1971; Kunda, 1992; Vallas, 1993). Ideology produced in the workplace would supplement ideology present in the media and the growth of the consumer culture and the welfare state as accounting for workers' and other stakeholders' failure to act on their own interests.

Four themes recur in the numerous and varied writings about organizations working from such a perspective: (1) concern with reification, or the way a socially/historically constructed world would be treated as necessary, natural, and self-evident; (2) the suppression of conflicting interests and universalization of managerial interest; (3) the eclipse of reason and domination by instrumental reasoning processes; and (4) the evidence of consent.

In *reification*, a social formation is abstracted from the ongoing conflictual site of its origin and treated as a concrete, relatively fixed entity. The illusion that organizations and their processes are "natural" objects protects them from examination as produced under specific historical conditions (which are potentially passing) and out of specific power relations. Ideological critique is enabled by the elite-driven search for reifications in everyday life. The resultant critique demonstrates the arbitrary nature of "natural objects" and the power relations that result and sustain these forms for the sake of producing dissensus and discovering the remaining places of possible choice.

Lukács (1971), among many others (see Giddens, 1979), has shown that particular sectional interests are often *universalized* and treated as if they were everyone's interests, thus producing a false consensus. In contemporary corporate practices, managerial groups are privileged in decision making and research. *The* interests of the corporation are frequently equated with management's interests. For example, worker, supplier, or host community interests can be interpreted in terms of their effect on corporate—that is, universalized managerial—interests. As such they are exercised only occasionally and usually reactively and are often represented as

simply economic commodities or "costs"—for example, the price the "corporation" must pay for labor, supplies, or environmental cleanup (Deetz, 1995b). Central to the universalization of managerial interest is the reduction of the multiple claims of ownership to financial ownership. In ideological critique, managerial advantages can be seen as produced historically and actively reproduced through ideological discursive practices in society and in corporations themselves (see Bullis & Tompkins, 1989; Deetz, 1992; Mumby, 1987). Critical theory joins other recent theories in arguing for the representation of the full variety of organizational stakeholders (see Carroll, 1989; Freeman & Liedtka, 1991).

Habermas (1971, 1984, 1987) has traced the social/historical emergence of *technical rationality* over competing forms of reason. Habermas described *technical reasoning* as instrumental, tending to be governed by the theoretical and hypothetical, and focusing on control through the development of means-ends chains. The natural opposite to this, Habermas conceptualizes as a *practical interest*. Practical reasoning focuses on the process of understanding and mutual determination of the ends to be sought rather than control and development of means of goal accomplishment. But in the contemporary social situation, the form and content of modern social science and the social constitution of expertise align with organizational structures to produce the domination of technical reasoning (see Alvesson, 1987a; Fischer, 1990; Mumby, 1988; Stablein & Nord, 1985). To the extent that technical reasoning dominates, it lays claim to the entire concept of rationality, and alternative forms of reason appear irrational. To a large extent, studies of the "human" side of organizations (climate, job enrichment, quality of work life, worker participation programs, and culture) have each been transformed from alternative ends into new means to be brought under technical control for extending the dominant group interests of the corporation (Alvesson, 1987a; Barker, 1993;

Wendt, 1994). The productive tension between the two becomes submerged to the efficient accomplishment of often unknown but surely "rational" and "legitimate" corporate goals (Carter & Jackson, 1987).

Early critical theorists focused primarily on bureaucracies and other forms of direct control and domination. As the work has developed and these forms have declined, more sophisticated conceptions of power have arisen. Various forms of indirect control have become of greater concern (see Edwards, 1979; Lukes, 1974). Many of these forms of indirect control involve active "consent" of those controlled. *Consent* processes occur through the variety of situations and activities in which someone actively, though often unknowingly, accomplishes the interests of others in the faulty attempt to fulfill his or her own. People are oppressed but are also enticed into activities that create complicity in their own victimization (for examples, see Brunsson, 1989; Clair, 1993a; Pringle, 1989). As a result, rather than having open discussions, discussions are foreclosed or there appears to be no need for discussion. The interaction processes reproduce fixed identities, relations, and knowledge, and the variety of possible differences are lost. Thus, important discussions do not take place because there appears to be no reason for them. Consent often appears in direct forms as members actively subordinate themselves to obtain money, security, meaning, or identity; things that should result from the work process rather than subordination. In fact, both the subordination and requirement of it hamper the accomplishment of these work goals. Critical organizational communication research during the 1980s and 1990s includes a rather wide body of studies showing where culture and cultural engineering may be described as hegemonic (e.g., Alvesson, 1987b; Knights & Willmott, 1987; Mumby, 1988, 1997; Rosen, 1985). Other researchers have shown how normative, unobtrusive, or concertive control processes develop in organizations and subvert employee participation programs (see

Barker, 1993; Barker & Cheney, 1994; Barker, Melville, & Pacanowsky, 1993; Barley & Kunda, 1992; Bullis, 1991; Bullis & Tompkins, 1989; Etzioni, 1961; Kunda, 1992; Lazega, 1992; Schwartzman, 1989).

