

Organizational Communication: An Analysis of the Main Perspectives, Main Concepts and Future Directions of the Field

Yusuf YÜKSEL

Dr., Polis Akademisi Trafik ve Ulaşım Güvenliği Araştırma Merkezi

E-posta: yusufyuksel1976@gmail.com

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Öz

Örgütsel iletişim alanının kapsamı ve bu alanı ilgili disiplinlerden ayıracak içerik, teori, yöntem, ve uygulamalar üzerine akademik tartışmalar 1980'li yıllarda beri devam etmektedir. Bu tartışmalar, örgütsel iletişim alanının derinlemesine anlaşılmaması, sınırlarının belirlenmesi ve diğer disiplinlerden ayrılan özelliklerinin anlaşılması noktasında hayatı öneme sahiptir. Bu temel tartışmalardan hareketle, bu makale örgütsel iletişim alanının tarihçesini, sınırlarını, alanda temel teorik yaklaşımları (*işlevsel, yorumlayıcı, eleştirel*), ‘*organizasyon, iletişim, kültür, ve kontrol*’ gibi alanda önemli kavramların bu farklı yaklaşımlar içerisinde sunumunu incelemektedir. Ayrıca, literatürdeki boşlukları ve alanın gelecek yönelimleri de bu makale içinde tartışılmaktadır. Bu konuları tartışarak, bu makale örgütsel iletişim alanını bütünsel bir şekilde sunmayı ve bu alanda çalışan akademisyenler için temel bir referans olmayı amaçlamıştır.

Keywords:

Functional/Interpretive/
Critical Perspective,
Communication,
Organization, Culture,
Control.

Abstract

There is a scholarly debate since the 1980s regarding the content, theory, methodology and applications that define the scope of organizational communication and separate it from other related disciplines. This debate is critical in the sense that it enables to identify organizational communication in a rich manner and helps us define the scope of the field and its unique characteristics. Based on this debate, this article provided the history and scope of the field, analysis of the major theoretical perspectives in the field (*functional, interpretive, and critical*), conceptualization of the most critical concepts (*organization, communication, culture, voice/control*) in these theoretical perspectives. Current gaps and future directions of the field are also discussed in this article. By discussing these topics, this article aimed to provide a holistic view of organizational communication and become a basic reference for scholars in this field.

Introduction

Organizational communication is one of the broadest subfields of the communication discipline. Not only is it quite extensive in its own right, but it also spans and intersects with various other subfields within communication, and with other disciplines. Moreover, it has both theoretical and professional dimensions. However, there is a scholarly debate on the characteristics of the field since the 1980s. The main debate is what content, methodology and applications define the scope of the field and separate it from other related sciences and disciplines? The main problem that scholars argued is the need of a perspective and theory to conceptualize communication as a foundation for the organizations (Putnam, 1983). The debate is critical in the sense that it further helps to shape the identity of organizational communication as a full academic field by developing its own scholarship, applications and theory and distancing itself from the management school (Taylor et al., 2001). Since then, the debate has been revolving around the scope of the field, different perspectives within the field, and how to conceptualize communication and organization, which all constituted a main consideration within the literature (Kuhn, 2005). Within this context, the purpose of this paper is to discuss the scope of the field, different perspectives within the field, and conceptualization of main concepts in the field.

As such, the present article will address the history of the field in a way to link contemporary discussions, the major theoretical perspectives in the field (*functional, interpretive, and critical*) and conceptualization of the most critical concepts such as '*organization, communication, culture and voice/control*' in these theoretical perspectives. Description of these points will contribute to understand the content, theory, and applications of the field and separate it from other related disciplines. It will also increase the likelihood of meaningful contributions of communication scholars. Following this section, future directions for the field of organizational communication will be discussed based on the articulation of the gap existing in the current literature.

