This paper sets out a theory-based analysis of boundaries for four communication-focused subject areas that may be legitimately taught in business schools: organizational communication, business communication, management communication, and corporate communication. System, process, and product models provide the basis for the analysis. Those models were derived primarily from published definitions and taxonomies of the four areas. Such conceptual differentiation allows for a relatively objective determination of discipline boundaries and their interrelationships.

Organizational, Business, Management, and Corporate Communication: An Analysis of Boundaries and Relationships

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When called upon to define our field(s), teachers and researchers in communication and its subdisciplines likely share U. S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart's well-publicized predicament. Though unable to define pornography, the Honorable Justice noted in a concurring judicial opinion (Jacobellis vs. Ohio, 1964) that he would surely recognize the phenomenon when he saw it. In 1967, Charles Redding, the acknowledged father of organizational communication, said much the same thing about his offspring. “The field of organizational communication,” he opined, “consists of whatever those who concern themselves with it say it is” (cited in Rogers, 1978, p. 58). So it is with business communication, management communication, corporate communication, and other communication forms.

PROBLEMS IN DEFINITION

No doubt we are able to recognize the various guises of communication when we encounter them. Furthermore, we define the forms operationally through specifying what we do in our teaching and research. Such definitions are not without merit, of course, particularly for empirical research purposes. As P. W. Bridgman, Nobel Prize-winning physicist, noted, “The true meaning of a term is to be found by observing what a man [sic] does with it, not by what he [sic] says about it” (cited in Hayakawa, 1958/1977, p. 45). Academics who “do” communication do different things, however, their teaching and research interests and methodologies varying widely both within and between disciplines.
A casual review of relevant journals suggests that research interests are not discrete between and among the business-related communication disciplines; rather, their journals' contents overlap. The *Journal of Business Communication* and *Management Communication Quarterly*, for example, include articles traditionally considered to be within organizational communication's domain. Similarly, the Speech Communication Association's recent journal index (Matlon & Ortiz, 1992) lists several articles on business communication and business report writing (p. 602). Under the Organizational Communication heading the index catalogues articles on public speaking, writing, listening, and leadership and management (pp. 641-642). The 1992 SCA convention program indicated an overlap with management communication as well, one session being entitled “Grounding Organizational and Management Communication Theory in Reality: Two Course Models” (p. 209).

Academics also foil definition by calling the similar things they do by different names and vice versa and by teaching them in different academic departments or divisions. Course content in Management Communication and Business Communication, for example, may be similar or dissimilar, depending on course objectives, course level or number, and, often, the instructor's academic background. Business communication is housed in both English departments and business schools, while courses in organizational communication, though predominantly a part of speech or communication curricula, are taught in business schools as well. Territoriality and political loyalties that result from such variance shift the emphasis from, if they do not preclude, substantive differentiation between and among the communication types.

**FOCUS OF STUDY**

This paper aims at differentiating theoretically four communication-focused subject areas that may be legitimately taught in business schools: organizational communication, business communication, corporate communication, and management communication. Technical communication, legal communication, agricultural communication, medical communication, and like topics, though worthy of investigation, are outside the scope of this particular inquiry.

Attention to boundaries does not suggest that course content or research strategy should be universally consistent within each subdiscipline; neither is the argument normative, one approach to disciplinary definition perhaps being no better necessarily than another, depending
on the given situation. The point is rather that theoretical differentiation provides a relatively objective basis for discipline analysis that minimizes such constraining factors as what academics have always "done" (historical biases), where courses are housed (political considerations), and individual or institutional preferences about what the field(s) ought to be (speculation). Boundary analysis should help to provide a defensible rationale and focus (though not prescription) for course content, pedagogy, and scholarly research (Reinsch, 1991a). Furthermore, such an analysis ought to be useful for internal evaluators, including curriculum and rank and tenure committees. Perhaps, ultimately, it may help to resolve political issues and give direction about business, management, organizational, and corporate communications' future places in the academy or, in the "bazaar" (Daniel, 1983).

LITERATURE REVIEW

In addition to defining the essence or particular focus of the various communication types and the proper sphere for each, a number of scholars have investigated the relationships between and among them. The resulting speculation and analysis have appeared largely in the pages of academic journals, particularly The Journal of Business Communication and the ABC Bulletin. The citation trail suggests that Porterfield (1980) led an early charge when he explored obstacles to and offered counsel "toward the integration of communication and management" (p. 13). For Porterfield, the imperative for organizational communication was "to make the transition from theory to practice, from basic to applied research" (p. 20).

