THE NEWSLETTER OF THE COMMUNICATION THEORY & METHODOLOGY DIVISION

CT&M CONCEPTS

ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATION IN JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION

On defining the "Field of Communication"

Andrew F. Hayes
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CT&M PF&R Chair

Over the last several years there have been questions raised in *CT&M*Concepts about just what our Professional Freedom and Responsibility (PF&R) is and what our obligations to AEJMC are or should be. For instance, in the Summer 2003 newsletter, Chip Eveland asked whether we should be required to devote as much time to PF&R and teaching relative to research compared to other divisions, given that we are first and foremost a research division. Chip brought up the point that as AEJMC has evolved, more and more AEJMC divisions now emphasize research. Thus, perhaps CT&M should be bound to the same rules as any division with respect to research, teaching, and PF&R in conference programming and newsletter content. In a later column (Fall 2004), Doug Blanks Hindman noted that questions about professional responsibility should focus inward as well as outward. That is, just as we might reflect outwardly by commenting on the practice of professional communicators to satisfy the objectives of PF&R, we might also engage in self-reflection and comment on our professional obligations and responsibilities, as researchers, to those who do research, talk about research, and make research possible. Such people include research participants, those who write press releases at our universities, granting institutions such as NSF, and even other researchers—i.e., ourselves. Although I might be stretching Doug's idea further than he intended, my argument is that it is sensible to construe discussion, debate, and commentary about our obligations to the research community and enterprise we call the field of communication as within the domain of PF&R.

Can a psychologist, sociologist, or political scientist train a communication scholar, or even be a communication scholar?

But before such discussion can even occur, it is necessary to get a handle on just what the "field of communication" consists of—who its members are and its domain of inquiry and teaching. This question prompts others, such as what qualifications are necessary to be considered a member of the field of communication, and what communication research is defined as. For instance, must a person hold a graduate degree to be considered a member of the field? If so, must that degree come from a program in communication or journalism? Can a psychologist, sociologist, or political scientist train a communication scholar, or even be a communication scholar? If so, how is the determination made that even though a person has a graduate degree in, sociology, for example, that person is a communication scholar? It is based on where the person publishes, what conferences the person attends, or it is just the variables he or she measures and analyzes? Or is it as simple as how a person self-identifies? And how is the decision made as to what counts as communication research? Is it a question of variables? Levels of analysis? Methodology? Would a person who studies the sociology of media organizations be considered a communication scholar? Or someone who examines what predicts how Supreme Court judges rule on First Amendment cases? And what of people who don't conduct research? Do we have obligations to people who "practice" the field rather than research the field? Are communication practitioners given equal status as members of the field, or are they somehow less important and so shouldn't guide where we direct our efforts?

To me the answers to these questions are consequential because they determine who our audience is as researchers, what we teach our

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Inside Concepts

Thoughts from the Head: Restructuring CT&M leadership

Glenn Leshner
University of Missouri
CT&M Division Head

Although the San Antonio conference in still fresh in our minds (and lingers on our credit cards), it is time to begin thinking about next year. But before I let you know how I hope this year develops for CT&M, I wish first to thank Dietram Scheufele for his outstanding leadership of CT&M the past few years. True, Dietram was the division head for only one year, but his progression through the various CT&M offices greatly shaped the direction I would like to see CT&M continue. I would also like to thank recent past division heads, Patricia Moy, Chip Eveland, Dhavan Shah, David Domke, and Wayne Wanta for their guidance, ideas, and friendship.

We are launching a new CT&M listserv (CTM-L@lists.missouri.edu). To be added to the listserv, email me (leshnerg@missouri.edu) your name.

Meanwhile, CT&M heads into an exciting time. Most notably, the members who attended the business meeting in San Antonio unanimously voted to continue exploring a relationship with Lawrence Erlbaum Associates and the development of a new journal, *Communication Methodology and Measures*. Andrew Hayes, Dietram Scheufele, and Patricia Moy are taking the lead on this. The journal seems to be moving along quickly (as of this writing, potential editors and editorial review board members have been discussed).

