

## An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research

**Edited by: Don W. Stacks, Michael B. Salwen and Kristen C. Eichhorn**

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Communication theory enlightens the very nature of human communication and the arrays that come to light in social connection. What makes humans different from other beings is the ability of humans to communicate with each other, thereby paving a way, always, to get engaged in dealings with others. Such dealings can be premeditated to appreciate the cataleptic and conscious predispositions that occur throughout the course of action. Indubitably, studying human communication is an extensive and complex matter. For this reason, communication theory becomes the *canopy* for many theories that hunt for understanding verbal and nonverbal cues. Communication theory itself cannot explain human connection and interaction as one simple theory. So, there are a set of theories of communication that aim to understand all perspectives of communication.

The third edition of the book - *An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research* is an edited volume by Dr Don W. Stacks, Dr Michael B. Salwen, and Kristen C. Eichhorn. Among these three editors, Dr Don W. Stacks and Dr Michael B. Salwen have vast academic experience — associated with School of Communication at the University of Miami as professors. Dr Don W Stacks is an author of several books on communication topics and has received numerous awards. On the other hand, Dr Michael B. Salwen's research focused on the social effects of mass communication and international communication. He was a prolific scholar, who authored and edited several books. It is unfortunate to note that by the time of the release of the second edition of this book, Dr Michael B. Salwen had already breathed his last. Kristen C. Eichhorn has substituted the loss of Dr Michael B. Salwen and worked for the third edition. She is Dean of the Division of Graduate Studies and Professor of Communication Studies in the School of Communication, Media and the Arts at the State University of New York at Oswego.

The reviewer feels that the book, "An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research", is of great interest as it is on a topical and relevant subject. This book covers a vast canvas on integrated approaches to communication theory and research that is categorically divided into five parts: Part One-Studying "Theory": doing "Research"; Part Two-Mass Communication: Approaches and Concerns; Part Three-Human Communication Approaches and Concerns; Part Four-Integrated Approaches to Communication; Part Five — Future of Theory and Research in Communication.

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In this setting, it is very pertinent to relate the definition of communication given by Berger & Chaffee (1987). According to them:

*Communication is a process of expression, interaction, and influence, in which the behaviour of humans or other complex organisms expresses psychological mechanisms, states, and traits and, through interaction with the similar expressions of other individuals, produces a range of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural effects (Robert T. Craig & Heidi L. Muller, 2007: 82).*

Further, according to Robert T. Craig, Communication Theory is a field comprising of seven traditions: rhetoric, semiotics, phenomenology, cybernetics, socio-psychology, socio cultural theory, and the critical approach (Ibid).

This edited volume provides an overview of communication theory and research, presenting theoretical coverage of the broad scope of communication study as well as integrating theory with research. To expound the incorporation, the expert contributors from various specialised areas have offered samples in the form of hypothetical studies, published studies, or unpublished research. It clearly brings out how theory and research are integrated into the specialised fields.

There is no second thought that this book is a complete book on communication theory and research, having many renowned academicians across the world, specialised in their areas of interest, as the contributors of chapters. The book is well structured and divided into five parts and forty chapters. Particularly, the third edition of this book focuses mainly on the three areas: rapidly changing technology, the 2016 US presidential election and the current political climate, and lastly, the blurring of mass communication and human communication.

One of the most interesting discussions of this book is that it examines the effect of such traditional theories as uses and gratifications and has readers' evaluation of their expectations in the age of dual screen usage. Besides, this book challenges our thought patterns around the fear of isolation and public opinion. Of the many topics that the book has covered, identity management in digital media environments has a special entreaty. One appealing aspect of this book is that, throughout this edition, authors discuss the sophistication of research methodologies and the challenges that future scholars may face surrounding measurement in a world of virtual reality and interactive media.

This edited volume interestingly presents new perspectives and research interests in examining agenda-setting theory by using the current political environment and the 2016 presidential election as the contextual elements. Also, the first amendment to media credibility, privacy issues, and social movements such as #MeToo are thoroughly conversed. In this comprehensive volume, issues surrounding privacy, credibility, and developing interpersonal relationships are given due importance for the reason that social media platforms, mobile devices, and artificial intelligence are challenging our silos and push us toward a more integrated approach of understanding. Among various significant chapters such as *International Communication*, *Communication Ethics*, and *Feminist Theory*, at the heart of this book, *Diffusion of Innovations*, a vast topic in its brief version is offered in a separate chapter.

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It is tough to envisage which domains within communication will attract greater attention from researchers, which ones will be de-emphasised, and what new research topics will emerge. It depends merely on such aspects as technological development in future, economic trends, world events, and funding trends in education. It is a matter of fact that addressing practical problems effectively will require more powerful theories than currently available to address practical communication-related problems. For this, theories that accurately account for the ways in which people construct, use, and respond to messages are very much required. Without a doubt, this volume set alight conversation about these issues.

This edited volume, unquestionably, includes all the seven traditions of communication theory viz. rhetoric, semiotics, phenomenology, cybernetics, socio-psychology, sociocultural theory, and the critical approach. Nonetheless, though I understand that it is always very easy to critique books for what they leave out, the reviewer felt, in this case, the inclusion of environmental communication as a special chapter would have made this edited volume thorough in all respects.

Communication theory and research mutually influence each other and are reciprocally interwoven. The editors have definitely achieved the objective they set when compiling the volume in the first place. Overall, the purpose of the editors in editing this volume is achieved — to provide both seasoned scholars and beginning students unfamiliar with the state of theory and research in various areas of communication study to provide a taste of current theory and research in communication. This book will definitely appeal to graduate students and faculty members who want a thorough overview of not only the field but also sample research stemming from its various component parts.

To this end, this excellent publication, by all means, paves a way for theorists to work together in framing a truly grounded approach to Communication Theory and Research, making it a more serious academic discipline in the future. This book, for sure, will serve as a comprehensive textbook/reference book in the field of communication theory and research.

### References

- Craig, Robert T., & Muller, Heidi L. (2007). *Theorizing Communication Readings Across Traditions*. New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd.