APPLYING COMMUNICATION THEORY *for* PROFESSIONAL LIFE

A Practical Introduction

4th Edition

Marianne Dainton
Elaine D. Zelley

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Fourth Edition

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PREFACE

This book is designed to serve as a communication theory textbook for upper-level undergraduate and master's degree students. Although it is intended for upper-level students, we make no presumption that the students have previous knowledge or background in communication or communication theory. Rather, the text is meant to serve as a practical introduction to the topic for students pursuing (or currently working in) careers in communication-related industries.

We have found that the primary challenge of instructors teaching communication theory to career-oriented students is the abstract nature of the topic; many students have difficulty seeing the relevance of communication theory in their professional lives. Our goal for writing this book is to make communication theory tangible to students by explaining the theories in practical ways and by assisting students in seeing how theory can be used in professional life. The response to previous editions of this book has been overwhelmingly favorable, and we are grateful to have achieved our goal.

In this fourth edition, the major changes have been with the case studies. All of the case studies now include specific questions about ethical issues associated with the narrative of the case. In Chapters 1 and 2 we have revised the simulated "Education as Entertainment Theory" to include apps and other new media forms of educational content. The case study for Chapter 4, which focuses on individual differences and social approaches to communication, is a modification of a case study that had previously been used for interpersonal communication. In addition, four brand new case studies have been included: Chapter 3 contains a case called "You're Fired," Chapter 5 incorporates a case called "Bad Move," Chapter 7 includes a case called "Million-Dollar Manipulation," and Chapter 11 adds a case called "The (New) Media Culture Wars."

As relevant, modifications to theories have been incorporated, and new research that uses those theories has been included in the Summaries and Research Applications section in each chapter. Popular culture references have been updated as well, and we have used a number of political examples to reflect the increasingly divergent political rhetoric in the United States. Finally, thanks to feedback from the faculty who have adopted this text, we have streamlined the learning objectives for each chapter.

As a reminder to instructors and students, this textbook is not meant to provide a comprehensive survey of all communication theory, nor is it meant to focus only on particular contexts of communication. Instead, we have selected representative theories that have clear applicability to communication practitioners. Finally, we have not limited ourselves only to theories developed in the communication discipline because we believe all theories that address communication—whether developed within the field or not—are important tools for communication professionals.

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We would like to thank the reviewers for this edition, as well as the faculty members who have e-mailed us with their compliments and recommendations. We are very appreciative of their support and feedback, and we hope we have done justice to your recommendations.

We also would like to thank several of our graduate students, whose workplace stories serve as the foundation for some of our cases in this and previous cases. Specifically, we thank Tiffany Mercer-Robbins, Michele Langley, Vincent Haas, Maryam Ashfar, Janet Donovan, Lauren Zane-Virostek, Cristina Tosti, and Julie Pompizzi (all names and organizations listed in the case studies are pseudonyms).

We also would like to thank our students and colleagues at La Salle University. Our students continue to challenge us with the "so what" question, and we are pleased most of them are persuaded by our answers. Our colleagues in the communication department also deserve acknowledgment; they not only serve as outstanding instructor role models but also continue to greet our work with enthusiasm and provide us with much-needed social support. We particularly thank Katie Neary Dunleavy for her advice and support.

It often goes without saying (but shouldn't!) that we thank our family members and friends for their ongoing support. Both Marianne and Elaine are especially grateful to their husbands, Scott and Bryan, for serving as sounding boards and providing insight from the corporate world. More than a few of their experiences have made it into this text.


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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION THEORY

There are almost 600,000 web pages devoted to explaining that "communication is easy" (go ahead and search it!) and over 7 million YouTube hits for the same phrase. Of course, if mastering the communication process really only required viewing a 4-minute video, we would all be maestros of getting our messages understood. Unfortunately, much of popular culture tends to minimize the challenges associated with the communication process. Yes, in the 21st century, we believe communication skill is important—you need only to peruse the content of talk shows, dating apps, advice columns, and organizational performance reviews to recognize that communication skills can make or break an individual's personal and professional life. Companies want to hire and promote people with excellent communication skills (Beaton, 2017). Divorces occur because spouses believe they "no longer communicate" (Dutihl, 2012). Communication is perceived as a magical elixir, one that can ensure a happy long-term relationship and guarantee organizational success. Yet, despite lauding communication as the *sine qua non* of contemporary success, the secret to that success is treated superficially at best in our modern information environment. Clearly, popular culture holds paradoxical views about communication: It is easy to do yet powerful in its effects, simultaneously simple and magical.

We believe the communication process is complex. "Good" communication means different things to different people in different situations. Accordingly, simply adopting a set of particular skills is not going to guarantee success. Genuinely good communicators are those who understand the underlying principles behind communication and are able to enact, appropriately and effectively, particular communication skills as the situation warrants. This book seeks to provide the foundation for those sorts of decisions. We focus on communication theories that can be applied in your personal and professional lives. Understanding these theories—including their underlying assumptions and the predictions they make—can make you a more competent communicator.

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

1. Analyze a definition of communication, articulating the definition's level of observation, intentionality, and normative judgment
2. Recognize the various contexts in which communication takes place
3. Differentiate a communication theory from a concept and a model
4. Discriminate between commonsense, working, and scholarly theories
5. Use criteria for evaluating theory to determine the relative usefulness of a communication theory

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

This text is concerned with communication theory, so it is important to be clear about the term *communication*. The everyday view of communication is quite different from the view of communication taken by communication scholars. In the business world, for example, a popular view is that communication is synonymous with information. Thus, the communication process is the flow of information from one person to another (Axley, 1984). Communication is viewed as simply one activity among many others, such as planning, controlling, and managing (Deetz, 1994). It is *what* we do in organizations.

Communication scholars, on the other hand, recognize communication as more than just the flow of information. In a simplified world in which a short YouTube clip could explain to viewers why communication is "easy," we could handily provide you with a one-sentence definition of the term *communication*. Based on that simple definition, we would all understand the meaning of the term, and we would all use the term in exactly the same way. However, scholars disagree as to the scope of the process, whether a source or receiver orientation should be taken, and whether message exchange need be successful to count as communication.

DANCE'S DEFINITIONS OF COMMUNICATION

Fundamentally, communication is a complex process associated with sending, receiving, and interpreting messages. Beyond that, however, the concept of **communication** is just not that easy to delineate. Back in 1976, Dance and Larson reported 126 published definitions of the term *communication*. The variations in the definitions were profound. Table 1.1 highlights the ways the definitions varied.

In looking at the multitude of definitions of communication, Dance (1970) identified three variations. First, Dance argued that definitions varied based on the **level of observation**, which he described as the scope of what is included in the definition. For example, Dance (1967, as reported in Dance & Larson, 1976, Appendix A) defined communication as "eliciting a response through verbal symbols." This definition limits what is considered communication in two ways. First, it limits communication to only that which elicits a response. Consider an example where you instruct a coworker to fill out a particular form. If that coworker doesn't respond in any way, by this definition, communication hasn't occurred. The second way this definition limits communication is in saying communication is only verbal. So, if your coworker gives you the "okay" gesture when you've asked her to fill out the report, her response to your request would not be considered communication, as it was purely nonverbal. Definitions that make such limitations are said to have a relatively narrow level of observation; only specific types of message exchanges "count" as communication. These types of definitions might suggest messages that don't meet the requirements to be considered communication are *informative* rather than *communicative*.

Other definitions, however, try to be very inclusive about behaviors that might be considered communication. To illustrate, another definition identified by Dance and Larson (1976) says communication is "all of the procedures by which one mind can affect another" (Weaver, 1949, as cited in Dance & Larson, Appendix A). Notice that this definition does

not give any indication of whether the mind is of a human, an animal, or even an alien (if there are such things). More importantly, it suggests *all* behavior can count as communication. Such definitions are considered to have a broad level of observation. As such, the first way to differentiate between theories is to consider what "counts" as communication.

A second distinction made by Dance (1970) is the stance the definition takes on **intentionality**. Some definitions explicitly indicate that for communication to occur, the exchange of messages has to be on purpose. For example, Miller (1966) defined communication as "those situations in which a source transmits a message to a receiver with conscious intent to affect the latter's behaviors" (as cited in Dance & Larson, 1976, Appendix A). Definitions such as this one are said to take a **source orientation**. So, for example, if your boss were to yawn while you gave a presentation, this definition would not consider the yawn as communication if your boss did not yawn on purpose (i.e., if she yawned as a physiological response to tiredness rather than to suggest you were boring her).

However, other definitions take a **receiver orientation** to communication. Such definitions buy into the notion that "you cannot not communicate"; anything you say or do is potentially communicative, regardless of whether you intended to send a message or not (see Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967). For example, Ruesch and Bateson (1961, as cited in Dance & Larson, 1976, Appendix A) say that "communication does not refer to verbal, explicit, and intentional transmission of messages alone. . . . The concept of communication would include all those processes by which people influence one another." In this case, if you (as the receiver) were to interpret your boss's yawn as a message of boredom, it should be considered communication, regardless of whether the boss intended to send that message or not.

The final way Dance (1970) argues that definitions of communication vary is **normative judgment**, which is a focus on whether the definition requires an indication of success or accuracy. Some definitions would suggest that even if people misunderstand each other, communication has still occurred. Berelson and Steiner (1964), for example, say communication is "the transmission of information, ideas, emotions, skills, etc., by the use of—symbols—words, pictures, figures, graphs, etc. It is the act or process of transmission that is called communication" (as cited in Dance & Larson, 1976, Appendix A). In this case, it is the transmission that is important, not the understanding. So, if a student has no idea what a teacher is talking about, by this definition, communication has still occurred, it just may not have been very effective communication. Definitions like this are said to be nonevaluative.

Other definitions limit communication to only those situations where the receiver and the source share the same understanding after the communicative effort. These definitions, identified as being evaluative, require shared meaning in order to be considered communication; unsuccessful messages are not considered to be communication. To illustrate, Gode (1959, as cited in Dance & Larson, 1976, Appendix A) defines communication as "a process that makes common to two or several what was the monopoly of one or some." This definition suggests that if the message has not resulted in a common understanding, communication has not occurred. In the example of student-teacher interaction described earlier, if the student doesn't understand the teacher, then by this definition the teacher has not communicated. She or he may have lectured, cajoled, or presented, but she or he has not communicated.