CT&M has had a spotty listserv over the years. There was a time when lively discussions took place on the listserv, but it seems to have recently died out. We are about to launch a new CT&M listserv, housed at the University of Missouri (CTM-L@lists.missouri.edu). If you are a CT&M member, you will receive an email telling you that you are a member on the listserv. Certainly, you may unsubscribe if you wish. But I hope you give the listserv a try. I received a list of CT&M members and their emails from the AEJMC home office. If you are on that list and if AEJMC has your email address, you will receive listserv messages. If you want to be added to the listserv, please email me (leshnerg@missouri.edu) your name and the email address you want on the listserv and I will get you added.

You may recall that Dietram suggested that we discuss altering the division's leadership structure in the Spring issue of *CT&M*Concepts. I want to continue the discussion. For those CT&M members who have not been directly involved in the leadership of the division, here is how it works: CT&M has a structure that is much different than other divisions and interest groups, and you can see who currently occupies those chairs elsewhere in this newsletter. The biggest workload each year generally falls on the Program/Paper/Research Chair. Although most other divisions separate these roles, we combine them in CT&M. From personal experience, I enjoyed the entire role as Program/Paper/Research Chair. There are advantages to determining the number of papers to be programmed, how they will be programmed, and running the research competition if one is to put together the entire conference program. The Teaching and PF&R Chairs generally are responsible for those aspects of the program, but the Program Chair ultimately is responsible for those panels and their placement during the conference. There are efficiencies in having one person handle the entire program. However, it is a heavy workload and good arguments can be made for splitting those responsibilities two or three ways.

A more important issue, I think, is how we elect our Vice-Head/Head-Elect. Each year we elect two new members to the Executive Committee. The roles on the executive committee vary as a function of need, discretion of the head, and most importantly, on how each member volunteers for positions. Dietram goes into detail about these issues in the Spring newsletter, so I need not repeat them here. One potential problem is continuity of expertise for the division. Another is that it is possible that a person could be program/research/paper chair one year then lose an election at the next business meeting. This means that the person who does the most work one year may not get the chance to be division head. One solution Dietram has suggested is that we directly elect the Program/Paper/Research Chair, who will serve a three-year term. After the first year, the year the person runs the conference program, this person would automatically become the Vice Head, and then Head in subsequent years. This scheme has several advantages, including rewarding people for their hard work and providing continuity in leadership. Another possibility is to split the Program/Paper/Research Chair, say, into a Program Chair and a Paper/Research Chair. We could elect a Paper/Research Chair, who then serves as Vice Head in year 2. The Vice Head could be responsible for the Program that year, and then move to Division Head in year 3—

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Escaping the triangulation strangulation

Doug Blanks Hindman
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One of the truisms of research theory and methods courses is the value of what some call methodological triangulation – the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods in a given study. Challenging this truism is like kicking a dead horse. But, in my humble opinion, this is a dead horse that needs some more kicking.

Students are frequently told by well-meaning theory and methods instructors that neither qualitative nor quantitative method is adequate, so the solution is to use surveys and focus groups, or experiments and depth interviews in each project. This combination of methods is said to lead to fuller, more nuanced explanations. The quantitative lens outlines the structural and lawful elements, and the qualitative lens reveals the flesh on the bones, the depth and texture, while allowing researchers to distinguish between what Clifford Geertz famously described as the difference between a wink and a blink. Just as the land surveyor derives the length of one side of a triangle from measures of angles and lengths of the other sides, the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is purported to lead to truths that are otherwise hidden or too far away to measure directly.

Each research method comes with a matching set of philosophical baggage.

The problem with encouraging methodological triangulation is it misses an important point that beginning researchers need to understand. The point is that each research method comes with a matching set of philosophical baggage. If the researcher, the research question, the methods, and the baggage don't match, then the package just does not look very good. It is the equivalent of a business traveler wearing an Armani suit while boarding an airplane in bare feet and carrying a live chicken. Or, as my graduate school professors warned, those who mix methods may become methodological dilettantes.