Several limitations of ideology critique have been demonstrated. Three criticisms appear most common. First, ideology critique appears ad hoc and reactive. It largely explains after the fact why something didn't happen. Second, the elitist is often criticized. Common concepts like false needs and false consciousness presume a basic weakness in insight and reasoning processes in the very same people it hopes to empower. The irony of an advocate of greater equality pronouncing what others should want or how they should perceive the world "better" is apparent to both dominant and dominated groups. Third, some accounts from ideology critique appear far too simplistic. These studies appear to claim a single dominant group that has intentionally worked out a system whereby domination through control of ideas could occur and its interest could be secured. Clearly, domination is not so simple. Certainly the power of ideology critique can be maintained without falling to these criticisms, and most studies today carefully avoid each problem. Largely this has been aided by the development of Habermas's theory of communicative action.

Communicative Action

While earlier critical studies focused on distortions of consciousness, thought, and meanings, Habermas's work since the late 1970s has concentrated on distortions in communication processes (Habermas, 1984, 1987). This project retains many of the features of ideology critique, including the ideal of sorting out constraining social ideas from those grounded in reason, but it envisages procedural ideals rather than substantive critique and thus becomes quite different from traditional ideology critique. It also introduces an

affirmative agenda, not based on a utopia, but still on a hope of how we might reform institutions along the lines of morally driven discourse in situations approximating an "ideal speech situation" (see Mumby, 1988). Organizational communication scholars have developed these ideas to support more participatory communication and decision making in organizations and to display power-based limitations on organizational democratization (Cheney, 1995; Deetz, 1992, 1995b; Forester, 1989, 1993; Harrison, 1994). From a participation perspective, communication difficulties arise from communication practices that preclude value debate and conflict, that substitute images and imaginary relations for self-presentation and truth claims, that arbitrarily limit access to communication channels and forums, and that then lead to decisions based on arbitrary authority relations (see Deetz, 1992, for development).

Basically, Habermas argued that every speech act can function in communication by virtue of common presumptions made by speaker and listener. Even when these presumptions are not fulfilled in an actual situation, they serve as a base of appeal as failed conversation turns to argumentation regarding the disputed validity claims. The basic presumptions and validity claims arise out of four shared domains of reality: language, the external world, human relations, and the individual's internal world. The claims raised in each realm are, respectively: intelligibility, truth, correctness, and sincerity. Each competent, communicative act makes four types of claims: (1) presenting an available understandable expression, (2) asserting a knowledge proposition, (3) establishing legitimate social relations, and (4) disclosing the speaker's positioned experience. Any of these claims that cannot be brought to open dispute serves as the basis for systematically distorted communication. The ideal speech situation is to be recovered to avoid or overcome such distortions.

The ideal speech situation, thus, describes four basic guiding conditions as necessary for

free and open participation in the resolution of conflicting claims. First, the attempt to reach understanding presupposes a symmetrical distribution of the chances to choose and apply speech acts that can be heard and understood. This would specify the minimal conditions of skills and opportunities for expression including access to meaningful forums, media, and channels of communication. Second, the understanding and representation of the external world needs to be freed from privileged preconceptions in the social development of "truth." Ideally, participants have the opportunity to express interpretations and explanations with conflicts resolved in reciprocal claims and counterclaims without privileging particular epistemologies or forms of data. The freedom from preconception implies an examination of any ideology that would privilege one form of discourse, disqualify certain possible participants, and universalize any particular sectional interest. Third, participants need to have the opportunity to establish legitimate social relations and norms for conduct and interaction. The rights and responsibilities of people are not given in advance by nature or by a privileged, universal value structure, but are negotiated through interaction. The reification of organizational structures and their maintenance without possible dispute and the presence of managerial prerogatives are examples of potential immorality in corporate discourse. Finally, interactants need to be able to express their own authentic interests, needs, and feelings. This would require freedom from various coercive and hegemonic processes by which the individual is unable to form experience openly, to develop and sustain competing identities, and to form expressions presenting them.