Table 1.1 Ways Definitions Vary

Differences in Definitions	Stance	Taken
Level of observation: *Are there limitations on what counts as communication?*	**Narrow** Yes	**Broad** No
Intentionality: *Do only messages sent consciously and on purpose count?*	**Source** Yes	**Receiver** No
Normative judgment: *Does the message have to be successfully received to count as communication?*	**Evaluative** Yes	**Nonevaluative** No

By now you understand some of the complexities of the nature of communication. Throughout the book, different theorists likely use different definitions of communication. Sometimes these variations in definition will be obvious, sometimes they will be less so. For example, systems theory (see Chapter 9) spends a great deal of time articulating the nature of communication. In so doing, it becomes clear that this theory takes a broad level of observation, a receiver orientation, and is nonevaluative. However, other theories only imply what they mean by communication. Poole and colleagues, in their adaptive structuration approach (see Chapter 8), never articulate their definition of communication. Because the theory is grounded in Giddens's sociological approach, however, we can assume they define communication in a similar fashion to Giddens, who defines communication as "a basis for understanding and bridging experiences, a way of creating social reality" (Giddens, 1976, as cited in Putnam, 1983, p. 51). As such, this theory also takes a broad level of observation, but the focus is more on intentional acts (source orientation), and by stressing the notion of understanding, it is more evaluative in nature.

CONTEXTS OF COMMUNICATION

Although we hesitate to provide a single definition of communication, we can identify some specific **contexts of communication**. In fact, we have organized this book around these specific contexts. The first context that requires consideration is the cognitive context, by which we mean the influence our thoughts have on the way we communicate. Relatedly, the second context is the individual differences context. Here we consider the nature-nurture debate. In so doing, we continue to consider how individual differences and social roles play a role in the communication process. Third is the interpersonal context, which refers to the interactions between two individuals, who most often have a relationship with each other. Fourth is the intercultural context, which focuses on interpersonal communication when two people are from different cultures. The fifth context is not specifically focused on a setting for communication but on a particular type of communication: the persuasive context. Readers should know that persuasion actually takes place in a variety of settings, ranging from inside one person's mind to the mass media. The sixth and seventh contexts are closely aligned

Table 1.2 Contexts of Communication

Context	Theories
Cognitive	• Attribution theory • Uncertainty reduction theory • Expectancy violations theory • Cognitive dissonance
Individual and social	• Social role theory of gender • Emotional intelligence • Message design logics • An interactional perspective on workplace generations
Interpersonal	• Politeness • Social exchange theory • Dialectical perspective • Privacy management theory
Intercultural	• Hofstede's cultural dimensions • Communication accommodation theory • Anxiety/uncertainty management theory • Face negotiation theory
Persuasive	• Elaboration likelihood model • Theory of reasoned action/theory of planned behavior • Inoculation theory • Narrative paradigm
Group	• Functional group decision making • Groupthink • Adaptive structuration theory • Symbolic convergence theory
Organizational	• Organizational culture • Organizational assimilation • Organizational identification and control • Organizing theory

(Continued)

Table 1.2 (Continued)

Context	Theories
Mediated	• Diffusion of innovations • Social network analysis • Media richness theory • Uses and gratifications theory
Mass communication	• Agenda-setting theory • Cultivation theory • Social cognitive theory • Encoding/decoding theory

with the world of work: the group context and the organizational context. Finally, the eighth context is the mediated context, which is concerned with how technology influences our interpersonal, group, and organizational communication. The ninth and final context is the mass communication context, which focuses on the influence of mass-mediated messages. Table 1.2 provides an overview of these contexts and the theories covered in this text that are associated with each context.

COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Because we believe one of the goals of studying communication theory is to make you a better communicator, we should articulate more clearly the nature of **communication competence**. Research indicates that communication competence is most often understood as achieving a successful balance between effectiveness and appropriateness (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989). *Effectiveness* is the extent to which you achieve your goals in an interaction. Did you get the raise? Were you able to convince a subordinate that timeliness is important? Did you persuade your spouse to clean the bathroom? *Appropriateness* refers to fulfilling social expectations for a particular situation. Did you assertively ask for the raise, or was it a meek inquiry? Were you insistent or wishy-washy when discussing your employee's tardiness? Was your interaction with your spouse demonstrative, or did you passive-aggressively pile dirty towels on the floor? Many times, a person is effective without being appropriate; consider a job applicant who lies on a resume to get a job for which he or she is unqualified. That person might be very effective in getting the job, but is such deceit appropriate? On the other hand, many times people are appropriate to the point of failing to achieve their goals. For example, a person who doesn't wish to take on an additional task at work, but says nothing because he or she fears causing conflict, might be sacrificing effectiveness for appropriateness. The key is that when faced with communicative decisions, the competent communicator

considers how to be both effective *and* appropriate. We believe the theories described in this book will help you achieve your communication goals by providing an indication of both what should be done as well as how you should do it.

CONCEPTS, MODELS, AND THEORIES

The term ***theory*** is often intimidating to students. We hope by the time you finish reading this book you will find working with theory to be less daunting than you might have expected. The reality is that you have been working with theories of communication all of your life, even if they haven't been labelled as such. Theories simply provide an abstract understanding of the communication process (Miller, 2002). As an abstract understanding, they move beyond describing a single event by providing a means by which all such events can be understood. To illustrate, a theory of customer service can help you understand the poor customer service you received from your cable company this morning. Likewise, the same theory can also help you understand a good customer service encounter you had last week at a favorite restaurant. In a professional context, the theory can assist your organization in training and developing customer service personnel.

At their most basic level, theories provide us with a lens by which to view the world. Think of theories as a pair of glasses. Corrective lenses allow wearers to observe more clearly, but they also affect vision in unforeseen ways. For example, they can limit the span of what you see, especially when you try to look peripherally outside the range of the frames. Similarly, lenses can also distort the things you see, making objects appear larger or smaller than they really are. You can also try on lots of pairs of glasses until you finally pick a pair that works best for your lifestyle. Theories operate in a similar fashion. A theory can illuminate an aspect of your communication so you understand the process much more clearly; theory also can hide things from your understanding or distort the relative importance of things.

We consider a communication theory to be any systematic summary about the nature of the communication process. Certainly, theories can do more than summarize. Other functions of theories are to focus attention on particular concepts, clarify observations, predict communication behavior, and generate personal and social change (Littlejohn, 1989). We do not believe, however, that all of these functions are necessary for a systematic summary of communication processes to be considered a theory.

Although similar to at least two other terms, we want to be careful to differentiate theories from other abstract notions. First, a **concept** refers to an agreed-upon aspect of reality. For example, *time* is a concept, as is *love*, the color *orange*, and a *bitter* taste. All of these notions are abstract, meaning they can be applied to a variety of individual experiences or objects and can be understood in different ways. That is, you might love your cat in a different way than you love your mother; you might think time drags when in a class you don't much like but that it speeds up over the weekend; and you might hate the color orange and love the bitterness of certain foods. However, in and of themselves these concepts are not theories; they represent an effort to define or classify something, but they do not provide insights into how or why we experience them in a particular way.

Typically, theories provide a way to predict or understand one or more concepts. So, a definition of communication described earlier is a concept, but how that definition is used to explain the communication process is a theory.

A second term you might confuse with theory is a **model**. Part of the confusion you might experience is because the term *model* is used in at least four ways (Gabrenya, 2003; Goldfarb & Ratner, 2008): as a synonym to the term *theory*, as a precursor to a theory (a model is developed and eventually becomes a theory), as a physical representation of a theory (i.e., a diagram such as the one that appears for expectancy violations theory in Chapter 3), or as a specific—often mathematical—application of predication (e.g., a researcher might develop a mathematical model to predict which job categories are going to be in high demand in upcoming years). Because of these varying ways of understanding a model, we believe the term *theory* is preferable when talking about systematic summaries of the communication process.

THREE TYPES OF THEORY

Of central interest is the importance of theory for people in communication, business, and other professions. Our definition of theory suggests that any time you say a communication strategy *usually* works this way at your workplace, or that a specific approach is *generally* effective with your boss, or that certain types of communication are *typical* for particular media organizations, you are in essence providing a theoretical explanation. Most of us make these types of summary statements on a regular basis. The difference between this sort of theorizing and the theories provided in this book centers on the term *systematic* in the definition. Table 1.3 presents an overview of three types of theory.

The first summary statements in the table describe what is known as **commonsense theory**, or theory-in-use. This type of theory is often created by an individual's own personal experiences or developed from helpful hints passed on from family members, friends, or colleagues. Commonsense theories are useful because they are often the basis for our decisions about how to communicate. Sometimes, however, our commonsense backfires. For example, think about common knowledge regarding deception. Most people believe that liars don't look the person they are deceiving in the eyes, yet research indicates this is not the case (DePaulo, Stone, & Lassiter, 1985). Let's face it: If we engage in deception, we will work very hard at maintaining eye contact simply *because* we believe liars don't make eye contact! In this case, commonsense theory is not supported by research into the phenomenon.

A second type of theory is known as **working theory**. These are generalizations made in particular professions about the best techniques for doing something. Journalists work using the "inverted pyramid" of story construction (most important information to least important information). Filmmakers operate using specific camera shots to evoke particular emotions in the audience, so close-ups are used when a filmmaker wants the audience to place particular emphasis on the object in the shot. Giannetti (1982), for example, describes a scene in Hitchcock's *Notorious* in which the heroine realizes she is being poisoned by her coffee, and the audience "sees" this realization through a close-up of the coffee cup. Working theories are more systematic than commonsense theories because they represent agreed-on ways of doing things for a particular profession. In fact, these working theories may very well be based on scholarly theories. However,

Table 1.3 Three Types of Theory

Type of Theory	Example
Commonsense theory	• Never date someone you work with—it will always end badly. • The squeaky wheel gets the grease. • The more incompetent you are, the higher you get promoted.
Working theory	• Audience analysis should be done prior to presenting a speech. • To get a press release published, it should be newsworthy and written in journalistic style.
Scholarly theory	• Effects of violations of expectations depend on the reward value of the violator (expectancy violations theory). • The media do not tell us what to think but what to think about (agenda-setting theory).

working theories more closely represent guidelines for behavior rather than systematic representations. These types of theories are typically taught in content-specific courses (such as public relations, media production, or public speaking).