Lesikar's 1981 paper on the meaning and status of organizational communication sparked a colloquy in The ABCA Bulletin about discipline relationships. Lesikar argued that "a total concept of communication in business is developing [that includes] theory, interpersonal, organizational, writing, listening, [and] nonverbal" communication (p. 4). He based that conclusion both on definitions of organizational communication and on "content expansion" in its management and writing "tracks."

Though various respondents took Lesikar to task for his history (Reep, 1982), his view of organizational communication as "the sum of various different parts" (Koehler & Taagher, 1982, p. 1), and his methodology (Wilson & Hanna, 1982), a number supported his view. Valuing "multiple input" as giving the discipline "depth" and enabling it to be "multi-faceted," Seigle (1982) agreed that organizational communication "seems to be a
merging of . . . myriad . . . interest areas” (p. 1). Similarly, in examining three approaches to organizational communication (organizational behavior, organizational communication, and business communication), Leipzig and More (1982) agreed with Lesikar’s assessment that though “traditional demarcations are still present to a certain degree . . . the concerns, philosophies, and methodologies are converging.” The “major dissimilarity,” they found, was in “the combination of theoretic and pragmatic concerns” (p. 89), organizational behavior being the most theoretical, business communication being the most pragmatic, and organizational communication blending the two.

Smeltzer, Glab, and Golen (1983) shifted the focus from organizational to management communication, the latter of which they viewed as the outcome of “a merging” of three “differentiated disciplines”—organizational communication, business communication, and management (pp. 71-73). Borrowing Farace and MacDonald’s (1974) terminology for describing organizational communication “dimensions,” Smeltzer et al. analyzed management communication’s evolution from the perspective of structure, function, and system. Their conclusions were: (a) business communication’s “traditional domain . . . involves the structural component,” which includes “correct letter style, writing style, grammatical use, and report format” (p. 73); (b) management communication’s approach is functional, “view[ing] communication as a means to an end, something to be exploited in the service of organizational objectives after weighing the cost-benefit considerations” (p. 74); and (c) the system is “the main concern of organizational communication” (p. 74). In sum, the authors held that, “Traditionally, business communication was oriented toward skills and organizational communication toward the knowledge. Managerial communication integrates the function, skill, and knowledge orientation” (p. 75).

As editor of The Journal of Business Communication, Lamar Reinsch published two editorials exploring definitional issues. The first paper (1991a) identified two functions of definitions: to set “boundaries” (dividing lines) and to identify “banners” (central foci) for disciplines (p. 97). Though encouraging scholars to investigate both approaches, Reinsch chose, in his second editorial (1991b), to focus on banners. Suggesting that broad definitions of the communication types overlap and thus offer little help in differentiation, he first proposed—“in an experimental spirit”—narrow definitions for communication, organization, manager, and business. Based on those delineations, he then set out the following similarly narrow, intent-based definitions of organizational communication, management communication, and business communication:
Organizational communication is communication intended to affect (overthrow, modify, fortify) organizational structure.

Management communication is communication intended to affect or effect a manager’s decisions.

Business communication is communication intended to help a business achieve a fundamental goal, to maximize shareholder wealth. (p. 308)

Reinsch extended his discussion to include the implications of these definitions for pedagogy and research. Contrary to most papers that explore relationships between and among the disciplines, Reinsch’s analysis emphasizes differentiation rather than integration. This paper likewise focuses on differences between and among the communication types.

RESEARCH ISSUES

Alternative Research Strategies

A number of approaches might be useful in helping to differentiate the four communication types described in this paper. The most obvious, an historical analysis, examines the derivation of relevant subject areas and identifies topics and themes co-opted by and adapted to the business-related communication disciplines. Such investigation usually focuses on similarities of topics between and among disciplines, however, and rarely on differences. The emphasis, moreover, is on the topics themselves rather than on their integration into new conceptual frameworks. Therefore, employing traditional analytical paradigms from rhetoric and composition, organizational theory and behavior, and speech communication theory and practice is, in itself, a restricted and thus insufficient basis for conceptual differentiation.

Contemporary information-processing or rhetorical models have also been used as tools for definition. Limaye (1983), for example, adopted Jakobson’s six-factored model of verbal communication as a useful “schema to generate formal definitions” of business and technical writing (p. 331). According to the model, identifying the primary factors (addresser, addressee, context, message, contact, and code) and their parallel functions (emotive, conative, referential, poetic, phatic, and metalingual) provides the means for defining various communication forms. Though such rhetorical models are useful for analyzing persuasion-based discourse, they are more limited for investigating relationships among the four communication types. Organizational communication, for
example, is conceptualized by scholars as being much broader than rhetorical context.