The most frequent objection to Habermas, and those who have followed this work, is that he has overemphasized reason and consensus and has only a negative view of power, which hampers both the conception of social change and seeing the possible positivity of power (see Benhabib, 1990; Lyotard, 1984). What Habermas does well is to give an arguable

standard for normative guidance to communication as a critique of domination, even if his position is distinctly Western, intellectual, and male (Fraser, 1987; see Benhabib, 1992, for a discussion of these problems and ways of recovering the critical thrust of his work). The participative conception of communication describes the possibility and conditions for mutual decision making and also provides a description of communication problems and inadequacies. In general, most strategic or instrumental communicative acts have the potential of asserting the speaker's opinion over the attempt to reach a more representative consensus. In such cases, an apparent agreement precludes the conflict that could lead to a new position of open mutual assent. In cases where the one-sidedness is apparent, usually the processes of assertion/counter-assertion and questions/answers reclaim a situation approximating participation.

Critical theorists have been very effective in showing the invisible constraints to mutual decision making in organizations. In many workplaces today, strategy and manipulation are disguised and control is exercised through manipulations of the natural, neutral, and self-evident. Critical work has both demonstrated the presence of ideological domination and processes of "discursive closure" and "systematically distorted communication" (see Deetz, 1992, chap. 7). While Habermas has been criticized for focusing too much on consensus at the expense of conflict and dissensus, implicit in his analyses is the recovery of conflict as an essential precursor to a new consensus and the perpetual critique of each new consensus as interaction continues.

The Discourse of Dialogic Studies

I have chosen the term *dialogic* rather than the more obvious *postmodernist* to organize this discourse because it attends to key features of this work and because of the growing commercial use of the term *postmodern*, resulting in increased difficulty in distinguish-

ing realist assumptions about a changing world (a postmodern world) and a postmodern discourse, which denies realist claims about the world (Jones, 1992; Parker, 1992). The term also makes it easier to include older theorists such as Bakhtin for whom the term *postmodern* seems inappropriate (see Shotter, 1993). Dialogic perspectives are based in a recent set of philosophical writings originating most often in France. Of greatest interest are the writings emphasizing political issues and conceptions of fragmentation, textuality, and resistance. These philosophically based approaches to organization studies have emerged out of works of Bourdieu, Derrida, Lyotard, Kristiva, Foucault, Baudrillard, Deleuze and Guattari, and Laclau and Mouffe. Organizational researchers following the general themes of this work include Hawes (1991), Martin (1990), Calás and Smircich (1991), Mumby and Putnam (1992), Knights (1992), Burrell (1988), Bhabha (1990), Barker and Cheney (1994), Holmer-Nadesan (1997), Ashcraft (1998), and several of the essays in Hassard and Parker (1993). As with critical writings, this is a wide group of writers and positions with their own disputes, but their work shares features and moves that can be highlighted in treating them together.

Like critical studies, the concern is often with asymmetry and domination in organizational decision making, but unlike the critical studies' predefinition of groups and types of domination, dialogic studies focus more on micropolitical processes and the joined nature of power and resistance. Domination is seen as fluid, situational, and without place or origin. Even group and personal identities cannot be seen as fixed or unitary. The attention is to reclaim conflicts suppressed in everyday experiences, meaning systems, and self-conceptions. Rather than a reformation of the world, dialogic studies hope to show the partiality (the incompleteness and one-sidedness) of reality and the hidden points of resistance and complexity. In place of an active political agenda and utopian ideals, attention centers on the space for a continually transforming

world through recovery of marginalized and suppressed peoples and aspects of people.

Dialogic research emphasizes dissensus production and the local/situated nature of understanding. Many of the conceptions on which this is based are difficult and not terribly well known by organizational communication scholars. Owing to this I will provide some greater detail here. Seven themes will be highlighted: (1) *the centrality of discourse*, emphasizing language as systems of distinctions that are central to social construction processes; (2) *fragmented identities*, demonstrating the problem of an autonomous, self-determining individual as the origin of meaning; (3) *the critique of the philosophy of presence*, focusing on object indeterminacy and the constructed nature of people and reality; (4) *the loss of foundations and master narratives*, arguing against integrative meta-narratives and large-scale theoretical systems such as Marxism or functionalism; (5) *the knowledge/power connection*, examining the role of claims of expertise and truth in systems of domination; (6) *hyperreality*, emphasizing the fluid and hyperreal nature of the contemporary world and role of mass media and information technologies; and (7) *research as resistance and indeterminacy*, stressing research as important to change processes and providing voice to that which is lost or covered up in everyday life. Each of these has an impact on conceptions of quality communication, processes of decision making, and research directions.