The type of theory we focus on in this book is known as **scholarly theory**. Students often assume (incorrectly!) that because a theory is labeled as *scholarly* it is not useful for people in business and the professions. Instead, the term *scholarly* indicates that the theory has undergone systematic research. Accordingly, scholarly theories provide more thorough, accurate, and abstract explanations for communication than do commonsense or working theories. The downside is that scholarly theories are typically more complex and difficult to understand than commonsense or working theories. If you are genuinely committed to improving your understanding of the communication process, however, scholarly theory will provide a strong foundation for doing so.

EVALUATING THEORY

Earlier we suggested that all theories have strengths and weaknesses; they reveal certain aspects of reality and conceal others. An important task students and scholars face is to evaluate the theories available to them. We are not talking about evaluation in terms of "good" versus "bad" but evaluating the *usefulness* of the theory. Each of you is likely to find some of the theories presented in this text more useful than others. Such a determination is likely due at least in part to your own background and experiences, as well as your profession. We would like to challenge you to broaden your scope and consider not just the usefulness of each theory to you personally but the usefulness of the theory for people's personal and professional lives in general.

A number of published standards can be used to evaluate theories (e.g., Griffin, Ledbetter, & Sparks, 2015; West & Turner, 2017). All are appropriate and effective

tools for comparing the relative usefulness of a given theory. Because this text is geared toward working professionals, however (or those who wish to soon be working in the profession of their choice), we believe the following five criteria outlined in Table 1.4 best capture the way to assess the relative usefulness of communication theories in the communication, business, and related professions. Note that we are talking about the *relative* usefulness of the theory. We are not talking about either/or, good or bad, weak or strong. Instead, we hope you look at these distinctions as continua that range from very useful at one end to not particularly useful at the other end.

The first area of focus is **accuracy**. Simply put, the best theories correctly summarize the way communication actually works. Recall, however, that we are referring to scholarly theories. As such, we do not mean accuracy in terms of whether the theory accurately reflects your own personal experience (although we would hope that it does!). Instead, when we use the term *accuracy*, we are suggesting that systematic research supports the explanations provided by the theory. Thus, in assessing this quality, you should look at research studies that have used the theory to see whether the research supports or fails to support it.

A second way to evaluate theories is **practicality**. The best theories can be used to address real-world communication problems; in fact, Lewin (1951) said, "There is nothing so practical as a good theory" (p. 169). Clearly, some profound theories have changed the way we understand the world even though they aren't actually *used* by most people on a daily basis (Einstein's theory of relativity or Darwin's theory of evolution, for example). In terms of communication theories, however, theories that are accurate but can't be used in everyday life are not as good as theories that have great practical utility. For example, a theory that can help a person make better communicative decisions in his or her interactions with coworkers is better than a theory so abstract that it cannot be used by an individual in daily communication. Thus, a theory with more applications is better than a theory without practical uses. In assessing this criterion, you should look not only for how the theory has been used in the research literature but also whether the theory has made the leap to professional practice.

Succinctness is the third way to evaluate a good business or professional communication theory. *Succinctness* refers to whether or not a theory's explanation or description is sufficiently concise. Importantly, succinctness does not mean the theory is necessarily easy to understand or has only a few short steps; because the world is complex, theories trying to explain it are often fairly complex as well. Instead, what we mean by succinctness is whether the theory is formulated using as few steps as possible. The "three bears" analogy works here. Theories that have extra steps or include variables that don't help us understand real-world experiences would be considered overly complex. Theories that do not have enough steps, that don't delve beneath the surface, or that don't have enough variables to understand real-world problems are too simple. Theories that include no more and no less than necessary to understand a phenomenon thoroughly are considered just right; they are appropriately succinct. The best way to think of succinctness is to compare how much of the communication situation is explained by the theory in proportion to how many concepts are being used to explain it. The larger the situation and the smaller the number of necessary steps or concepts, the more succinct the theory.

The fourth way to evaluate a theory is to consider its **consistency**. The most useful theories have both internal and external consistency. By **internal consistency**, we mean the ideas of the theory are logically built on one another. A theory that proposes at one point that cooperation among team members guarantees success and at a different point proposes that competition is more effective than cooperation has a logical flaw. Similarly, theories that "skip" steps do not have much internal consistency. A theory predicting that age is related to the experience of jealousy and that one's expression of jealousy affects the future of the relationship, but then fails to tell us how the experience of jealousy is related to the expression of jealousy, has a logical gap. As such, it does not have strong internal consistency.

External consistency, on the other hand, refers to the theory's coherence with other widely held theories. If we presume that widely held theories are true, then the theory under evaluation that disagrees with those believed supported theories also presents a logical problem. As such, the notion of consistency, whether internal or external, is concerned with the logic of the theory. The most useful theories are those that have a strong logical structure.

The final area for evaluation is **acuity**. *Acuity* refers to the ability of a theory to provide insight into an otherwise intricate issue. Earlier we said theories evaluated as "succinct" are not necessarily easy to understand because the real world is often complicated. A theory that explains an intricate problem, however, is of greater value than a theory that explains something less complex. Think of acuity as the "wow" factor. If, after understanding the theory, you think "wow, I never considered that!" the theory has acuity. If, on the other hand, you think "no duh," the theory does not demonstrate acuity. To illustrate, a theory that explains a complex problem, such as how organizational cultures can influence employee retention, is a more useful theory than a theory that explains a relatively straightforward problem, such as how to gain attention in a speech. Those theories that explain difficult problems show acuity; those that focus on fairly obvious problems demonstrate superficiality.

Table 1.4 Criteria for Evaluating Theory

Area of Evaluation	What to Look For
Accuracy	Has research supported that the theory works the way it says it does?
Practicality	Have real-world applications been found for the theory?
Succinctness	Has the theory been formulated with the appropriate number (fewest possible) of concepts or steps?
Consistency	Does the theory demonstrate coherence within its own premises and with other theories?
Acuity	To what extent does the theory make clear an otherwise complex experience?

SUMMARY

In this chapter, we discussed the popular perception of communication, which suggests that the communication process is paradoxically simple yet powerful. We identified three ways our understanding of communication can vary: the level of observation (what is included or not included in the definition), the role of intentionality (whether speaker intent is required), and normative judgment (whether success is required in order for an interaction to be considered communication). We then turned our attention to communication competence, indicating that competent communicators are those who can balance effectiveness and appropriateness. Next, we discussed the nature of theory. We differentiated between concepts, models, and theories. We also discussed the distinctions between commonsense theories, working theories, and scholarly theories. Finally, we provided a means by which scholarly theories of communication can be evaluated, namely accuracy, practicality, succinctness, consistency, and acuity.

KEY TERMS

CASE STUDY 1: EDUCATION AS ENTERTAINMENT

Imagine a new theory has been proposed, described shortly. This isn't a "real" theory: it has been created just so that you can apply the material from this chapter. We challenge you to think critically about the theory using the concepts you have learned.

In 1969, a radical new children's program appeared on television, one specifically designed to blend education with entertainment (characterproducts.com, 2004). *Sesame Street*, which has been on the air continuously for almost 50 years, uses puppets, live action, and cartoons in an effort to teach children basic skills such as identifying colors, the ABCs, and counting. The show itself is grounded in contemporary educational research, with a child psychologist in charge of evaluation of material that appears on the show (2004; McMullin, 2001). McMullin (2001) argues that *Sesame Street* is the "single largest educator of young children in the world" (¶ 2).

More than just a television show, *Sesame Street* has also branched into other media forms.

In addition to their website, *Sesame Street* currently produces 10 game apps, 6 story apps, over 75 electronic books, and 5 apps that are listed as "family tool kits" to assist children in coping with social issues like divorce and incarceration. Further, there is a subscription *Sesame Street* channel on YouTube that has more than 2 million subscribers and more than a billion hits per year (Folkenflik, 2016), as well as six other channels affiliated with *Sesame Street*, including a YouTube channel called Sesame Studios that features original digital content distinct from the popular *Sesame Street* puppets. "The idea is to create new content swiftly and inexpensively, reaching children where they consume media, just like adults, on smartphones, tablets and computers," (Folkneflik, 2016, ¶2).

Despite the popularity and success of the *Sesame Street* conglomerate, we propose education as entertainment theory (EET), which suggests there is a dark side to educational media such as *Sesame Street*. Specifically, the theory asserts that children exposed to screen media that blend education and entertainment become so accustomed to the idea that "learning is fun" that they are actually less motivated to learn when alternative instructional methods are used in a classroom setting. There are five key terms associated with this theory: *entertainment-education media*, *instructional style*, *expectations*, *motivation*, and *learning*.

Entertainment-education media. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2017), children spend an average of 7 hours per day in front of a screen. About 25% of children under the age of 8 regularly watch educational television, about 8% play educational games on a computer, and 7% access educational content on mobile devices (Heintz & Wartella, 2012). The common goal of these educational media forms is to engage children's attention so that they might learn. Yet, research has demonstrated a number of negative effects of screen time on young children, including childhood obesity, irregular sleep patterns, and social and behavioral issues (Summers, 2014). More importantly, research also indicates that use of digital media is associated with changes in early learning and development (Kates, 2016). EET argues that heavy consumption of entertainment-education content has a negative impact on children's later school performance because of the expectation that learning should always be fun. This leads to the second central idea, instructional style.

Instructional style. Instructional style refers to the techniques used in the education process. According to Forrest (2004), "A review of the research regarding learning processes suggests that instructors use a wide variety of teaching methods, believing that this affords all students an opportunity to gain the necessary knowledge, regardless of their learning styles" (p. 74).

The research makes a distinction between instructor-focused and student-focused teaching (Andersen, Nussbaum, Pecchioni, & Grant, 1999). Instructor-focused teaching is the traditional model, wherein the teacher is in charge of the pace and content of the class. Student-focused instruction encourages greater student participation, for example, cooperative learning (where students are put into groups or teams and teach and motivate each other) and class discussion (Andersen et al., 1999).