History of Different Perspectives in Organizational Communication

Before directly focusing on different perspectives in organizational communication, a brief overview of the history of the field may be useful as to link the contemporary discussions with the early development of the field. Although the origin of the field dates back to the traditional rhetoric (Ruben and Stewart, 2006), the modern field of organizational communication has a more recent history that can be traced back to the early 19th century. This early research was not conducted mainly by communication scholars; rather, it was performed by academics within the fields of organizational psychology, organizational behavior, administrative science, and management (Redding and Tompkins, 1988). The focus of the research in the first half of the century was basically on communication skills, managerial effectiveness, superior-subordinate relationships (Richetto, 1977). It was only after 1950s that organizational communication under the name of '*business and industrial communication*' has emerged as a potentially autonomous discipline in its own right (Redding and Tompkins, 1988) but the research was mainly conducted by scholars from diverse fields. In the second half of the century, studies from the other areas that

emerged in the field were information flow studies, network analysis, climate analysis, message content, and the adaptation of systems theory to organizations (Goldhaber et al., 1978). In this period, the academic field of organizational communication can trace most of its conceptual roots to four sources: *traditional rhetorical theory*, *mass communication*, *human relations* and, *management/organization theory* all of which had basically the characteristic of a pragmatic, utilitarian philosophy. In fact, most of the studies in the field until 1980s have taken this modernist or empirical orientation.

Since the 1980s, the field has started to make a turn toward interpretive and critical perspectives which essentially focus on meaning, interpretation, and power in organizations (Putnam and Krone, 2006). This '*interpretive turn*' greatly influenced the way the field evolved in the following years. In fact, this shift in the field was not unique or independent from the change in other disciplines as all is rooted in some emerging epistemological and ontological orientations regarding the nature of reality and social order, which have influenced social sciences in general. The challenge to Newton's and Galileo's theories lays the groundwork for the reasoning of deduction/induction and universal laws (Berger, 1977; Craig, 1983) especially by the notion of Luckman's social construction of reality, symbolic interaction movement that emerged in Chicago School of Sociology, Heidegger's phenomenology (Taylor et al., 2001), and hermeneutics (Smircich and Calas, 1987). Goffman's dramaturgical and social phenomenological perspective (Delia, 1987) also provided a base for interpretive, meaning oriented approaches.

In a similar way, Frankfurt school of critical theory and cultural studies in Europe propelled the study of power and inequality in the communication field (Delia, 1987; Eisenberg and Goodall, 1993). Based on these new approaches, the new organizational communication scholars dealt much more with social construction of meaning, meaning making, inter-subjective meaning, and power (Axley, 1984). In this sense, organizational communication can be best understood within comparisons and contrasts of different perspectives in the field, instead of being debated and defined in a reified way. The next section introduces the main assumptions of each perspective. This discussion will enable to understand the field itself in a rich manner and help us define the scope of the field and its unique characteristics compared to other related fields.

Main Perspectives in Organizational Communication

Functionalistic Perspective

The functionalistic perspective is associated with an objectivist stance on reality, which is viewed as an objective, a priori dimension of the world, and an external order of objects that can be uncovered, a deterministic view of human nature, and logical positivism that aims to test theories with '*objective*' and '*scientific*' data obtained from experiments and surveys (Delia, 1987). Researchers center on more validity, reliability, dependent and independent variables, sampling strategies, and generalized law-like statements for the purpose of prediction, control, and manageability across situations, experimental research designs, and use of multivariate statistics (Smircich and Calas, 1987). As such, the focus of research in this view is more antecedent-based or outcome-based and less process-

based. Functional tradition underlines the principles of prediction, generalizability, and causality with a concern of producing useful knowledge.

Functionalistic perspective defines communication as mainly information exchange and treats communication as a variable that can be manipulated to produce certain effects, such as effectiveness, coordination or collaboration. It takes its theoretical base from the mechanical view of communication, leading it to put more emphasis on communication failure, information flow and message fidelity (Putnam, 1983). Although the functionalistic perspective has been influenced by other perspectives and recent communication theories that take into account receivers' role in the communication in a way that recognizes the interpretation of the messages by receivers, and the role of relational and contextual variables in the interpretation, its basic theoretical orientation remained very much the same (Taylor, 1993).