The Centrality of Discourse

Most current dialogic studies grew out of French structuralism by taking seriously the "linguistic turn" in philosophy. In this sense, dialogic studies developed the French tradition by making the same move on structuralist thought that Habermas and others in critical studies did on ideological critique in the development of communicative action in the German tradition. Language replaces consciousness as central to experience. Textual/

discursive fields replaced the structure of the unconscious and/or cultural structures claimed as universal. Both critical and dialogic theorists used these to fight a two-front war; first, against normative researchers and other objectivists with their science aimed at controlling nature and people, and second, against interpretive researchers and other humanists with their privileging of individual experience, unique human rights, and naive versions of human freedom. As discussed later, the linguistic turn enabled a critique of normative research's claim of objectivity through examining the processes by which objects are socially constituted and the role of language in that process and simultaneously a critique of interpretive research through demonstrating the fragmentation of cultures and personal identities and removing the psychological subject from the center of experience. Focusing on language allowed a conception of social constructionism that denied the normative claim of certainty and objective truth and the interpretivists' reliance on experience and neutral cultural claims that led them to miss the social/linguistic politics of experience. Communication thus becomes a mode of explanation of organizations and activities associated with them rather than a phenomenon to be explained within them.

Many organizational researchers have used this insight to produce discursive, communication-centered analyses of organizations. Many of the more empirical dialogic studies, but not all, have followed Foucault's conception of discourse. For example, Knights and Willmott (1989) and Mills (1994) demonstrated the way being subjected led to particular forms of subjugation; Knights and Morgan (1991) used Foucault's discursive practices to show the construction of person and world in the discourse of strategy; Townley (1993) applied it to the discourse of human resource management; and I (Deetz, 1998) have shown how self-surveillance and self-subordination replace explicit control systems in knowledge-intensive companies. Works following other related philosophical perspectives on

discourse have tended to be somewhat more theoretical (e.g., Burrell, 1988; Cooper, 1989; Deetz, 1994d; Hawes, 1991).

Fragmented Identities

The position on the person follows directly from the conception of discourse. Enlightenment thought centered knowledge and understanding in a conception of an autonomous and coherent subject. This conception leads to an emphasis on—what was developed in this essay as—a consensus discourse in science and society. Dialogic studies reject the notion of the autonomous, self-determining individual as the center of the social universe and in its place suggest the complex, conflictual subject with an emphasis on fundamental dissensus (see Garsten & Grey, 1997; Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1984; Mills, 1994; Nukala, 1996).

There are two versions of this critique of a secure unitary identity. The first suggests that the Western conception of *man* as a centered subject has always been a myth. Freud's work is used to show the growing awareness in Western thought of the difficulties with it. People have always been filled with conflicts. The conception of a unitary autonomous self was a fiction used to suppress those conflicts and privilege masculinity, rationality, vision, and control. To the extent that dominant discourses spoke the person, the person gained a secure identity but participated in the reproduction of domination marginalizing the other parts of the self and other groups. The sense of autonomy served to cover this subservience and to give conflict a negative connotation. The privileging of consensus and naturalization of a constructed world tended to hide basic conflicts and conceptualize the ones that did arise as based on misunderstandings, incomplete knowledge, or prejudice.

The other dialogic critique suggests that identity was relatively stable in homogeneous societies and their organizations with few available discourses. In contemporary, hetero-

geneous, global, teleconnected societies and globalization the available discourses expand greatly. Since identity is a discursive production, in this new situation the individual acquires so many simultaneous identities through different competing discourses that fragmentation is virtually inevitable (see Deetz, 1995b; Gergen, 1991). As society becomes more fragmented and/or virtual, the identity-stabilizing forces for organizations as well as people are lost. Such a position suggests the possibility of tremendous freedom and opportunity for marginalized groups and suppressed aspects of each person to be conceptualized and discussed in more heterogeneous societies and chaotic organizations. But the multiplicity of discourses can also lead to what Giddens (1991) called "ontological insecurities." Such insecurities regarding identity can lead to strategies that aim to secure a "normal" identity (see Knights & Morgan, 1991; Knights & Willmott, 1985, 1989). This loose self is open to manipulation (since the stable background of a dominant reproductive discourse is weakened) and can be "jerked" about in the system, leading to a sense of excitement and even "ecstasy" but also can be conversion prone and easily controlled by system forces (as in Baudrillard's conception of simulation, 1988; Deetz, 1994d).

The conception of a fluid conflictual identity, however, creates difficulties in developing political action. Flax (1990), for example, shows the awkward position it leaves women in. If gender is treated as a social construction, one can show that the dominant discourse in modern organizations has produced women and their experience as marginal and "other"—that is, taking all the negative terms in the linguistic system and discourse. Ridding society of strong gender ascriptions and gendered identities—making gender irrelevant to work—is a meaningful activity to provide opportunities for women. But to accomplish such a move in the contemporary situation requires women to organize and show that gender is an issue across nearly all social situations—that is, to fix a centered

identity. The dilemma is heightened regarding their experience, for if women's experiences arise out of an essential difference, they cannot be denied as important and needing to be taken into account, but to make the essentialist argument of distinct female experiences denies social constructionism and can easily be used to further stigmatize women as "other" in a society where men have more resources. Ironically, however, this is the type of deep tension and inability to develop a single coherent position that, rather than weakening dialogic work, gives it its reason for being.