EET focuses on entertainment instructional style. This refers to efforts to make learning "fun." The entertainment instructional style relies on music, role-playing, games, and visual stimulation, among other things. The goal is to increase interest and reduce boredom. Efforts are made to have students participate in the learning in an informal style (Handfield-Jones, Nasmith, Steinert, & Lawn, 1993).

Expectations. Expectations are what we anticipate will happen. In the case of EET, we are

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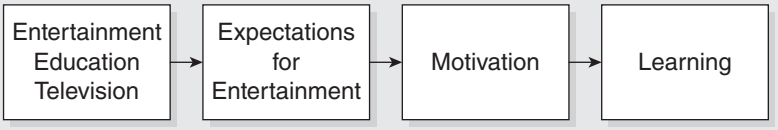


referring to expectations based on context, specifically, the learning context. According to Staton (1999), "Both instructors and students bring with them to the classroom certain expectations for the kind of speech that should and should not occur, for the kind of behavior that is and is not appropriate, for the roles that the instructor and students should and should not take, and for the nature of the social atmosphere that should and should not develop" (p. 35). In this case, we are specifically talking about expectations for entertaining instruction.

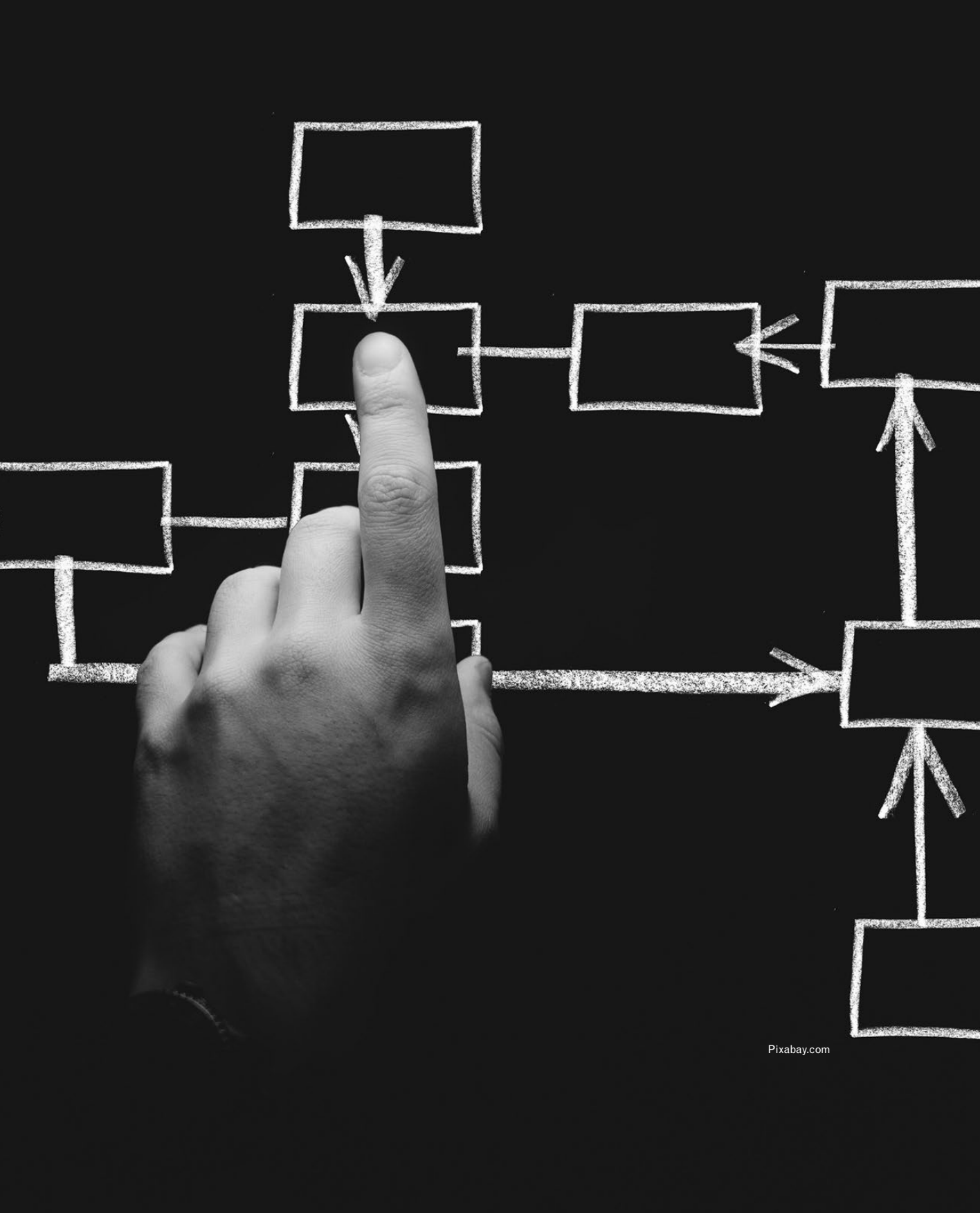
Motivation. Motivation refers to a student's desire for learning (Kerssen-Griep, Hess, & Trees, 2003). It is a drive for achievement in a particular course or content area. We presume that expectations influence motivation, such that when expectations are met, a student will be more motivated to learn. This is supported by research, which has found that instructional methods influence student motivation (Kerssen-Griep et al., 2003).

Learning. Learning is defined as "a process of progressive change from ignorance to knowledge, from inability to competence, and from indifference to understanding" (Fincher, 1994, as cited in Forrest, 2004, p. 74). According to Rubin (1999), learning is typically measured through assignments such as skills performance (e.g., a speech) or written assignments (exams, papers).

In summary, EET proposes that early childhood experiences with entertainment education media (such as *Sesame Street*) increase an individual's expectations for an entertainment instructional style. If such expectations are met, the student will be more motivated and will learn more. If the expectations are not met, the student will be unmotivated and will therefore learn less. This can be illustrated as above.

Questions for Consideration

1. The theorists associated with EET have not formally defined communication. Where do you think "communication" occurs in this theory (hint: consider the contexts listed in Table 1.2)? Provide evidence from the theory that might indicate how the theorists' views of communication might be classified using Dance's three ways definitions of communication vary.
2. Using the definition of communication competence provided in this chapter, what role might communication competence play in the EET process?
3. What are the concepts associated with EET? Why are these concepts (rather than theories or models)?
4. Which of the four types of models described in the chapter is used by the theory?
5. Describe your initial reaction to EET. Then, critically reflect on EET. How might EET fare if you evaluated its usefulness by using the criteria described in the chapter?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CHAPTER TWO

THEORY DEVELOPMENT

In Chapter 1, we defined theory as "any systematic summary about the nature of the communication process." We further introduced the topic of scholarly theory, which is different from other forms of theory because it has been carefully researched. The focus of this chapter is on the methods by which scholarly theories are created, developed, and modified. Our first concern is the nature of how theory and research are related.

THEORY–RESEARCH LINK

As much as we would like to provide a simple answer to how theory and research are linked, we can't easily articulate the connection because of debate about the theory–research relationship akin to the classic question, "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" In this case, scholars disagree as to what starts the process: theory or research.

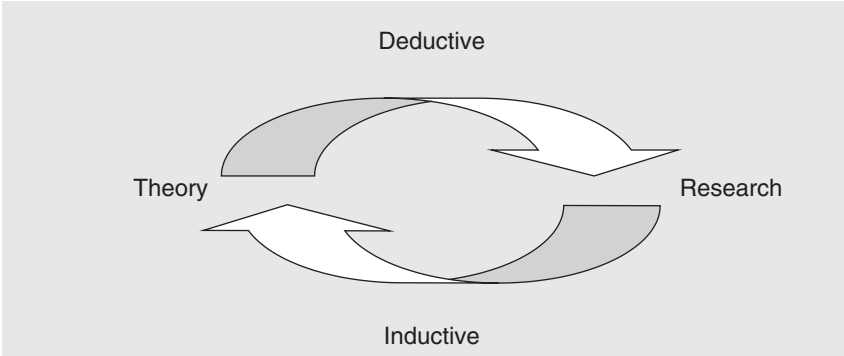
Some scholars argue that research comes before theory. This approach is known as **inductive theory**. Scholars using inductive theory, also known as grounded theory, believe the best theories emerge from the results of systematic study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). That is, these scholars observe or examine a particular topic, and, based on patterns that emerge over time, they develop a theory; the research comes *before* the theory. If someone wanted to develop a theory about how management style affects employee performance, then that person would study management style and employee performance in great depth before proposing a theory. Preliminary theories may be proposed, but the data continue to be collected and analyzed until adding new data brings little to the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon or situation.

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

1. Describe the differences between inductive theory and deductive theory, especially in terms of the theory development process
2. Explain the major research methods used by communication theorists, including what they reveal and what they conceal about the communication process
3. Articulate why a particular research method is the appropriate method to answer a research question
4. Recognize the differences between humanistic and social scientific approaches to communication study
5. Summarize the ways theories change and grow

Figure 2.1 The Theory–Research Link



On the other hand, some scholars believe in **deductive theory**. Deductive theory is generally associated with the scientific method (Reynolds, 1971). The deductive approach requires that a hypothesis, or working theory, be developed before any research is conducted. Once the theory has been developed, the theorist then collects data to test or refine the theory (i.e., to support or reject the hypothesis). What follows is a constant set of adjustments to the theory with additional research conducted until evidence in support of the theory is overwhelming. The resulting theory is known as a law (Reynolds, 1971). In short, deductive theory development starts with the theory and then looks at data. As an example, a researcher might start with the idea that supportive management styles lead to increased employee performances. The researcher would then seek to confirm his or her theory by collecting data about those variables.

As indicated earlier, these two approaches represent different starting points to what is in essence a "chicken or the egg" argument. But neither approach advocates a single cycle of theorizing or research. Instead, both approaches suggest theories are dynamic—they are modified as the data suggest, and data are reviewed to adjust the theory. Consider the model depicted in Figure 2.1. We believe this is the most accurate illustration of the link between theory and research. In this model, the starting points are different, but the reality of a repetitive loop between theory and research is identified.