Students need to learn to appreciate the value of various theories and methods. But they also need to appreciate research that is consistent in its underlying epistemology and ontology -- its assumptions about the nature of knowledge and the nature of reality. The goal of teaching students about the philosophy of science is to help them learn to judge research on its own terms, and to avoid a painfully common mistake of holding a particular researcher accountable to a different research paradigm's standards. We don't want our students to sneer at publications by James Carey, Jean Baudrillard, and Robert McChesney because none include t-tests. Not that there is anything wrong with t-tests.

Research theory and methods instructors can help students understand the underlying assumptions of quantitative and qualitative, administrative and critical research. But the more important task is to challenge students to struggle with their own predispositions towards one type of research over the other. The goal is not to produce intellectual fence-sitters and methods mixers who throw things at the wall and hope that something sticks. Instead, the goal is for students to understand who they are, and to get their mugs and wumps on the same side of the fence.

The task is not all that difficult. Obviously, students understand that different questions lend themselves to different methods. They also intuitively understand that different researchers are drawn to different types of questions, and that in many cases, the publication says as much about the researcher as it does about the phenomenon. Most students enjoy exploring their own intellectual and political predispositions. Others become paralyzed, afraid to commit to one paradigm over the other. Once urged back to work, the struggling student generally settles in with a personally satisfying set of questions, theories and methods.

Students in theory and methods classes need to learn that the best research does not have something for everyone, but is instead consistent in its match of problem to theory to method. These three elements, when held together with what Burrell and Morgan called a consistent philosophy of science and a theory of society, can work together to reveal hidden truths.

Qualitative and quantitative, critical and administrative research can indeed explain different facets of the same phenomenon. As with drinking and driving, however, different research methods are best when experienced one at a time.

Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (1979). *Sociological paradigms and organisational analysis : Elements of the sociology of corporate life*. London : Heinemann.

Naming the divisional journal, bridging the methodological divide

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CT&M DIVISION CO-VICE HEAD

I was re-reading Neil Postman's (1992) *Technopoly* today in preparation for a course on communication and technology, and I was struck anew by Postman's antipathy toward what I do: "[I]t is clear that social science is a vigorous ally of Technopoly and must therefore be regarded with a hostile eye" (p. 56). When Postman talks about social science, he's talking mainly about work that attempts to measure human characteristics and subsequently explain or predict social behavior.

The first time I read the book was in my first semester of grad school, back when I was all but ignorant of the methodological and epistemological divide in our discipline. As I began my own research, I was drawn to quantitative approaches because they seemed to provide objective, definitive answers, but I felt the lure of the qualitative side because of the depth of the questions it asked and the premium it placed on a researcher's insight (which I thought I possessed in spades). As I applied to Ph.D. programs, I professed the desire to use all of the methodological tools at my disposal, both quantitative and qualitative. I did not want to put myself in the position of the proverbial hammer-wielding person to whom every problem looks like a nail.

But I was told that I would need to choose. Not in the "If yer not fer us, yer agin' us" sense, but for my own good. I would need to specialize in order to develop a research program, publish, get hired and get tenure. After that, I was told, I would be free to noodle about on the other side of the methodological fence if I so desired. But in the meantime, fence-straddling would be counterproductive and perhaps (carrying the analogy one step further) uncomfortable.

So I chose, as many have done and many more, most likely, will continue to do. My first AEJMC paper was a qualitative genre analysis, but since then my work has been quantitative. I've developed a research program based on my theoretical and methodological specialties. It's not that every problem looks like a nail to me, but that I tend to look for nails rather than screws or wingnuts. Is the grass greener on the other side of the methodological fence, invitingly verdant for post-tenure noodling some day? I wouldn't know: The fence seems to have grown since I stopped straddling it – or perhaps it's that I'm just not as methodologically spry as I used to be.