The Critique of the Philosophy of Presence

Normative social science, as well as most of us in everyday life, treats the presence of objects as unproblematic and believes that language is to represent (re-present) these things. When asked what something is, we try to define it and list its essential attributes. Dialogic studies find such a position to be illusionary. Rather, the "elements" of the world are fundamentally indeterminant and can become many different determinant "objects" through different ways of attending to or encountering them. Linguistic and nonlinguistic practices direct attention and means of encountering the "elements" of organizations, thus are central to "object" production. Since the "elements" of organizations may be constructed/expressed as many different "objects," limited only by human creativity and reconfiguration of past understandings, meaning can never be final; objects and meanings are always incomplete and open to redetermination. Many different, and fundamentally irresolvable, "objectivities" thus exist in organizational life and research. The appearance of completeness and closure leads us to overlook the politics in and of construction and the possibilities for understandings hidden behind the apparent and obvious, thus a particular objectivity may be privileged.

Language is central to the production of objects in that it provides the social/historical

distinctions that provide unity and difference. Language does not mirror the reality “out there” or people’s mental states, but rather is a way of attending to both the insiders and outsiders providing them shape and character (Shotter, 1993; Shotter & Gergen, 1994). Further, the systems of differences or distinctions historically held by language are not fixed but metaphorical, full of contradictions and inconsistencies (Brown, 1990; Cooper & Burrell, 1988). Meaning, thus, is not universal and fixed, but precarious, fragmented, and situated. Since the research community, like others, can only escape this situation through distortion and closures, the conceptual base of research must also be, also already suggested, local and emergent.

Organizational communication researchers have used these conceptions to deconstruct objects of organizational life including the bounded concept of an organization and organizational rationality itself (Mumby & Putnam, 1992). Perhaps among the most productive have been those studying accounting practices. The bottom line, profit and loss, expenses, and so forth have no reality without specific practices creating them (Miller & O’Leary, 1987; Power, 1994). Others have looked at knowledge and information (Boland, 1987; Coombs et al., 1992). And others yet report practices (Sless, 1988) and categories of people (Epstein, 1988). Each of these shows the conditions necessary for objects to exist in organizational life and opens these objects to redetermination through initiating discussions and negotiations of reality that were not possible as long as hidden dominance held sway.

The Loss of Foundations and Master Narratives

Traditionally, the power of any social position has been gathered from its grounding or foundation. This grounding could either be to a metaphysical foundation—such as an external world in empiricism, mental structures in rationalism, human nature in humanism, or

God in religion—or a narrative, a story of history—such as Marxism’s class struggle, social Darwinism’s survival of the fittest, or market economy’s invisible hand. Positions based on such foundations and narratives are made to seem secure and inevitable and not opportunistic or driven by advantage. Certainly, much normative organizational research has been based on appeals to an “object” world, human nature, or laws of conduct. Critical research has a different foundational appeal to qualities of speech communities in its morally guided communicative action. Dialogic researchers are distinctly non- or antifoundational.

Again, like in the case of identity, dialogic researchers take two different but compatible stances in their critique of groundings. First, some argue that foundations and legitimating narratives have always been a hoax. Appeals to foundations have been used (usually unknowingly) to support a dominant view of the world and its order. As feminists, for example, argue following this position, the historical narrative has always been *history*. Empiricists’ appeal to the nature of the external world covered up the force of their own concepts (and those borrowed from elite groups), methods, instruments, activities, and reports in constructing that world (Harding, 1991). Second, dialogic researchers note the growing social incredulity toward narratives and foundational moves. Lyotard (1984) showed the decline of *grand* narratives of “spirit” and “emancipation.” The proliferation of options and growing political cynicism (or astuteness) of the public leads to a suspicion of legitimating moves. In Lyotard’s sense perhaps all that is left is *local* narratives—that is, ad hoc and situated attempts at justification without appealing to themes that organize the whole of life.

The concern with integrative narratives has led to sensitive treatments of how stories in organizations connect to grand narratives and how different ones have a more local, situational character (see Martin, 1990). Other researchers have used this opening to display the false certainty in the master narratives in

management (Calás & Smircich, 1991; Ingersoll & Adams, 1986). Jehenson (1984), for example, showed how narratives of "effectiveness," "expertise," and "excellence" were used to legitimize managerial control systems. In one of my own studies (Deetz, 1998), I show how narratives of "consultancy" and "integrated solutions" enabled a dominant coalition to maintain control through a financial crisis in a professional service company.