WHAT IS RESEARCH?

Because research is a fundamental part of theory development, we must turn our attention to the question of what counts as research. Frey, Botan, and Kreps (2002) described research as "disciplined inquiry that involves studying something in a planned manner and reporting it so that other inquirers can potentially replicate the process if they choose" (p. 13). Accordingly, we do not mean informal types of research, such as reflections on personal experience, off-the-cuff interviews with acquaintances, or casual

viewing of communication media. When we refer to research, we mean the methodical gathering of data as well as the careful reporting of the results of the data analysis.

Note that *how* the research is reported differentiates two categories of research. **Primary research** is reported by the person who conducted it. It is typically published in peer-reviewed academic journals. **Secondary research** is reported by someone other than the person who conducted it. This is research reported in newspapers, popular or trade magazines, handbooks and textbooks, and, frequently, the Internet. Certainly, there is value to the dissemination of research through these media. Textbooks, for example, can summarize hundreds of pages of research in a compact and understandable fashion. The Internet can reach millions of people. Trade magazines can pinpoint the readers who may benefit most from the results of the research. Regardless of whether the source is popular or academic, however, primary research is typically valued more than secondary research as a source of information. With secondary research, readers risk the chance that the writers have misunderstood or inadvertently distorted the results of the research. Similar to the childhood game of "whisper down the lane," the message typically becomes more vague and less accurate as it gets passed from person to person—or website to website.

RESEARCH METHODS IN COMMUNICATION

Every 60 seconds almost 4 million texts are sent, Google translates nearly 70,000,000 words, Facebook users "like" a post over 4 million times, and almost a million Tinder users swipe left or right (Dieker, 2016). Those figures are for *every* minute of *every* day. Millennials are estimated to consume approximately 17.8 hours of media every day (Taylor, 2014). This is an astonishing number, but to put it into perspective, many of these media forms are consumed simultaneously. It is clear that we are inundated with information. But what value does this information have? The proliferation of verifiably fake news (i.e., flagrant untruths), as well as hyper-partisan stories intended to pander to readers' preexisting beliefs, makes information literacy more important than ever. Even if you never conduct a research study in your life, knowing which information has been methodically collected and reported accurately will undoubtedly help you make more informed personal and professional decisions. This section focuses on the four research methods commonly used in the development of scholarly communication theory. When reading about these methods, pay particular attention to the types of information revealed and concealed by each method. This approach will allow you to be a better consumer of research.

Experiments

When people think of experiments, they often have flashbacks to high school chemistry classes. People are often surprised that communication scholars also use experiments, even though there isn't a Bunsen burner or beaker in sight. What makes something an experiment has nothing to do with the specific equipment or instruments involved; rather, experimentation is ultimately concerned with causation and control.

It is important to emphasize that an **experiment** is the *only* research method that allows researchers to conclude that one thing causes another. For example, if you are interested in determining whether friendly customer service causes greater customer satisfaction, whether advertisers' use of bright colors produces higher sales, or whether sexuality in film leads to a more promiscuous society, the only way to determine these things is through experimental research.

Experimental research allows researchers to determine causality because experiments are so controlled. In experimental research, the researcher is concerned with two variables. A **variable** is simply any concept that has two or more values (Frey et al., 2002). Sex is a variable, because we have men and women. Note that just looking at maleness is not a variable because there is only one value associated with it; it doesn't *vary*, so it isn't a *variable*. Masculinity is considered a variable, however, because you can be highly masculine, moderately masculine, nonmasculine, and so on.

Returning to our discussion of experimental research, then, the research is concerned with two variables. One of the variables is the presumed cause. This is known as the **independent variable**. The other is the presumed effect. This is known as the **dependent variable**. If you are interested in knowing whether bright colors in advertisements cause increased sales, your independent variable is the color (bright versus dull), and the dependent variable is the amount of sales dollars (more, the same, or less). The way the researcher determines causality is by carefully controlling the study participants' exposure to the independent variable. This control is known as **manipulation**, a term that commonly conjures negative connotations but in the research world is imperative to establishing causality. In the study of advertisements just described, the researcher would expose some people to an advertisement that used bright colors and other people to an advertisement that used dull colors, and she or he would observe the effects on sales based on these manipulations.

Experiments take place in two settings. A **laboratory experiment** takes place in a controlled setting so the researcher might better control efforts at manipulation. In the communication field, laboratories often simulate living rooms or conference rooms. Typically, however, they have two-way mirrors and cameras mounted on the walls to record what happens. For example, John Gottman has a mini "apartment" at the University of Washington. He has married couples "move in" to the apartment during the course of a weekend, and he observes all of their interaction during that weekend.

Some experiments don't take place in the laboratory but in participants' natural surroundings; these are called **field experiments**. These experiments often take place in public places, such as shopping malls, libraries, or schools, but they might take place in private areas as well. In all cases, participants must agree to be a part of the experiment to comply with ethical standards set by educational and research institutions.

Surveys

The most common means of studying communication is through the use of surveys. Market research, audience analysis, and organizational audits all make use of surveys. Unlike experiments, the use of surveys does not allow researchers to claim one thing

causes another. The strength of **survey research** is that it is the *only* way to find out how someone thinks, feels, or intends to behave. In other words, surveys capture people's perception. If you want to know what people think about your organization, how they feel about a social issue, or whether they intend to buy a product after viewing an advertising spot you created, you need to conduct a survey.

In general, there are two types of survey research. An **interview** asks participants to respond orally. It might take place face-to-face or over the phone. One special type of interview is a **focus group**, which is when the interviewer (called a facilitator) leads a small group of people in a discussion about a specific product or program (Frey et al., 2002). A **questionnaire** asks participants to respond in writing. It can be distributed by mail, via the Internet, or administered with the researcher present. Some research is more suited for interviews than questionnaires. Interviews allow the researcher to ask more complex questions because he or she can clarify misunderstandings through probing questions. Questionnaires, however, might be more appropriate for the collection of sensitive information because they provide more anonymity to the respondent (Salant & Dillman, 1994).

The key concepts associated with either type of survey research are questioning and sampling. First, the purpose of a survey is quite simple: to ask questions of a group of people to understand their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Questions might take two forms. **Open-ended questions** allow respondents to answer in their own words, giving as much (or as little) information as they would like. For example, a market researcher might ask study participants to describe what they like about a particular product. Or an interviewer might ask someone to respond to a hypothetical situation. **Closed-ended questions** require respondents to use set answers. In this case, a market researcher might say something like "Respond to the following statement: Product X is a useful product. Would you say you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree?" Neither method is better than the other; the two types of questions simply provide different kinds of data that are analyzed using different means.

The second key concept associated with survey research is **sampling**. Researchers are typically concerned with large groups of people when they conduct surveys. These groups are known as a **population**, which means all people who possess a particular characteristic (Frey et al., 2002). For example, marketing firms want to study all possible consumers of a product. Newspaper publishers want to gather information from all readers. Pharmaceutical industries want to study everyone with a particular ailment. The size of these groups makes it difficult to study everyone of interest. Even if every member of the population could be identified, which isn't always the case, studying all of them can be extremely expensive.

Instead, survey researchers study a sample, or a small number of people in the population of interest. According to a basic premise in statistics known as the law of large numbers (LLN), if a sample is well selected and of sufficient size, the survey's results are likely also to hold true for the entire group. A **random sample**, in which every member of the target group has an equal chance of being selected, is better than a **nonrandom sample**, such as volunteers, a convenience sample (college students), or a purposive sample (people who meet a particular requirement, such as age, sex, or race). Essentially,

a random sample of consumers is more likely to give representative information about brand preferences than a convenience sample, such as stopping people at the mall on a particular day to answer a few questions.

Textual Analysis

The third method used frequently by communication scholars is textual analysis. A text is any written or recorded message (Frey et al., 2002). A website, a transcript of a medical encounter, and an employee newsletter can all be considered texts. **Textual analysis** is used to uncover the content, nature, or structure of messages. It can also be used to evaluate messages, focusing on their strengths, weaknesses, effectiveness, or even ethicality. So textual analysis can be used to study the amount of violence on television, how power dynamics play out during doctor–patient intake evaluations, or even the strategies used to communicate a corporate mission statement.

There are three distinct forms textual analyses take in the communication discipline. **Rhetorical criticism** refers to "a systematic method for describing, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating the persuasive force of messages" (Frey et al., 2002, p. 229). There are numerous types of rhetorical criticism, including historical criticism (how history shapes messages), genre criticism (evaluating particular types of messages, such as political speeches or corporate image restoration practices), and feminist criticism (how beliefs about gender are produced and reproduced in messages).

Content analysis seeks to identify, classify, and analyze the occurrence of particular types of messages (Frey et al., 2002). It was developed primarily to study mass-mediated messages, although it is also used in numerous other areas of the discipline. For example, public relations professionals often seek to assess the type of coverage given to a client. Typically, content analysis involves four steps: the selection of a particular text (e.g., newspaper articles), the development of content categories (e.g., "favorable organizational coverage," "neutral organizational coverage," "negative organizational coverage"), placing the content into categories, and an analysis of the results. In our example, the results of this study would be able to identify whether a particular newspaper has a pronounced slant when covering the organization. One modern derivation of this type of research is **text mining**, also known as **data mining**. Data mining is the use of advanced "data analysis tools to discover previously unknown, valid patterns and relationships in large data sets" (Seifert, 2007, p. 2). Given the immense amount of information available on the Internet, organizations can use complex programs to sift through enormous amounts of data to uncover the frequency and uses of particular words or ideas.

The third type of textual analysis typically conducted by communication scholars is **interaction analysis** (also known as **conversation analysis**). These approaches typically focus on interpersonal or group communication interactions that have been recorded, with a specific emphasis on the nature or structure of interaction. The strength of this type of research is that it captures the natural give-and-take that is part of most communication experiences. The weakness of rhetorical criticism, content analysis, and interaction analysis is that *actual* effects on the audience can't be determined solely by focusing on texts.