To draw on just one more analogy (the analogy bartender has cut me off): Methods are like languages. When you start relying on just one, you start to lose fluency in another. It seems that many scholars, even while they are learning to speak two languages, are encouraged to focus on one to the neglect of the second. And as a result, the communication across the methodological divide is sometimes reduced to pantomime. More venues that are methodologically bilingual could help us to speak each other's languages, to rebuild our fluency in half-remembered tongues.

That's what the divisional journal has a chance to be: a place to discuss communication methodology, period

That's what the divisional journal has a chance to be: a place to discuss communication methodology, period. But as Julie Andsager pointed out in the business meeting in August, if the proposed name, *Communication Methodology and Measures,* sticks, qualitative researchers won't read it or submit their work. Measurement is one of Postman's beefs with social science. He contends that it reifies abstract qualities (such as intelligence) into numbers (like IQ), in the process making invisible the "restricted and biased" criteria upon which we arrived at the numbers (p. 131).

Maybe qualitative researchers would stay away regardless. CT&M has a reputation as a home for quantoids. And some may bristle at CT&M's paper call, which says we are "open to all systematic methodologies." This is meant to affirm our dedication to rigor, not exclude qualitative work. As the undergrad methods textbook I teach from declares, "there are explicit, systematic methods qualitative researchers can employ, and report, as they interpret their textual data" (Baxter & Babbie, 2004, p. 366). But perhaps only five of the 82 submissions to the division last year employed qualitative methods.

Could we expect a better ratio in submissions to the divisional journal? Perhaps not. But then again, perhaps so. And if that ship hasn't sailed (the analogy bartender gave me one for the road), then I think we owe it to ourselves and the discipline to make the journal welcoming to researchers of all methodological persuasions.

Theorizing about theory & Intelligent Design

Lara Zwarun
University of Texas-Arlington
CT&M Division co-Vice Chair

Recent debates over whether Intelligent Design should be taught in science classes have made discussion about the concept of 'theory' far more common than it usually is. Whereas I often feel like much of what I do professionally is misunderstood or ignored by those outside of academia ("So, you just teach a few hours a week and that's it?"), these days, it is not uncommon to hear people debating whether evolution is "just a theory" and what sort of power it has if it is.

While this may well be one of those topics where it's futile to try to change people's minds (although I hope it isn't), at the very least, it seems like this provides us with a chance to educate people as to what it is we in the Communication field, and more specifically, in the Communication Theory and Methodology division of AEJMC, do. Obviously we don't think the words "just a" should qualify the word "theory" if we spend so much time developing them, testing them, modifying them, and sometimes disproving them. On the other hand, perhaps we are more qualified than most to speak to the inherent limitations of a theory: that it is not the truth, but it's the closest we've got so far.

Just because a theory does not explain every facet of a phenomenon, this does not mean it is worthless; it means it needs more tweaking and testing, a fact that we cheerfully acknowledge every time we write a manuscript with a "suggestions for future research" section.

In my mind, just because a theory does not explain every facet of a phenomenon, this does not mean it is worthless; it means it needs more tweaking and testing, a fact that we cheerfully acknowledge every time we write a manuscript with a "suggestions for future research" section. Ultimately it may be disproved and replaced with another theory. But the process of disproving and replacing it means that the original theory itself still helped us come closer to knowing something, and therefore gives it worth.

The current debate might give us a good opportunity to discuss this process of creating knowledge with people outside our field. For example, we might add to the debate by mentioning what we all no doubt learned as budding scholars: that a good theory explains, predicts, can be tested, and is parsimonious. I personally am not comfortable that Intelligent Design, as I understand it, meets all these counts. And because I wouldn't call it a theory at all, but rather, a point of view, it is my opinion that it should not be taught in a science class. Others might not agree, but perhaps we could still have a conversation about what it means to know something, instead of the latest celebrity gossip. That might be kind of nice.