Interpretive Perspective

Although functionalistic research remains dominant in the field of organizational communication, the interpretive perspective has become more common in literature recently. As briefly discussed, the '*interpretive turn*' of the 1980s greatly influenced how the field evolved in the following years. The emerging epistemological and ontological orientations regarding the nature of reality and social order provided a base for the interpretive perspective, which takes a subjective stance of social reality, anti-positivist epistemology, and voluntarism which, in contrast to determinism, accepts the role of human agency in the creation of meaning (Orlikowski, 1992). As opposed to dealing with prediction and control, this perspective is concerned with the processes and experiences through which people construct organizational reality and meaning (Geertz, 1973; Smircich, 1983).

As a result, the new organizational communication scholars dealt much more with the social construction of meaning, meaning making, and constitutive approach to meaning, inter-subjective meaning, and power (Putnam, 1983). In fact, the interpretive perspective brought to the field new conceptualizations of communication and culture as well as a rich understanding of organizations. In addition, it provided scholars with new directions for research and a wide range of flexibility in terms of content, application, and methodology.

Critical Perspective

Although typically rooted in Marxian theory, critical theory has entered the academy via a number of routes. In the field of organizational communication, the Frankfurt school and cultural studies in Europe provided its theoretical base (Delia, 1987; Eisenberg and Goodall, 1993; Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). In most cases, critical theory makes its contributions known to organizations through studies of power and hegemony despite a growing interest in discourses. For critical theorists, "organizations are a struggle site in which conflicting preferences and interpretations between the members of dominant and marginalized groups is inevitable" (Alvesson, 1993:134). These theorists recognize and focus on an organization's hegemonic structure with an anti-managerial tone, power relations, ignored and silenced concerns of minorities, old and new forms of organizational

control (i.e., culture, identification), harsh working conditions, and so forth (Cheney, 1995).

Consistent with their focus on a more democratic and participatory organizational life, critical scholars strive to contribute to the establishment of a democratic workplace where informed, authentic participation, and freedom from various coercive acts are possible. For this purpose, Habermas suggested an '*ideal speech situation*' which might be regarded as the idealistic goal of these perspectives, in which organizational members who are affected by decisions can voice their concerns freely and openly without one dominating the other in any way (Deetz, 2001). Basically, critical scholars aim to understand, critique, and educate in order to increase awareness and create more democratic, participative work environments, especially for lower-level employees and specific minority groups (Collins, 1998). Although the study in functional, structural perspective still dominates the field, the number of studies in both interpretive research and critical research increased throughout the 1990s (Martin, 2002).

Main Concepts in the Field

Four concepts were selected for the analysis: *Communication, organization, culture, and voice/control*. The concepts selected for the analyses provide valuable insights into the evolution and diversity of the field and the unique role that the organizational communication field can play among the many other fields that deal with organization and communication.

Communication

'*Communication*' is the main concept to understand the field and different perspectives within the field. It crystallizes the role that the organizational communication field can play different from related disciplines. Although some attempts like Lasswell's communication theory (Delia, 1987), have been observed to theorize communication in a way that help scholars to examine (mass) communication and its effect, the basic underlying theory that shaped the field of communication after 1950s was basically Shannon and Weaver's theory, which posited that communication is the transmission of information or sending and receiving messages (Craig, 1999). The messages sent or received are assumed to have an objective reality; in such a way, messages exist independent of sender and receiver. Within the framework of this conceptualization, the studies mainly focused on information flow, message content, communication skills, message channel, message fidelity to understand communication problems, the nature of superior-subordinate relationships, and effectiveness of communication (Thayer, 1986). In this approach, technically '*noise*', practically information overload, distortion, coordination problems, communication skills and attitudes, message content result in communication problems (Eisenberg and Goodall, 1993). Thus, in order to increase effectiveness in communication, clarity of message and open communication is proposed as a practical solution to managers (Dawson, 2004) as well as the rationale for making structural shifts in organizations that will allow more communication among organizational members from different positions (McPhee and Poole, 2001). These suggestions follow the assumption of that the problem in communication is not a norm, but exception (Miller et al., 1994) which has drawn from

information overload, information blockage, communication skills of sender, or message content (Taylor, 1993).