Ethnography

Ethnography is the final research method used by scholars of communication. First used by anthropologists, **ethnography** typically involves the researcher immersing himself or herself into a particular culture or context to understand communication rules and meanings for that culture or context. For example, an ethnographer might study an organizational culture, such as Johnson & Johnson's corporate culture, or a particular context, such as communication in hospital emergency rooms. The key to this type of research is that it is naturalistic and emergent, which means it must take place in the natural environment for the group under study and the particular methods used adjusted on the basis of what is occurring in that environment.

Typically, those conducting ethnographies need to decide on the role they will play in the research. A **complete participant** is fully involved in the social setting, and the participants do not know the researcher is studying them (Frey et al., 2002). This approach, of course, requires the researcher to know enough about the environment to be able to fit in. Moreover, there are numerous ethical hurdles the researcher must overcome. Combined, these two challenges prevent much research from being conducted in this fashion. Instead, **participant–observer** roles are more frequently chosen. In this case, the researcher becomes fully involved with the culture or context, but he or she has admitted his or her research agenda before entering the environment. In this way, knowledge is gained firsthand by the researcher, but extensive knowledge about the culture is not necessarily a prerequisite (Frey et al., 2002). Researchers choosing this strategy may also elect which to emphasize more: participation or observation. Finally, a researcher may choose to be a **complete observer**. Complete observers do not interact with the members of the culture or context, which means they do not interview any of the members of the group under study. As such, this method allows for the greatest objectivity in recording data, while simultaneously limiting insight into participants' own meanings of the observed communication.

Communication scholars use four primary research methods: experiments, which focus on causation and control; surveys, which focus on questioning and sampling; textual analysis, which focuses on the content, nature, or structure of messages; and ethnography, which focuses on the communication rules and meanings in a particular culture or context. A summary of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the four methods is summarized in Table 2.1.

Because this textbook is oriented toward students who are likely to use theory and research in the professional realm, we wish to make clear that people who work in the professions also use research, although that research is not used to develop scholarly theory (although it might be used to develop or refine a working theory). Marketing and public relations professionals, human resources executives, and managers in many industries conduct research as part of the creation and assessment of campaigns, for strategic planning, and for decision making. Like academics, professionals also use experiments (typically for product testing), surveys (especially focus groups), textual analysis (especially media monitoring), and ethnographies of a sort (typically observations of how customers use a product).

SOCIAL SCIENCE AND THE HUMANITIES

Thus far, we have talked about the central role research plays in the development of theories and how research comes either before creating the theory (in the case of inductive theory development) or after (in the case of deductive theory development). The reason for these differing approaches can be traced back to philosophical divisions within the field of communication. Communication has been described as both an art and a science (Dervin, 1993). On one hand, we respect the power of a beautifully crafted and creatively designed advertisement. On the other hand, we look to hard numbers to support decisions about the campaign featuring that advertisement. Although art and science are integrally related in the everyday practice of communication, in the more abstract realm of theory the two are often considered distinct pursuits. This concept can be traced to distinctions between the academic traditions of the humanities (which includes the arts) and the social sciences.

You might have some ideas about the terms *humanistic* and *social scientific* because most college students are required to take some courses in each of these areas. The distinctions between the humanities and social science are based on more than just tradition, however; they are based on very different philosophical beliefs. The interpretation of meaning is of central concern in the humanities (Littlejohn, 2002). Meaning is presumed to be subjective and unique to the individual, even though meaning is likely influenced by social processes. For individuals trained in the **humanistic approach**, **subjectivity** is a hallmark; one's own **interpretation** is of interest. Think about the study of English literature, a discipline at the heart of the humanities. English scholars study the interpretation of texts in an effort to understand the meaning of the object of study.

On the other hand, **objectivity** is a central feature of social science. Social scientists believe that through careful standardization (i.e., objectivity), researchers can observe patterns of communication that can hold true for all (or most) people, all (or most) of the time. These patterns that hold true across groups, time, and place are known as **generalizations**. To illustrate, psychology is a discipline rooted in the social sciences. As such, psychology scholars seek to explain general principles of how the human mind functions. These principles are intended to explain all people, all over the world, throughout history.

Because the humanities and social sciences have different areas of interest, they treat theory and research differently. Table 2.2 seeks to identify some of those distinctions. The first area of difference is the philosophical commitment to understanding the nature of human beings and the extent of their free will. Certainly, no one believes human beings are mere puppets who have no choice in how they behave. Communication theorists vary, however, in the extent to which they believe people *act* versus *react* to communication. For example, social scientists tend to follow **determinism**, which means they believe past experience, personality predispositions, and a number of other antecedent conditions *cause* people to behave in certain ways. Accordingly, deterministic approaches to human interaction propose that people in general tend to react to situations. Social scientists tend to look at the causes and effects of communication, such as what causes a marriage to fail or the effects of a particular marketing campaign.

Conversely, most humanists believe people have control over their behavior and make conscious choices to communicate to meet their goals. Theorists taking this stance are called pragmatists because they believe people are practical and plan their behavior. **Pragmatism** believes human beings are not passive reactors to situations but dynamic actors. Humanists, then, tend to focus on the choices people (or organizations) make, such as United Airlines' ineffective public relations response to a series of videos depicting callous—and violent—treatment of passengers.

A second way to differentiate between humanistic and social scientific scholarship is through a focus on *why* theories are developed. For example, the goal of social scientific theory is to both understand and predict communication processes. Because social science is interested in generalizations, the ability to predict is paramount. If a theorist understands the general pattern at the heart of a social scientific theory, she or he should be able to predict how any one individual might communicate. Those in the humanities, however, believe interpretations are always subjective; they are unique to the individual. Accordingly, humanists believe theorists can never actually predict how a person will behave; all that can be done is to try to understand human communication.

Although not directly related to the distinction between social science and the humanities, we note that some theories strive to do more than simply predict or understand. A special group of theories, called critical approaches, seeks to improve the world through social change. The goal of critical theory is to empower people in their professional and personal lives. For more information on critical communication theory, see Craig (1999).

The third difference between social science and the humanities is the process of theory development. Recall our discussion of the theory–research link discussed earlier in the chapter. Deductive theory is based on the scientific method, so it should be no surprise that the **social scientific approach** to theory development is *deductive*. Those in the humanities, however, tend to start with data and subsequently develop theory. For example, scholars of English literature would start with reading Shakespeare's plays before developing a theory about them. Thus, those in the humanities tend to use inductive theory development.

Finally, the focus and methods of research also vary in the social scientific and humanistic approaches. The focus of research for the social scientific method is on standardization and control. Because of these objectives, social scientists incrementally study narrowly defined areas at a time, believing the whole picture will be uncovered eventually. This approach is known as **particularism**. Humanists, on the other hand, believe in looking at the big picture; they propose that all pieces of the puzzle contribute to an understanding of the problem. Accordingly, they use holism, looking at the situation in its entirety, as the focal point of research.

Given the different areas of focus, it's not a surprise that the final difference between social scientists and humanists is the research methods they use. Earlier in this chapter, we discussed the four research methods used by communication scholars. Of the four, one is clearly social scientific, and one is clearly humanistic. Experimental methods, with their concern for causation and control, are uniquely suited for the social sciences. Remember that social science seeks to make predictions, and the best way to do that is

to have research that supports particular causes and effects. Similarly, ethnography is uniquely suited for humanistic research. Ethnography leans to the understanding of communication in contexts and cultures, which is appropriate for theory that uses holism in its quest for interpretation of communicative events.

The uses of survey research and textual analysis cannot be easily classified. Instead of the methods themselves being associated with either social science or the humanities, the specific way data are analyzed determines whether the method is social scientific or humanistic. The two methods of data analysis are quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative methods are adapted from those used in the hard sciences, such as chemistry and biology. Accordingly, quantitative methods are associated with social science. Qualitative methods are those that have historically been used by the humanities.

Quantitative methods typically rely on numbers or statistics as the data source (Reinard, 1998). These data and statistics are generally explanatory and comprehensive; they seek to predict what will happen for large groups of people. To accomplish this, researchers control the study by identifying the variables of interest before data collection takes place and trying to prevent extraneous influences from affecting the data. As described earlier, these commitments allow social scientists to make generalizations.

Qualitative methods reject the limitations on individual interpretation that control requires. Moreover, qualitative research eschews the use of numbers and uses verbal descriptions of communicative phenomena. Typically, the data are in the form of extended quotes or transcripts of communication. Finally, qualitative research typically centers on a description or critique of communication rather than on generalizations (Reinard, 1998).

Social scientists tend to use quantitative surveys or textual analyses. For example, they'll collect data about how many people prefer a new formulation of a product versus

Table 2.1 Four Methods of Communication Research

Research Method	What It Reveals	What It Conceals
Experiments	Cause and effect	Whether the cause–effect relationship holds true in less controlled environments
Surveys	Respondents' thoughts, feelings, and intentions	Cannot establish causality; cannot determine what people actually do
Textual analysis	The content, nature, and structure of messages	The effect of the message on receivers
Ethnography	Rules and meanings of communication in a culture or context	May provide a highly subjective (and therefore biased) view of the culture or context

Table 2.2 Differences Between Social Scientific and Humanistic Approaches to Communication

Issue	Social Science	Humanities
Belief about human nature	Determinism	Pragmatism
Goal of theory	Understand and predict	Understand only
Process of theory development	Deductive	Inductive
Focus of research	Particularism	Holism
Research methods	Experiments, quantitative survey, and textual analysis	Ethnography, qualitative survey, and textual analysis

a previous formulation of a product or how frequently a manager uses a particular communication strategy in interaction. Humanists tend to use qualitative surveys and textual analyses. They ask participants to respond at length to questions in their own words about a particular product, or they identify various communication themes evident in a corporate brochure.

A final note should be made about the distinctions between social science and the humanities. The purpose of talking about these two academic traditions is because communication is *both* social scientific and humanistic. As such, you shouldn't view these distinctions as dichotomies but as continua. Individual theories may be more or less social scientific or humanistic (not either/or), with elements borrowed from both traditions.