I had a funny experience about a year ago down here in the Bible Belt. I took a day trip to a state park where some dinosaur tracks are preserved in a river bed. On the remote road leading to the park, I discovered The Creation Evidence Museum, which describes itself as follows on its Web site:

> *Among museums this entity makes a unique contribution, demonstrating that man and dinosaur lived contemporaneously. Educators, professors, children, and adherents to various religions are finding answers to the great questions of life: Who am I?, Where did I come from?, What is my purpose here?, and Where am I going?*

These seem like very ambitious questions for people who write off evolution as "just a theory" to think they can answer. To me, they suggest that a discussion about theorizing, knowledge, science, and faith needs to be held. Whatever our religious beliefs, as members of this division, I think it makes sense for us to be part of this discussion.

Join us in Ohio this February for the 2006 AEJMC Midwinter Conference

Maria Len-Rios
University of Missouri
CT&M Program/Research/ Paper Chair

The 2006 AEJMC annual conference in San Francisco isn't the only upcoming opportunity for you to get involved in discussions of your research with CT&M colleagues. This spring, CT&M will participate in the 2006 Midwinter Conference at Bowling Green State University, Feb. 24-26, 2006. We are one of eight other divisions participating. We hope you will consider submitting your research, or encourage your graduate students to do so. The other divisions participating include: Communication Technology, Critical & Cultural Studies, Entertainment Studies, Graduate Education, International Communication, Mass Communication & Society, Media Management & Economics, and Visual Communication.

Paper submission deadline is December 21, 2005 by email to Maria Len-Rios (lenrios@missouri.edu)

To make participation easy, we will accept two types of submissions: (1) research paper extended abstracts, or (2) panel proposals. Proposals or abstracts may address any aspect of building communication theory, testing communication theory, or evaluating methodological issues in communication research. We particularly welcome submissions from graduate students. As with other conferences that accept extended paper abstracts, completed papers are expected at the time of the conference in the event of acceptance.

Here are some specific guidelines for submission:

1. Extended abstracts and panel proposals should ***not*** exceed 500 words. In addition, each panel proposal should include a list of potential panelists.
2. Identify paper author(s) or panel organizer(s) on the title page only. Also include the mailing address, telephone number, and e-mail address of the person to whom inquiries about the submission should be addressed. The title should be printed on the first page of the text and on running heads on each page of text, as well as on the title page.
3. Please include your abstract or proposal as an e-mail attachment in a standard word-processing format (preferably Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format). Also, please ensure that you remove any identifying information from your document (with the exception of the title page).
4. Lastly, e-mail your proposals or extended abstracts by midnight (CST), Dec. 21, 2005 to Maria Len-Ríos at lenriosm@missouri.edu. Sub-missions will not be accepted in any other form (hard copy, fax, etc.). All submissions will be peer-reviewed. Authors will be notified of the status of their submissions by January 15, 2006.

Further details on conference registration, pre-conference events, and travel will be forwarded after Jan. 15, 2006. A conference Web site has been set up by Louisa Ha, MME Midwinter Conference Liaison and Representative of Conference Host Bowling Green State University, which lists conference hotel rates. Access the Web site at: http://www.bgsu.edu/departments/commst/aejmc.htm.

Bowling Green State University is located in Bowling Green, Ohio, 20 miles south of Toledo. BGSU enrolled approximately 16,700 students on its main campus in the Fall of 2004. Average temperatures in Ohio in February are between 28 to 35 degrees Fahrenheit.