In spite of the heavy criticism of this model, this view of communication still dominates popular books, text books and the heads of scholars inside and outside the field (Zorn et al., 2000). In response to these critiques some attempts have been made as to develop new models of communication in the following years by Westley and Maclean, Dance, Thayer, Schramm (Ruben and Stewart, 2006), which complemented the original model with feedback, the role of receiver, situation and relationship variables, the notion of two-way communication, and strategic ambiguity as another communication strategy (Motley, 1990), but the models remained confined within the scope of information exchange model of communication.

In contrast to this conceptualization of communication as information exchange, the scholars, influenced by aforementioned shifts in epistemological and ontological orientations regarding the nature of reality and social order suggested to focus on communication as a constitutive process (Peters, 1999), in which “messages are active part of the production of meaning, perceptions, and feelings” (Deetz, 1994: 573). In other words, communication is viewed as a process through which shared meanings are produced and reproduced (Putnam, 1983). This perspective can be perceived as a meaning-centered view whereby meaning is not universal and fixed, but negotiated and situated (Deetz, 2001). In compatible with this conceptualization, miscommunication or unintentional communication is something expected, not an exception (Axley, 1984). Clarity of message for effective communication is believed to be misleading because all meaning is seen as fundamentally contextual and constructed by individuals. Relational variables that arise through a combination of source, receiver, and message factors, and context should be considered when interpreting the message rather than the message itself (Eisenberg, 1983). Regardless of making any argument on effectiveness, this perspective offers to look at the process rather than the outcome to understand communication. Although this shift is mostly reflected in the privilege of qualitative approaches over quantitative approaches, the difference between the perspectives should be considered more in tandem with epistemological and ontological shift (Kuhn, 2005).

Although critical theory makes its role known in organizations through studies of power based on structural and ideological aspect of organizations, there is a growing interest in discourses in the field which focus on more micro-political processes, communication content, joined nature of power and resistance (Conrad and Hynes, 2001). Deetz (2001) even make a distinction like critical (macro-oriented) and dialogic (micro-oriented) perspective in his classification of the field. Critical scholars criticize information oriented studies of communication for their position on message in which the messages sent or received are assumed to have an objective reality (Taylor, 1993). They argue that communication does not simply portray reality that already exists as suggested by the informational view of communication; rather communication shapes reality which has intended and unintended consequences that both enable or constrain the possibilities of collective action and challenge the dominant system (Mumby and Stohl, 1996). However, by viewing communication as neutral as stated by functional

scholars, communication reproduces existing meanings which benefit some groups and lose its ability to challenge dominant systems and power while the constitutive view has a potential producing for new meaning (Deetz, 2001). By taking a constitutive view, critical scholars aim to explore political processes that are usually undemocratic and to support democratization and participation in the workplace. As understood from this discussion, effectiveness is considered part of workplace language that reflects and serves to maintain managerial control (Zorn et al., 2000).

Organization

Another important concept for the field that we should focus on is the different conceptualizations of '*organization*', and its relation to the environment. In a similar line of thought with communication, the ontological and epistemological perspectives you take determine the way you understand the organization. Compatible with the above-mentioned methodological stance of functional perspective, organizations are defined as places where groups or individuals work in cooperation in pursuit of common goals and interests (Jones et al., 2004). Organizations acquire a physical, rigid, and container-like quality and communication is something that occurs in this physical space (Putnam, 1983). The scholars in this view tend to see organizations as fixed entities that can be understood based on its size, structure, hierarchical charts, and task practices. Using this perspective, the source of the power comes out of the fixed structural position of organizational members rather than situated activities of individuals.

In contrast, in the interpretive perspective, organizations are viewed as a range of factionalized groups with diverse and multiple goals (Putnam, 1983). Organizations are dynamic; they are produced, reproduced and transformed thorough the ongoing activities of its members (McPhee and Zaug, 2001). Such that, a hierarchical chart is defined with a screen metaphor which implies the power structure existing in chart is the product of the interaction among organizational members rather than their structural positions.