HOW THEORIES CHANGE AND GROW

Our final concern in this chapter is to be clear that once developed, theories continue to change and grow. As we indicated in Figure 2.1, whether a researcher starts with the theory or starts with research, theory development continues the loop between research and theory, refining, modifying, and extending the theory. Specifically, Kaplan (1964) argues that theories can change by extension or by intention. Growth by **extension** means the theory adds more concepts and builds on what was already established. For example, in 1959 Thibaut and Kelley created interdependence theory, which is described in Chapter 5. One central aspect of the theory is the prediction that relationship dependence (otherwise known as commitment) can be determined by examining an individual's satisfaction with the relationship, as well as his or her perception of the availability and quality of alternatives to the relationship. Caryl Rusbult (1980), a student of John Thibaut, continued working on the theory and presented an expanded version of the theory, which she called the investment model. Her model argues that looking at satisfaction and alternatives is not enough to predict commitment; one also has to examine how much an

individual has invested in the relationship. That is, people who are unhappy in their relationship, and who believe they can find a better partner, might stay in the relationship because they have invested a great deal of time, money, or even love, and they don't want to "lose" their investment. Thus, we can conclude that interdependence theory has grown through extension because a new concept—investment—was added to the theory to make its predictions more robust.

Conversely, growth by **intension** means scholars gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the original concepts presented in the theory. For example, communication accommodation theory, which is described in Chapter 6, was originally called speech accommodation theory, as the focus was purely on how our dialects and word choice varied based on to whom an individual was speaking. However, researchers quickly realized that accommodation occurs in other areas of verbal and nonverbal communication, such as speaking rate, politeness, and listening (see Gallois, Ogay, & Giles, 2005, for a review). The theory has grown by intension; the same principles of accommodation are still acknowledged by the theory, and no new concepts were added. Instead, additional research has allowed scholars to understand more fully the complex ways accommodation occurs, adding to the scope of the theory.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, we looked at how theories are developed and changed. We looked at two ways to create theory: inductive and deductive theory development. We discussed the links between theory and research, and we differentiated between primary and secondary research. We also identified the four primary research methods used by communication scholars: experiments, surveys, textual analysis, and ethnography. In addition to describing the key elements of each of these methods, the chapter focused on what each reveals and conceals about communication. Next, we turned our attention to the differences between social scientific and humanistic approaches to theory and research, centering our discussion on beliefs about human nature, the goal of theory, the development of theory, the focus of research, and the research methods used. Finally, we talked about how theories change through the processes of extension and intention.

KEY TERMS

Closed-ended questions 21
Complete observer 23
Complete participant 23
Content analysis 22
Deductive theory 18
Dependent variable 20
Determinism 24
Ethnography 23
Experiment 20
Extension 27
Field experiment 20
Focus group 21
Generalization 24
Humanistic approach 24
Independent variable 20

CASE STUDY 2: EDUCATION AS ENTERTAINMENT RECONSIDERED

In Chapter 1 you were introduced to a theory called education as entertainment theory (EET). We want you to reconsider EET, relying on what you learned in this chapter, as well as the following additional information.

In order to test EET, we conducted a survey. We created a questionnaire, which asked about age, sex, the frequency of viewing Sesame Street and other educational media, and expectations for instructional style, motivation, and perceived learning. For the expectations for instructional style, motivation, and perceived learning, we asked survey respondents to respond to the four teaching styles using a 1-to-5 Likert-type scale, with 1 representing "not at all" and 5 indicating "always."

Survey

On average, how often did you watch educational television (for example, *Sesame Street*) or use educational media (e.g., computer games, apps) when you were a child? (circle one) *Not at All | Very Little | Occasionally | Every Week | Every Day*

To what extent do you *expect* college professors to use the following teaching styles (check one for each style)?

	Not at All	Very Little	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
Lecture					
Class discussion					
Group activities					
Entertainment (e.g., films, games)					

(Continued)

(Continued)

To what extent would each style *motivate* you to want to learn (check one for each style)?

	Not at All	Very Little	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
Lecture					
Class discussion					
Group activities					
Entertainment (e.g., films, games)					

To what extent do you think you *actually* learn using the following styles (check one for each style)?

	Not at All	Very Little	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
Lecture					
Class discussion					
Group activities					
Entertainment (e.g., films, games)					

We distributed the questionnaire to 75 current college students and 75 adults over the age of 50. We choose age 50 because those individuals would have been in school already when *Sesame Street* appeared and before the advent of personal computer technology. There were 58 female and 17 male college students. There were 51 female and 14 male adults.

Our results showed that the average report of using educational media was 3.7 out of 5 for the college students, corresponding to frequent use of educational media. The average amount of using educational media was 2.2 for the adults, corresponding to very little use of educational media. Accordingly, the college students consumed more educational media than the adults did as children.

The remaining average answers are calculated in the following chart, with the instructional style listed in the far-left column and the mean expectation, motivation, and learning score for the two groups in the remaining columns.

Teaching Style	Expect College	Expect Adult	Motivate College	Motivate Adults	Learn College	Learn Adult
Lecture	4.7	4.8	2.4	3.2	4.1	4.2
Discussion	3.9	3.6	3.6	4.2	4.3	4.2
Group	3.4	3.2	2.9	3.2	2.6	3.2
Entertain	3.2	2.9	4.4	3.2	2.6	2.8

In looking at the chart, the only significant difference when considering entertainment education is in motivation, with college students reporting being motivated by entertainment education to a larger extent than adults. However, neither group seems to expect a whole lot of entertainment education, and neither group reports learning a lot from entertainment education. Thus, the predictions of EET are not fully supported.

Questions for Consideration

1. Based on what you read in Chapter 1 and the additional information just provided, was EET developed using an inductive or a deductive theory development process? Why?
2. What type of research (primary or secondary) was used in the development of EET? Was this a good choice?
3. Is EET social scientific or humanistic? Provide details from the information in Chapter 1 and this chapter to support your case.
4. Which research method was used to test the theory? Is this the best method? Why, or why not?
5. Discuss what ethical challenges researchers should consider when conducting this type of research. How do ethical challenges shift if the research method changes?
6. In what ways do you think EET should change or grow in the future? Be specific in detailing how it might change and why it should change in that manner.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CHAPTER THREE

COGNITION AND INTRAPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Regardless of whether you take a source or receiver orientation to communication, messages have no meaning without an individual's interpretation. Everyone has to process every message internally while considering how best to make sense of these messages. In other words, meaning is derived only after an individual perceives a message and gives it meaning; meaning resides in our *interpretations* of words or actions, not in the words or behaviors themselves. Consequently, communication is also an intrapersonal process.

COGNITIVE PROCESS

The roots of communication as an intrapersonal process can be traced to one of the major debates in psychology in the 20th century. At the beginning of the 1900s, American psychology was dominated by a focus on **behaviorism** (Runes, 1984). Most of us are familiar with Pavlov and his studies of salivary production in dogs. By associating the ringing of a bell with food, Pavlov was able to experimentally cause dogs to salivate when hearing a bell, even if the food was not present. Such is a description of a behavioral approach—a focus on external cause and behavioral effect. Major psychological figures such as J. B. Watson and B. F. Skinner argued that because we cannot observe mental processes, we should focus only on these causes and effects (Runes, 1984).

However, in the middle part of the 1900s, psychologists began arguing for a **cognitive** approach to understanding human behavior. Rather than focusing solely on external causes (or stimuli) and behavioral effects, these scholars argued we should be concerned with the mental processes used to process stimuli and generate particular effects (Runes, 1984). A major proponent of this approach was Noam Chomsky, who spearheaded a significant critique of behaviorism. **Cognition**, then, includes the processes of reducing, elaborating, transforming, and storing stimuli (Neisser, 1967). It refers to what happens in the mind that causes us to behave in particular ways.

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

1. Make predictions about the intentionality of behavior using Kelley's covariation model (consensus, consistency, distinctiveness, and locus of control)
2. Identify types of, conditions, and communicative strategies for reducing uncertainty
3. Use the concepts of expectancy, violation valence, and communicator reward valence to predict whether someone will reciprocate or compensate a violation
4. Explain how, by increasing or decreasing the magnitude of dissonance between beliefs and behaviors, one can influence or prevent change
5. Compare and contrast the major theoretical approaches to intrapersonal communication
6. Provide systematic understanding of a professional situation by employing theories of intrapersonal communication

In this chapter, we explain four theories that examine the cognitive and intrapersonal aspects of communication. First, attribution theory explains the process by which individuals assign causation or motivation to their own and others' behavior. The second theory presented in this chapter, uncertainty reduction theory, strives to explain and predict initial encounters with people. In other words, what drives you to initiate communication, and how do you go about reducing your uncertainty in a new situation? Third, expectancy violations theory seeks to predict and explain people's behavior when their expectations about what will happen are breached. The fourth theory presented, cognitive dissonance theory, explains and predicts how persuasion may be understood as a self-induced, intrapersonal event.

Altogether these theories emphasize the internal processes that serve as antecedents to the highly personalized creation of meaning, and each perspective applies to numerous communication contexts. From making judgments about a coworker based on her behavior as compared to others (i.e., attribution theory) to determining how best to reduce one's uncertainty during a job transfer (i.e., uncertainty reduction theory), each of the theories presented illustrates the internally driven process necessary to bring individual meaning to various messages.

ATTRIBUTION THEORY

According to attribution theorists, human beings often work like naïve detectives, continually trying to understand and make sense of what inspired various events, personal mannerisms, and individuals' conduct. Just as a crime scene investigator pieces together clues in an effort to determine a suspect's motive, you, too, go through life picking up clues and making judgments about what you believe influenced your own and others' behavior. These judgments and conclusions that provide reasons for behavior are called **attributions**. Attribution theory, then, explains the cognitive process one uses when trying to make causal explanations for behavior.

Attributions as Naïve Psychology

Attribution theory is not a new concept; researchers have long studied the ways in which people process events and then derive explanations for them. In the mid-1950s, however, Heider (1958) focused his attention on the process of drawing inferences—the assumptions individuals make regarding the causes of behavior as well as the judgments made about who is responsible for that behavior. According to Heider, individuals act as "naïve psychologists." When you see a person act, you immediately make judgments about the causal nature of the conduct. Specifically, Heider found that individuals try to determine whether a behavior in question was caused by dispositional or situational factors. **Dispositional factors** refer to internal or personal features, such as one's personality, character, or biological traits. These factors are relatively stable and unique to each individual. Conversely, **situational factors** refer to external dynamics that are relatively uncontrollable and determined by the environment or circumstance at hand. External

factors obviously vary to a much greater extent than do internal factors because they are inherently based on the context of a given situation, not on more stable personality traits.