Dialogic researchers do not see the decline of foundations as necessarily leading to positive outcomes. Certainly, the decline of foundations and grand narratives removes the primary prop of security and certainty that dominant groups trade for subordination. But the replacement is not necessarily freedom and political possibility for marginalized groups. Lyotard demonstrated the rise of "performativity," which while developed as a measure of means toward social ends becomes an end in itself. The performativity standard provides new forms of control not directed by a vision of society and social good but simply more production and consumption (see Carter & Jackson, 1987). Many "quality" programs evidence this. Certainly, the loss of grand integrative narratives has not been missed by management groups. One could easily say that the common conceptions of corporate "visions" and "cultures" are strategic local narrative constructions to provide the integration and motivation in a pluralistic society formerly provided by the wider social narratives that have passed away.

A difficulty in dialogic research with the loss of foundations, as in the concept of fragmented identities, is how to generate a political stance in regard to these developments. Women have confronted this most directly in debates over whether men and women have distinctly different experiences grounded in biological sex. Without a grounding, the basis for large-scale political action is lacking, and resistance to domination, even general domination, becomes local and situational. If one rejects an essentialist foundation and believes that more than local resistance is needed, criti-

cal theory may well provide the best remaining option, but not without costs (see Fraser & Nicholson, 1988).

The Knowledge/Power Connection

Within dialogic writings, power is treated far differently from most other writings on organizations. Foucault (1977, 1980, 1988) has led many in suggesting that the "power" of interest is not that which one possesses or acquires (Clegg, 1989; Jermier, Knights, & Nord, 1994). Such power is an outcome of more fundamental power relations. Power resides in the discursive practices and formations themselves. For example, the discourse that produces a "worker" both empowers and disempowers the group of individuals produced through this representation. In particular historical discourses, "workers" and "managers" are produced out of the open "elements" of organizational life and simultaneously provided with solidarity and interests as well as conflicts, material and symbolic resources, and self-understandings. Power thus resides in the demarcations and the systems of discourse that produce and sustain such groupings. Unions and managers mutually sustain the other in their conflicts. It is not the relative power of each that is of interest but how the distinction is reproduced.

One of the most useful terms entering into organization studies from Foucault's work on the knowledge/power connection has been his concept of "discipline." The demarcations developed in discourse provide forms of normative behavior. The combination of training, routines, self-surveillance, and experts provides resources for normalization, then discipline (Deetz, 1998; Knights & Collinson, 1987; Townley, 1993). From such a conception, normative research and the expertise produced from it are considered to provide resources for normalization and a veneer of truth for arbitrary and advantaging discursive practices (Hollway, 1984, 1991). The emphasis on dissensus discourse in dialogic research

is aimed at disrupting normalization and provides competing power relations (Holmer-Nadesan, 1997; Knights, 1992; Trethewey, 1997).

Hyperreality

In dialogic conceptions, linguistic and nonlinguistic practices are considered to open a relation to external elements (people and world) and produce these elements in specific ways. As discussed earlier, the referent ("elements" of the world) has no specific character; it is always determinable in more ways than all the determinations or objects that have been made of it through various historical practices. To the extent that this "indeterminacy" is known (the "otherness" of elements shows), the domination present in any system can be disrupted and objects de- and re-differentiated. To the extent that indeterminacy is recognized, the possibility of self-referentiality in a textual system is avoided. Otherwise, the determinant object produced by the practices is referenced by the practices and the system remains closed.

The presence of media and information systems increases the possibility of such closure and the lack of connection to the external indeterminacy. The referent can disappear as anything more than another sign—a produced object. Thus properly signs would only reference other signs; images would be images of images. The system then becomes purely self-referential or what Baudrillard calls a *simulation* (see Deetz, 1994d, for an example). In such a world, in Baudrillard's analysis, signs, rather than connecting us to the outside world and providing a temporary determination, reference only linguistically already determined objects—the "map" leads us only to earlier "maps" of the world. The "model" is seen as the thing and "model" behavior replaces responsive action. Signs reach the structural limit of representation by referencing only themselves with little relation to any outside or interior. In such a situation, a particular fiction is not produced by a subject

in opposition to reality, but positions an imaginary world and subject in place of any real; it has no opposite, no outside. Baudrillard (1983) used the example of the difference between feigning and simulating an illness to show the character of this dialogic representation: "Feigning or dissimulation leaves the reality principle intact; the difference is always clear, it is only masked; whereas simulation threatens the difference between 'true' and 'false,' between 'real' and 'imaginary.' Since the simulator produces 'true' symptoms, is he ill or not? He cannot be treated objectively either as ill, or not ill" (p. 5).