For the critical theories, organizations are site of struggle. The creation of meanings in the communication process is fundamentally mediated by power, leading to a struggle over meaning domination (Mumby, 1993, 2001). For instance, in Smith and Eisenberg (1987), the family metaphor in times of conflict was reinterpreted in a different way by employees and managers that caused tension among them. Family metaphor had been used to indicate closeness among all employees and difference from other parks for a long time. However, during the strike, family metaphor was interpreted differently by employees and managers. While employees perceived management's economic measures to be a threat to the family, management tried to reinterpret family emphasizing that "family life can sometimes be hard, and families must make sacrifices if they are to survive" (Smith and Eisenberg, 1987: 375). This example clearly shows conflicting implications of metaphors in organizations which is a sign of struggle over meaning. Thus, critical scholars denote communication, power and organization as interdependent phenomena (Mumby, 2001).

Culture

Another important concept in the field is '*culture*' which has its own well-developed

literature. Different perspectives have been very much represented in the studies of organizational culture literature. These perspectives depend on their methodological stance, conceptualization of culture, the role of culture in organizational effectiveness and change, the role of communication and leader in culture.

In functionalistic tradition, culture is taken as an essential organizational variable, something an organization has that can be managed to produce certain effects, such as effectiveness, commitment, and satisfaction in the workplace (Smircich, 1983). It is common to define organizational culture in this tradition by emphasizing widely shared values and practices within any given organization (Schein, 1985). From this standpoint, organizational culture has historically been described as widely shared patterns of beliefs, norms, rituals, symbols, and stories that develop over time and function as social or normative glue that hold people together. In this perspective, culture is essential for an organization's success in tough times and to keep employees motivated (Martin, 2002; Pettigrew, 1979; Smircich, 1983). The scholars in the functional perspective argue that leaders or top managers play a central role in the transformation and creation of a strong culture. They can build a strong culture by emphasizing a set of values and norms, adapting certain policies, rituals, and performances and communicating a vision (Bryman, 1999; Deetz et al., 1999; Mc Donald, 1991). This strong and unified culture is supposed to lead to greater commitment and effectiveness in organizations (e.g. Peters and Waterman, 1982). In fact, this view of organizational culture continues to attract attention from both managers and scholars due to its claim that culture can be a tool for managers to improve organizational effectiveness.

The assumptions underlying the positivist, functional organizational culture literature have been extremely challenged (Alvesson, 1993, Gregory, 1983, Smircich and Calas, 1987). Many academics who were highly critical of this view of organizational culture emphasized the need for new perspectives to expand the types of issues being studied and address the deficiencies of the functional and structural analysis of culture (Pacanowsky and Trujillo, 1983). The academics also criticized the monolithic, highly shared view of culture that addresses multiple goals, cultures and ambiguity in organizations (Chan, 1996, Wood, 2004).

As a reflection of '*interpretive turn*' in the organizational communication literature, organizational culture focuses on more processes through which people construct organizational reality and meaning (Geertz, 2000; Smircich, 1983). In this perspective, organizational culture is not unitary; it is reciprocal like a fluid and constructed through communication (Smith and Eisenberg, 1987). This view gives considerable attention to constitutive and performative functions of communication through which culture of an organization manifest itself (Pacanowsky and Trujillo, 1983). This perspective changes completely our conception of organizational culture. As stated by Smircich (1983: 387), "a culture is not something organization has; a culture is something organization is", in such "organizations can be understood as cultures". The researcher's role is defined as a '*cultural interpreter*' who intends to describe and interpret the meanings related to the activities of people with the purpose of drawing the natives' points of view (Geertz, 1973).