For example, if, at your monthly staff meeting, Ron's presentation of current sales figures appears disjointed and jumbled, you might attribute his awkwardness to the fact that his PowerPoint slides failed to upload properly onto the laptop. Here, the inference made suggests that because of the situation (i.e., defective software), Ron was forced to give the presentation from memory and without visual aids. Thus, you might attribute Ron's bumbled speech to a technological glitch, thereby making a situational attribution for his behavior. On the other hand, you might attribute Ron's poor presentation to his lack of preparation (i.e., a character flaw). Surely by now everyone knows not to rely solely on PowerPoint; Ron should have come prepared with a backup plan ready in case of technical difficulties. Looking at the situation this way, you might blame Ron's failed presentation on his lazy preparation—something within his personal control, thereby making an internal attribution.

Correspondent Inference Theory

Expanding Heider's work, Jones and Davis (1965) were concerned with the intentionality of dispositional (internally driven) behavior. They argued that when a perceiver attributes the cause of a behavior to dispositional factors, the perceiver also makes judgments about the actor's intentions. Jones and Davis referred to these judgments of intention as **correspondent inferences**.

As Texter (1995) noted, "Before we can draw correspondent inferences from observing a person's behavior, we must make a determination about the person's intention: Did the person intentionally act in a certain way, knowing the effects the behavior would have?" (p. 55). When a dispositional inference mirrors an action and the perceiver labels the disposition and the action similarly (e.g., lazy), these inferences are said to "correspond." For instance, you might infer the disposition of laziness or apathy from Ron's seemingly lazy preparation for the meeting.

Determining the intentionality of an act is not easy; however, there are several factors one can consider when determining the purpose of another's behavior: choice, assumed desirability, social role, prior expectations, hedonic relevance, and personalism (Jones & Davis, 1965). Beginning with choice, individuals can assess an actor's intention by examining whether the actor in question had any alternatives. If you perceive alternative courses of action, you are also likely to assume the "selected" behavior was deliberate. Second, you can assess intentions by focusing on the assumed **social desirability** of the actor's actions. That is, if a person behaves in a manner contrary to social conventions, you are more likely to infer that the behavior reflects the person's true character and not merely an attempt at social correctness. Similarly, an actor's social role, or public position, can help determine the intentionality of a behavior, particularly when this person behaves in a manner contrary to the prescribed role.

Just as one's position affects expectations and assumptions of intentionality, so do prior expectations of that individual. Thus, your previous encounters with an actor, or knowledge about the person's background, may influence your assessments about the

actor's intentions. **Hedonic relevance**, or the degree to which you believe an actor's behavior directly affects you (either positively through rewards or negatively through punishment), also shapes your assessment of the actor's intentions. The greater you perceive the hedonic relevance, the more likely you are to view the actor's behavior as deliberate. Last, **personalism** refers to the belief that an actor specifically and intentionally behaves in ways to hurt or help you. Thus, if you assume a person's behavior changes when you are not present, you may imagine the actions are intentional. Notably, although each of these six factors can aid in assessing an actor's intentions, relying on any of these reasons may lead to biased judgments of an actor's disposition.

Kelley's Covariation Model

Perhaps a more holistic approach to attribution theory, Kelley's (1967, 1973) covariation model explains the causal nature of the complete attribution process. Specifically, this model has a greater scope than does Jones and Davis's correspondent inference theory because Kelley seeks to explain attributions overall, whereas Jones and Davis focused only on the intentionality of dispositional inferences.

According to Kelley (1967, 1973), individuals judge the causality of another's behavior by examining four factors: consensus, consistency, distinctiveness, and controllability. When the first three of these features are combined (i.e., consensus, consistency, distinctiveness), a perceiver can judge whether the actions were internally controlled (i.e., disposition) or externally controlled (i.e., situational). That is, you assign meaning based on perceived controllability—how much command an individual had over the behavior in question.

First, the perceiver determines if an actor's behavior demonstrates **consensus**, that is, would other people react similarly if placed in the same situation? The more you observe people behaving similarly, the greater the perception of consensus. If Rebecca storms out of the quarterly sales meeting in a huff and snarls at everyone in her path while the other members of the sales team leave the meeting with smiles and small talk, low consensus has occurred. If, however, everyone on the sales team heads out of the meeting sporting a grimace and a foul mood, then you have observed high consensus.

Second, the perceiver must determine whether the actor's behavior demonstrates consistency. **Consistency** refers to whether the person in question engages in similar behaviors over time. Comparable to consensus, the more you observe an actor engaging in the same behavior, the greater your perception of consistency. If Rebecca always seems to be angry and rude to colleagues, then you would say that her ill-tempered behavior after the sales meeting is highly consistent with her previous behavior. Conversely, if you typically view Rebecca as pleasant and enthusiastic, you would conclude that her sudden change of behavior has low consistency.

Third, a perceiver judges an actor's **distinctiveness**, that is, whether the person acts differently depending on the situation. Unlike consensus and consistency, which increase with others' conformity and number of observances over time, distinctiveness decreases when the actor behaves similarly across many situations. That is, a behavior is only labeled distinctive if it is "markedly different in one situation or task from others" (Texter, 1995, p. 60). Continuing with our example, if Rebecca speaks rudely and

demonstrates hostility toward everyone in the company, to her friends, to her children, and to her neighbors, then Rebecca's offensive mannerisms have low distinctiveness because her rudeness is not unique. On the other hand, if Rebecca's anger and disrespectful tone occurred only after this one meeting and in no other meetings or situations, then you would conclude this behavior is highly distinctive because it appears contrary to the other circumstances in her life.

As mentioned earlier, by combining these judgments of consensus, consistency, and distinctiveness, the perceiver can determine the controllability of the actor's behavior. For example, you suppose an **interior locus of control** when you believe the actor could have controlled the behavior. Alternatively, you assume an **exterior locus of control** when the behavior appears to have been unavoidable.

Considered individually, predictions made using any single variable (i.e., consensus, consistency, or distinctiveness) may provide an incomplete picture. However, by combining the judgments of consensus, consistency, and distinctiveness, eight possible combinations result. It is the combination of variables that allow the perceiver to predict with greater accuracy the controllability of the actor's behavior as either internally or externally motivated (Kelley, 1973).

Specifically, an external (or situational) attribution is made about the individual when consensus is high, consistency is low, and distinctiveness is high. For example, if Rebecca and her entire team leave the sales meeting angry (high consensus), and Rebecca doesn't usually leave meetings in a huff (low consistency), and Rebecca is usually pleasant around the office, not bad-tempered (high distinctiveness), we will assume that something happened at the meeting (the situation) to cause the unpleasant mood. Conversely, an internal (or dispositional) attribution is made about another person when consensus is low, consistency is high, and distinctiveness is low. Returning to the previous example, if only Rebecca leaves the sales meeting angry while the rest of the team is jovial (low consensus), and Rebecca often leaves the sales meetings in a huff (high consistency), and Rebecca snaps at people at work, at home, and at church (low distinctiveness), we can assume that it's Rebecca's disposition influencing her behavior. A summary of the predictions of Kelley's covariation model are in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Types of Attributions Based on Kelley's Predictions

Consensus	"Do other people act this **way**?" If **yes**, an external attribution is likely. If **no**, an internal attribution is likely.
Consistency	"Has this person behaved similarly **many times** before?" If **yes**, an internal attribution is likely. If **no**, an external attribution is likely.
Distinctiveness	"Has this person behaved similarly in **other types of situations**?" If **yes**, an internal attribution is likely. If **no**, an external attribution is likely.

To review, attribution theorists have emphasized various explanations for the attributions you make in assigning the causes and motivations of your own and others' behavior. Whereas Heider examined the causal location of dispositional and situational sources of behavior, Jones and Davis focused more narrowly on determining the perceived intent that drives dispositional behavior. Kelley broadened the scope of attribution theory by examining the interplay of consensus, consistency, and distinctiveness.

UNCERTAINTY REDUCTION THEORY

The second intrapersonal theory discussed here is uncertainty reduction theory (URT). Berger and Calabrese's (1975) URT holds that social life is filled with ambiguities. Not knowing what to wear on the first day at a new job (Should I wear a suit or go with business casual?), uncertainty as to how to greet a new boss (Should I call her Megan? Ms. Smith? Mrs. Smith? Dr. Smith?), and wondering whether you will get along with the new office mate who just transferred from another location (Will she bother me with questions? Will he gossip about team members?) are just a few typical concerns during an average workday. Guided by several assumptions and **axioms** of human behavior, URT seeks to explain and predict when, why, and how individuals use communication to minimize their doubts when interacting with others.

Three assumptions guide the uncertainty reduction framework. First, Berger and Calabrese (1975) maintained that the primary goal of communication is to minimize uncertainties humans have about the world and the people therein. Second, they proposed that individuals experience uncertainty on a regular basis and that the experience of uncertainty is an unpleasant one. Third, Berger and Calabrese assumed that communication is the primary vehicle for reducing uncertainty. Importantly, with so many uncertainties presented to you within a given 24-hour period, Berger (1979) admitted individuals couldn't possibly reduce uncertainty about all of these new people or situations. Instead, he argued there are three possible preceding conditions that influence whether people have the motivation necessary to reduce their uncertainty.

Reducing Uncertainty

Antecedent Conditions

Berger (1979) argued that individuals are motivated to reduce uncertainty only under one of three specific antecedent conditions. First, anticipation of future interaction suggests you are more motivated to reduce uncertainty about someone you are likely to see again. Thus, you are more inclined to use uncertainty reduction behaviors when a new office mate joins the team because you know you will be working with this person on a daily basis. The second condition, **incentive** value, includes the notion that you are prompted to learn more about someone when the individual in question has the potential to provide you with rewards or even punishments. In other words, what can this person do for you or to you? The third antecedent condition is **deviance**. If a person is odd, eccentric, bizarre, or unusual in some way that counters your expectations, URT suggests individuals will be more likely to reduce their uncertainty about the individual.