As an alternative to more traditional rhetorical analyses, Couture (1992a) identified three discourse communities in organizational writing based on empirical research, discourse theory, and pedagogical practice. For Couture, engineering, administrative, and technical/professional writing "offer positional heuristics that we can use to explain and interpret the writing of individuals in the workplace" (p. 31). Suggesting a "conceptual dilemma" in Couture's analysis, Limaye (1992) submitted "more productive criteria for categorizing organizational discourse": the writer's rhetorical purpose, the context, and the organizational culture (pp. 488-489). Couture (1992b) agreed that rhetorical purpose and situational constraints are important criteria for distinguishing organizational writing. Though Couture's analysis provides a means for discriminating between and among kinds of organizational discourse, it does not—nor does it intend to—differentiate between and among the traditional business-related fields of communication.

Another differentiation strategy is to identify common course topics and, depending on the criteria used, determine definition through an analysis (often summary) of course content (Rogers, 1978). Course topics range widely, however, with little consensus about what is and is not appropriate. Furthermore, disciplinary assumptions tend to be implicit, if they exist at all. Therefore, discipline topics as identified in course-related material such as textbooks are used in this study only when published definitions are nonexistent or insufficient for drawing conceptual distinctions about a subject area.

A fourth approach, which this paper takes, is to base discipline analysis on conceptual variables gathered primarily from published definitions and taxonomies in each of the four areas. This perspective allows for theoretical demarcations that are bound neither by the paradigms of parent disciplines nor by descriptive summations of common course topics. Rather, insofar as possible, they are grounded in explicit conceptual statements about what various writers presume their fields to be. The strategy here is to isolate the essential variables, the conceptual underpinnings, in those definitions and to set them forth in a comprehensive theoretical explanatory model.

Data

Published definitions of the four communication types provided primary data for the study. Where definitions were sometimes implicit (specifically in the areas of business and corporate communication),
notions about the nature of the subject area were inferred operationally; that is, from what the disciplines do.

Relying on definitions is not without its problems. Definitions may be inconsistent, exclusionary, or simplistic in identifying the essential nature of the phenomena they treat (Allen, 1990). Moreover, definitional boundaries are not only unstable; in some instances, they are consensually nonexistent. Despite such problems, definitions from a variety of sources provide coherent statements from scholars about the nature and scope of organizational, business, management, and corporate communication. Though those statements reflect different emphases and thus vary widely, critical distinctions may be gleaned from them.

Research Tasks

The study reported here included three primary research tasks. The first task was to develop a conceptual model (Biglan, 1973; Kreps, Frey, & O'Hair, 1991) sufficiently comprehensive to explain and discriminate among the four communication types. The second research task was to construct descriptive prototypes for each communication type based on the conceptual variables identified in the model. The third task was to compare and contrast the four discipline prototypes to determine relationships and distinguishing characteristics. A system, process, product framework grounded this comparative synthesis.

THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The analytical model used in this paper has a two-part structure that allows for multiple levels of inquiry. First, a typology of descriptor variables provides a basis for differentiating organizational, business, management, and corporate communication. The methodology used to identify those variables follows. First, a review of implicit and explicit definitions in over 200 books and journal articles isolated a number of possible variables for distinguishing the various communication types. The basis for selecting which of the variables to include in the model was the potential of each to differentiate one communication type from another. Twelve variables meeting that criterion were then formulated into six pairs of contrary descriptors or Cartesian coordinates. Those pairs of descriptors, along with definitions for each descriptor as used in this study, follow.
1. Dyad/Collectivity. Dyad refers to communication between two people. That communication, which may or may not be interactive, includes such formats as letters, reports, and interviews. Collectivity represents communication that is one to many (public communication), group (meetings, conferences), or group to group (sales function to production function; lobbying interest to public policy-making body).

2. Inside/Outside. Inside communication is that communication that occurs within an organization; outside communication happens when individuals within an organization communicate with those external to it.

3. Intervention/Investigation. Intervention refers to communication behavior directed toward meeting organizational goals. Investigation alludes to the study of organizational communication phenomena for the purposes of understanding and describing how they operate.

4. Analysis/Synthesis. Analysis suggests segmentation, division, or differentiation of elements relating to communication (a micro orientation). Synthesis is concerned with the combination of parts, the composite (a macro orientation).

5. Skills/Theory. Skills focus on craft; theories are systematized explanatory and predictive principles relative to a subject.

6. Method/Discipline. Method refers to communication techniques; discipline indicates a discrete, coherent field of study.