Critical theorists point out the hegemonic structure of workplace and emphasize

power relations and how the notion of strongly unified culture can be used to control employees (Kunda, 2006). Culture is seen as a set of explicit and implicit rules and body of traditions that guides the relationship between the organization and its members; as such, culture governs what the organizational members need to know, think, and feel in order to meet the standards of membership (Kunda, 2006). In general, according to critical scholars, management of organizational culture is thought to improve control rather than to directly increase performance, and the notion of strong culture and identification is viewed as a form of value-based unobtrusive control which has gradually replaced simple, technical, and bureaucratic forms of control (Papa et al., 1997). This new form of control adopted, especially in modern organizations, limits decision options for organizational members in favor of organizational interest and masks the mechanism of discipline (Zorn et al., 2000). In addition, critical scholars emphasized cultural variation within organizations in the form of subcultures, multi-cultures, and finally the tensions and paradoxes among these cultures (Alvesson, 1993; Chan, 1996). They aim to increase awareness and create more democratic, participative work environments especially for lower-level employees.

Control/Voice

‘*Control and voice*’ is another concept which is quite helpful to understand the goal of different perspectives within the field. The perspectives in the field have different orientations in terms of the nature of control and which voice to reflect. The studies in the functionalist perspective mostly aim at increasing effectiveness by prediction and control which inherently reflects a managerial interest and voice while the interpretive perspective is increasingly characterized by a multiple voice perspective of organizational actors regardless of the hierarchical position and without taking an open side between managerial and employee interests (Mumby and Stohl, 1996). In fact, the functional perspective as well as other perspectives supports a pro-people and pro-profit notion (Eisenberg and Goodall, 1993), but the emphasis of the functionalist perspective on prediction and control inherently reflects a managerial bias. However, critical scholars focus on low-level employees with a goal to increase their consciousness and enact a more democratic workplace (Tompkins and Cheney, 1985). Deetz (2001:38) challenged us to “rethink the goals of research and to move from a managerial bias to consider alternative voices as well as the social and political consequences of organizational activities”. Critical scholars also criticize the interpretive perspective for not having a research agenda for a better organizational life whereas, their multiple voice approach in some way contributes to the benefits of the low-level employees. In critical view, the notion of strong culture (Martin, 1992, 2002), identification, empowerment, (Papa et al., 1997), and teamwork (Barker, 1993) can become a new form of control -concriptive control- which basically based on value-based appeals. Peer influence in team work or strong identification that limits decision options for the organizational members in favor of organizational interest mask the mechanism of discipline. In addition, the workplace language (i.e. teamwork, participation, empowerment, strong culture) drawn from managerial discourse in popular management books justifies a wide range of managerial actions and interests, frame these concepts in a positive light and helps to maintain voluntary consent (Lewis et al., 2006). A statement that explains the voluntary consent would be “power is most effective when it is unnecessary” (Hardy and Clegg, 1996: 32). Critical scholars suggest a democratic

workplace where informed, authentic participation and freedom from various coercive are possible. Habermas's '*ideal speech situation*' might be conceived as the idealistic goal of these perspectives in which the organizational members affected by decisions voice their concerns freely and openly (Deetz, 1996).

Discussion of Perspectives and Concepts in the Field

The main argument in this paper is the idea that the field can be best represented in the comparison and contrast of these three perspectives. None of these perspectives is comprehensive enough to define the field, but each one constitutes a unique map for making sense the field of organizational communication. Based on the aforementioned debate, it is obvious that the development of various perspectives not only contributed to the flourishing of the field but also brought more complex and nuanced understandings of organizational communication.

The field has also been classified in other ways by different scholars who privilege different assumptions regarding the field. For instance, Deetz (2001) classified the field as '*normative, interpretive, critical* and *dialogic*'. Some other scholars demonstrated how the field divided based on '*structure/action dialectic*' (Conrad and Hynes, 2001), or in its methodological preferences '*qualitative / quantitative*', ontological stance '*objective reality / subjective reality*' or '*positivism / social constructionism*' (Putnam 1983; Redding and Tompkins, 1988). All these classifications have a ground in the field, but as it is in all classifications, they all have some limitations. For instance, as suggested by Kuhn (2005: 624), the shift in the field in the 1980s provided "a warrant for the proliferation of qualitative approaches against the dominance of quantitative research", but the value of the shift "as an innovation is lost if it is considered merely a methodological rather than an epistemological or ontological shift". In this sense, this study is an indication of the belief that these perspectives cover the epistemological or ontological shift among different approaches in the field not only methodological. Although Deetz's (2001) classification very much represents the field, the distinction between critical and dialogic perspectives has many aspects overlapping that make it difficult to address in the analysis of different concepts or themes in the field.