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On defining the "Field of Communication"

students, who we recruit to join our academic programs as faculty, and where our professional allegiances and responsibilities reside. For example, if we reject research as irrelevant to the field because it isn't published in the "right" place, we end up with a narrower knowledge base from which to draw when conceptualizing and talking about what we know about communication. It also greatly restricts faculty recruiting and therefore what students are taught. Or if we focus where we submit our research on a rather short list of so-called "flagship" journals in the field, we end up minimizing our influence on other people who study communication (and perhaps those who practice it professionally) but have found homes in places other than communication departments. To be sure, the combination of electronic delivery and science search engines such as the Web of Science has diminished the importance of where research is published in terms of how widely our research is disseminated. Nevertheless, you will still find many social psychologists or political scientists who have much greater faith in mass communication research published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* or *American Political Science Review*, than in *Communication Research* or *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*. But If one's definition of the field is defined broadly rather than narrowly, then the right place to publish is determined mostly by such factors as the respect a submission is given by editors and reviewers, the rigor of the peer review process, and turnaround time, rather than whose discipline the journal serves.

Obviously, none of these questions can be answered in a brief column. Indeed, it may be that these questions have no answers we can all agree on. I'd like to invite anyone with thoughts on the topic to join a dialog about it on the CT&M blog at http://aejmcctm.blogspot.com. Look for the post titled "On Defining the Field of Communication."

Announcing the new CT&M web page & blog

Over the years the officers of CT&M have attempted to facilitate communication between members using a listserv and webpage. The old listserv is now defunct, and the web page is badly out of date. The officers of the division have decided to update our approach to facilitating communication and discussion between CT&M members by creating a CT&M blog. The blog can be found at http://aejmcctm.blogspot.com. The blog page will also function as the division's home page, and over the next several months a set of useful links will be added to the page. We encourage all members to check in on the blog regularly and contribute to the discussions that we hope will blossom over the coming months and years.

The blog is configured so that anyone in the world can comment on posts to the blog, but in order to post a new entry to the blog, you must be member of the blog. Acknowledging that not all members of the division will want to be members of the blog, interested CT&M members should contact Andrew Hayes at hayes.338@osu.edu for an email invitation to join. The invitation will include a link to join. Once the invitation is accepted, you must register with blogger.com to post to the blog. Registration is easy and free, and links to the blogger.com home page can be found on the CT&M blog.

We look forward to hearing from you in cyberspace!

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Restructuring CT&M leadership

same idea, but with a reassignment of responsibilities. Other permutations are possible, as well. If you have any thoughts about this issue, please email me or post your thoughts on the listserv.

Meanwhile, any decisions we make about leadership structure will need to comply with our by-laws. Nojin Kwak, University of Michigan, has agreed to serve as chair of this ad hoc committee. He will assemble a committee and attempt to find our by-laws, if any exist. Otherwise, the committee will draft a new set of by-laws for discussion, and eventual vote, by the membership. The new by-laws may include a new leadership structure. This is something we need to discuss as a division.

Please post!

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communication theory & methodology division

. newsletter
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. minority scholarship
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. syllabus exchange
. networks

What is Communication Theory & Methodology?

The Communication Theory & Methodology (CT&M) division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) was created in the mid-1960s. The goal of CT&M was and still is to advance the study of communication through theory-based, methodologically-sound research.

CT&M has traditionally been a leader at encouraging research by graduate students. It was the first division of AEJMC to have a **student paper competition**, and every year it awards $250 to the Top Student Paper. In addition, CT&M will award all first authors of student papers $50 to help **offset the cost of traveling** to the conference.

The **CT&M Student Reviewer Program** trains ABD students in the process of paper reviewing by not only allowing them to participate in the actual reviewing processing, but by sharing faculty reviews of the same paper so that students are able to compare how they evaluate manuscripts with more experienced reviewers

The **CT&M Minority Student Scholarship** - currently $1,200 - acknowledges and honors outstanding minority students. It is awarded annually to a deserving student enrolled in a journalism & mass communication Ph.D. program.

The **CT&M Syllabus Exchange** aids new and established faculty alike by serving as a repository of excellent syllabi developed and tested at universities around the country.

If you are interested in the theory and methodology of communication research in any substantive AEJMC area, CT&M should be the first division of AEJMC that you join.

For more information:

Visit the CT&M Web site at

http://www.jcomm.ohio-state.edu/ctm/index.htm

or contact Dominique Brossard: dbrossard@wisc.edu

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