Hochschild (1983) provided an organizational example of this (though from a theoretically different position) in her description of the appropriateness of flight attendants' emotions. Our traditional conceptions allow a fairly simple distinction between "real" spontaneous emotions that arise in response to perceived situations and "acting" where an employee fakes the managerially desired emotion. Hochschild shows, however, that the presence of "deep acting" makes this distinction misleading. In deep acting, the flight attendants in her studies learn to perceive or attend to the situation in such a way that the managerially desired emotion spontaneously arises in the employee. Is it fake or not? In the concepts here, it is self-referential. The system appears open and environmentally adaptive but closes or manipulates the environment in ways that the system adapts to the system reproduced environment. This is not unlike normative research constructing the world using the concepts of the same theory it hopes to test.

Research as Resistance and Indeterminacy

The role of dialogic research is very different from more traditional roles assigned to social science in both its emphasis on dissensus production and the local forms of knowledge. It primarily serves to attempt to open up the

indeterminacy that modern social science, everyday conceptions, routines, and practices have closed off. The result is a kind of antipositive (or positivist) knowledge that Knights (1992) described. The primary methods are deconstruction, resistance readings, and genealogy.

Deconstruction works primarily to critique the philosophy of presence by recalling the suppressed terms that have become devalued in dominant systems of distinction. When the suppressed term is given value, the dependency of the positive term on the negative is revealed and a third term is recovered that shows a way of thinking or attending to the world that is not dependent on the opposition of the first two (see Calás & Smircich, 1991; Martin, 1990; Mumby, 1996; Mumby & Putnam, 1992). The resistance reading demonstrates the construction activity and problematizes any fixed relationship. The positive and the polar constructions are both displayed as acts of domination. Conflicts that were suppressed by the positive are brought back to redecision (see Westenholz, 1991). The conflictual field out of which objects are formed is recovered for creative redetermination—constant dedifferentiation and redifferentiation. Given the power of common sense and organizational routines, such readings require rigor and imagination. The rereadings are formed out of a keen sense of irony, a serious playfulness, and are often guided by the pleasure one has in being freed from the dull compulsions of a world made too easy and too constraining. The point of research in this sense is not to get it right but to challenge guiding assumptions, fixed meanings and relations, and reopen the formative capacity of human beings in relation to others and the world.

A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

In looking at different organizational communication research programs, clearly differ-

ent programs have different goals and assumptions and provide different forms of evaluation. I hope to have displayed differences that give insights into the diverse discourses in organizational communication studies today, displaying some of the ways that they are alike and different. The relation among these alternatives is not addressed well in exclusionary, pluralistic, supplementary, or integrative terms. Each orientation creates a vision of social problems and tries to address them. Different orientations have specific ways of answering the types of questions they pose and do not work terribly well in answering the questions of others.

I, like many others, sometimes wish we were all multilingual, that we could move across orientations with grace and ease, but this type of Teflon-coated, multiperspectival cosmopolitan envisioned by Morgan (1986) or Hassard (1991) is both illusionary and weak (see Parker & McHugh, 1991). Good scholars have deep commitments. Multiperspectivalism often leads to shallow readings and invites unexamined basic assumptions. Some scholars are more multilingual than others, but doing good work within an orientation still must be prized first. Ideally, alternative research programs can complement each other. Consensus without dissensus is stifling and finally maladaptive. Elite/a priori concepts are necessary and probably inevitable, but we can make them more temporary and open to reconfiguration.

Without a doubt, most organizational communication scholars are becoming both more knowledgeable about alternatives and more appreciative of the differences. This development allows us to get beyond relatively unproductive theoretical and methodological arguments to more basic and serious questions. The choice of orientation, to the extent that it can be freed from training and department/discipline politics, can probably be reduced to alternative conceptions of social good and preferred ways of living. This acceptance grounds theory and method debate in a moral debate that has been neither terribly

common nor explicit in organizational communication studies. I agree with Gergen (1992) that organizational research and theory need to be evaluated as much by a question of "how shall we live?" as by verisimilitude and methodological rigor. Studies need to be understood and evaluated on their own terms, but should also appeal to the larger social concerns in which both the needs and means of accomplishment are contested.