The concepts selected (organization, communication, culture, voice /control) for the analysis provides valuable insights into understanding the field. As the foregoing literature explains, there is little agreement on the description of these concepts though both '*organization*' and '*communication*' label the name of the field. In this sense, these concepts are critical to reflect the nature and diversity of the field and the unique role that organizational communication field can play among the many other fields such as management or administrative science. In fact, the interpretive and critical perspectives brought to the field new conceptualizations of many critical concepts as well as rich understandings of communication and organization. If the field would remain dominantly confined to the study of tangible message outputs, information flow, and processes like organizational diagnosis and development, scholars of organizational communication would have difficulty in expressing what they do different from other fields. However, right now, as indicated above, different conceptualizations of organization and communication

provide scholars with new directions for research and a wide range of flexibility in terms of content, application and methodology.

In a similar line of thought, it seems that the study of '*culture*' provides valuable insights into understanding of organizations and communication. Even, some scholars such as Pacanowsky and Trujillo (1983) suggest studying communication in organizations as '*cultural performances*'. Thus, although the position of each perspective is different, it seems reasonable to say that organizational culture or specifically cultural metaphor becomes a significant lens for communication scholars to examine or engage with organizations (Pacanowsky and Trujillo, 1983; Van Maanen, 1991). Similarly, '*voice/control*' concepts can help develop the identity of organizational communication by focusing on multiple voices and emerging control mechanisms with a focus on not only managers but also low-level employees (Mumby and Stohl, 1996).

Current Gaps and Future Directions

Current Gaps

Organizational communication faces similar limitations that obstruct most academic fields. First, there is a persistent gap between academic world and professional world. This idea is popular at many disciplines, but the consequentiality of communication suggests that communication scholarship can be and need to be part of the practice and produce publicly meaningful outcomes by addressing the concerns of both managers and followers (Ruben, 2000). Organizations are generally concerned with a profit motive or a mission motive and a research which does not advance one of those motives does not find a ready audience in the field of practice. In their book on organizational communication, Eisenberg and Goodall (1993) ask to reconsider the role of communication in business, profit and accomplishment of mission as parts of their scholarly interest. This argument hasn't taken as a suggestion for going back to the time when the field was mainly characterized to serve managers to increase effectiveness and productivity. To take perspectives of all stakeholders and consider multiple voices seems to be one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the field. There are many different examples in the field that goes behind a managerial bias, but helpful in terms of the richness they provide to understand organizations (e.g. Barker, 1999), reflexivity it provides to managers (e.g. Barge, 2004) and making visible the emotions and voice of different groups in the organization as well as managers (e.g. Hylmo and Buzzanell, 2002; Van Maanen, 1991). Especially, the field of organizational communication can provide a process oriented approach in addition to antecedent or outcome oriented approach. If organizational communication scholars can't do that, as stated by Ruben (2005: 295), the gap will be filled out by "practical and professional writers who do not have a scholarly understanding of communication". Thus, organizational communication scholars need to remember that they have a dualistic responsibility when conducting academic research: providing knowledge for the field and also providing recommendations and suggestions for organizational management and employees. Organizational communication scholars can offer many different perspectives for making sense of the world, which can benefit practice by drawing the attention of practitioners to the actual complexities of organizational life and helping organizational

members to steer away from superficial, cut-and-paste solutions.