Discussions of responsibility and value are still relatively infrequent in organizational communication research, but present (see various essays in Conrad, 1993; Deetz, 1995a; Deetz, Cohen, & Edley, 1997). Certainly, we have lagged behind moral and ethical discussions of organization available other places (e.g., Frederick, 1986; Freeman, 1991; Freeman & Liedtka, 1991; Gergen, 1995; Jackell, 1988; MacIntyre, 1984; Mangham, 1995). The justification for much organizational communication research has been aimed at improving the functioning of organizations and management as if they were value-neutral tools without regarding how these tools are applied or whose values are advanced. With such a conception, our research has often focused on the perfectibility of the tool rather than the ends it is used to advance. To the extent that this conception has been useful, organization studies have enhanced the effective use of resources and fulfillment of certain human needs. But many researchers now question this "tool" version of organizations and research, claiming that researchers paid insufficient attention to alternative needs and goals, and the numerous social and political consequences of organizational activities (see Marsden, 1993). Until recently, most organizational communication researchers accepted a managerial bias in their conceptions of organizations and articulations of organizational goals.

The business environment has changed in fundamental ways in the past two decades. These changes require rethinking decision making in corporations: Who should make the decisions? How should they be made? What

criteria should be used to evaluate them? If companies are to stay economically viable and their host societies healthy, corporate decisions must be more responsive to rapidly changing environments and human needs. Understanding new values and the rights and capacities of other organizational members is initiating reforms of organizational communication research that are as sweeping as many contemporary changes in organizational life. Certainly, this is seen to some extent in the growth of teams, other participation programs, customer focus, and increased discussion of environmental and social responsibility.

More important than these new programs, in my mind however, is a growing shift in the conception of organizations themselves. This shift offers the greatest challenge and opportunity for organizational communication researchers. Generally, the conceptual shift can be characterized as moving from an "owner/manager" model to a "stakeholder" model of organizations (see Carroll, 1989; Deetz, 1995b; Freeman & Gilbert, 1988; Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Osigweh, 1994). In this model, a variety of groups in addition to stockholders and managers are seen as having made an investment and thus having a stake in corporate decisions. Proponents of such a view argue that in a democratic society all those affected by the activities of corporations (all *stakeholders*) have some representation rights. But beyond the question of rights, direct decisional influence by both internal and external constituencies can lead to greater effectiveness in meeting the diverse social and economic goals. A stakeholder model recognizes multiple forms of ownership and enables widespread participation and thus helps initiate important value debates.

In traditional models of organizations, the core processes in organizations were conceived as economic. Communication aided economic accomplishment, but wherever possible stakeholder representation was limited to economic representation. If communication-based decision making could be reduced

to an economic calculation, it was. In a stakeholder model, the core processes involve several simultaneous goals. The interaction among stakeholders can be conceived as a negotiative process aiding mutual goal accomplishment. Communication is the means by which such negotiation takes place. Conceptions of human interaction, negotiation, and rationality developed by communication theorists are uniquely suited to these new needs. To make a full contribution, organizational communication researchers would need to use communication conceptions aimed at increasing genuine participation rather than increased influence and control. This change is still incomplete.

Many organization managers understand the need to attend to stakeholders today but have not accepted a stakeholder model. New communication and decision-making conceptions are often used to increase the number of forums in which stakeholder representation and debate could occur, but few have increased stakeholder voice (Deetz, 1995b; Deetz et al., 1997; Gordon, 1988). Attention to stakeholders in these cases is a strategic attempt to increase loyalty and commitment and decrease resistance rather than seeking genuine decisional input. The lack of voice results from constrained decisional contexts, inadequate or distorted information, socialization and colonization activities, and the solicitation of "consent" where stakeholders "choose" to suppress their own needs and internal value conflicts. Gradually, we are learning that the problem with traditional organizations was not simply bureaucracy, but control systems in a variety of forms. To overcome these problems, new conceptions of interaction can improve collaborative decision making within corporations. The critical and dialogic scholars were somewhat earlier in fully appreciating these changes while managers and managerial-biased researchers have been more ambivalent—often both advocating new conceptions and programs and subverting their full implementation. But both normative and interpretive researchers can de-

sign studies that enhance the functioning of the organization as a site of stakeholder coordination rather than a site of control. Finding new ways of organizing becomes everyone's job.

Understanding our alternatives requires understanding both the relation of conceptions to the various social stakeholders and the relation of research discourse to dominant social theories. Thinking through these relations provides an opening for discussion. We are learning the positive effects of human diversity as organizational members—beyond "separate but equal" and integration—and organizational communication research can benefit from better conceptual discussions of research diversity. In doing so, the ultimate point is not in arguing it out to get it right, but to reclaim the suppressed tensions and conflicts among the many contemporary stakeholders to negotiate a life together based in appreciation of difference and responsive decision making.

NOTES

1. Citations are selective throughout this essay. Rather than try to be exhaustive and produce a cluttered text with hundreds of references, I will reference what I consider to be well illustrative or especially useful developments and will bias the selection toward authors who work in communication departments. This essay was completed in 1996. Citations to literature published after that time are more limited.

2. Much of this discussion is adapted from Deetz (1996).

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