Secondly, communication is inherently a broad, interdisciplinary topic that has been studied by scholars from many different fields. At this point, it is important to recognize that the contributions of scholars that are outside the field of communication in no way discredit the work of those within the communication field. Instead, they can provide new insights. Regardless of one's field of organizational expertise (e.g. management, behavior, theory, communication) there is not a golden bullet to solve organizational issues. Perhaps it is at the juncture of different fields that rich data is to be found. Rather than persisting in a method or perspective to the exclusion of the rest of the academy, communication scholars might bring significant value to their research through interdisciplinary research with scholars from other fields. As Eisenberg and Goodall (1993) suggest, the scholars must no longer work independently to achieve their goals but should coordinate with organizational theorist and behaviorist to meet the needs of administrators, managers and policy makers.

The last gap that will be addressed is the distinction between micro-level and macro-level approaches. There is a tendency towards the analysis of communication patterns, practices, and interpersonal communication within the boundaries of organization without taking into account the broader level of power, ideology, economy, and cultural factors that surrounds the organization (Jones et al., 2004). Systems theorists suggests scholars to think organization as located in the environment rather than being in isolation from the environment, to consider the continuing evaluation of relationships, and to take into account macro structures as well as micro structures to understand organizations. In this sense, organizational communication scholars need to get “dialectic of micro-practice and macro-thinking which necessities more meso-level research” (Jones et al., 2004: 732).

Future Directions

With the rise of new technologies, mediated communication has become an important part of organizational life. This provides an opportunity for organizational communication scholars to lead in the development of this important area. With the rise of mediated communication, virtual organizations and teams, distributed organizations and workgroups, transnational organizations will be a significant part of the future of local and global organizations (Fulk and Jarvis, 2001). These new forms of organizations bring diversity to the workplace with possible implications on the conflict, identification, culture, and communication practices. This area offers significant opportunities for communication scholars to lead the field of study with a communication perspective.

Another important change in organizations deals with the structure. Early conceptions of organizational structure were driven by the command and control models of military and other hierarchical structures. The recognition of emergent structures, technologies and complexities highlight the corresponding complexity of the manager's role. An early management theorist, Henry Mintzberg says that the “management school has been more effective at training technocrats to deal with structured problems than managers to deal with unstructured ones” (Pugh and Hickson, 1997: 28). This problem has been discussed by Donald Schön (1983:45) in his book, '*The Reflective Practitioner*', noting that a gap exists “between professional knowledge and the demands of the real-world practice”.

The mismatch between technocratic training of experts is an opportunity for the field of communication. Organizations are looking for managers and communication studies that can meet that need.

Conclusion

The field of organizational communication has made improvements since the field emerged in the last three decades with its own content, methodology, and applications and generated an adequate body of research within different perspectives (Mumby, 1993). Not only have new perspectives been addressed, but also novel methodologies for studying these various perspectives have been created. Organizational communication scholars interested in organizational processes seemed to pick up where management scholars left off by studying not only the antecedents, outcomes of many common areas of study, such as culture, change, and leadership, but also the process where culture, change, and leadership occur. Therefore, the doubts and hesitations communicated in the 1980s concerning the future of the field have been diminished.

However, many literature reviews (Mumby and Stohl, 1996; Deetz, 2001; Redding and Tompkins, 1988) published in the last decade both praised the field of organizational communication for its emergence and success, and posed questions of doubt regarding the field's continued achievement or accomplishment considering that if there is any reasonable area of agreement on what the field is. This paper is mostly devoted to the representation of three perspectives which are basically distinguished in their methodological and theoretical orientations. None of these perspectives can fully speak on behalf of the field. Each one constitutes a unique map for making sense of the world, but none of these maps is comprehensive or provides all the answers by itself. In this sense, representation of the field by different perspectives provides richness to the field compared with the time when organizational communication was solely dominated by functional, positivist research. That's why; scholars of organizational communication should leave off asking for a unified, grand (scientific) theory integrating different perspectives. The possible problem is not the diversity or different perspectives in the field, but the possible isolation of each perspective rather than exercise influence over each other. One can prefer taking a perspective and use it more appropriately and deeply and at the same time, can benefit from insights generated by utilizing the other perspectives. That's why; scholars of organizational communication at least need to be aware of other perspectives' general assumptions in a way they can use them to provide insights into their own research in direct or indirect ways.

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