A second-level analytical framework groups the pairs according to system, process, and product. Though admittedly somewhat arbitrary, this classification captures the essential "sense" of the descriptor terminology and helps to assess the scope, kinds of inquiry, and explanatory assumptions of the four communication types. The system analysis focuses on the essential nature and scope of the disciplines based on what is studied; the process analysis sheds light on how the various subject areas are studied; the product analysis reveals assumed goals underlying discipline content.

Combining the system-process-product framework with the contrary descriptor typology results in the following integrated conceptual model. As the following section of the paper demonstrates, the model facilitates identifying relationships between and among the discipline prototypes.
The following section sets out theoretical boundaries or disciplinary prototypes for organizational, business, management, and corporate communication based on the contrary descriptor typology.

Organizational Communication Boundaries

Organizational communication scholars have historically had little success in establishing unequivocal parameters for their field. As Rogers (1978) noted, "There is no 'obvious' or 'logical' definition of the area" (p. 57). Contemporary scholarship has produced no consensus either. On the contrary, in questioning the basic ontological assumptions of the field, recent scholars have left the discipline with two competing, if not warring, paradigms of its essential nature. Furthermore, old questions about the field's appropriate scope remain, with some writers defining organizational communication broadly and others limiting substantially its scope.

The first issue, the ontological dispute, centers on differing assumptions that reflect two diametrically opposed world views (Weick, 1987). The traditional approach to organizational communication, which is based on a belief in an objective reality, is functionalist in perspective. That is, it perceives the organization to be a relatively stable structure within which communication flows. As Pace and Faules (1989) put it,

In that view, communication functions to achieve the goals and objectives of the organizational system. . . . Communication supports the organizational structure and its adaptation to the environment. If the organization is a large information processor, then the purpose of the communication process is to get the right information to the right people at the right times. (p. 22)

An alternative paradigm that is challenging functionalism is an interpretive approach that focuses not on organizations (conceived as objective
realities) but on organizing processes through which subjective reality is constructed. Pace and Faules (1989) are again instructive:

When the organization is conceived of as people interacting and giving meaning to that interaction, communication becomes an organization-making function rather than just an organization-maintaining one. Communication does not just serve the organization; it is the organization. . . . Communication, then, is central to organizational existence and does more than simply carry out organizational plans. (p. 22)

Though the interpretative paradigm is clearly making inroads into the mainstream of organizational communication theory (Kreps, 1986; Pace & Faules, 1989; Pace, Michal-Johnson, & Mills, 1990, p. 45; Putnam, 1983), the historically dominant paradigm has been the functional approach. That model, therefore, grounds the analysis in this paper.

The second major area of disparity among organizational communication scholars is their view of the discipline's scope. Goldhaber's (1979) excellent review of early organizational communication definitions reflects wide divergence of scholarly opinion. Subsequently published definitions suggest substantive differences as well. Some approaches are highly inclusive. Redding and Sanborn (1964), for example, early embraced internal communication; human relations; management-union relations; downward, upward, and horizontal communication; skills of speaking, listening, and writing; and communication program evaluation. The 1981 revised bylaws of the Organizational Communication Division of the International Communication Association took a broad view as well: "The particular domain of organizational communication centers upon messages, message flow, interpersonal interaction, interaction patterns, information processing, and symbolization in organizations" (cited in Leipzig & More, 1982, p. 82).

Many definitions are more limited, however, particularly those whose emphasis is on structure and/or communication systems. Koehler and Taugher (1982), for example, restricted the field to a "comprehensive, systematic treatment of measurable communication variables and relationships" (p. 2). Similarly, Witkin and Stephens focused on "those interdependencies and interactions among and within subsystems, through the act of communication, which serve the purposes of the organization" (cited in Goldhaber, 1979, p. 12). Wofford, Gerloff, and Cummins (1977) emphasized "the flow of communication as it occurs between individuals in the network formed by the structure of the organization itself" (p. 16).

Analyzing organizational communication definitions according to the contrary descriptors provides a relatively objective way to plot its
boundaries. Though most writers view collectivity as the appropriate conceptual locus for organizational communication, some definitions are more inclusive. Both Knapp (1969) and Falcone and Greenbaum (1975), for example, incorporate interpersonal communication into their taxonomies, suggesting the appropriateness of dyad analysis as well. Similarly, though most definitions focus on organizational communication as an internal phenomenon operating inside the organization (Katz & Kahn, 1966), some include external or outside communication as well; that is, communication between the organization and its environment (Kreps, 1986, pp. 239-260; Lesikar, 1972; Zelko & Dance, 1965).

Some definitions include intervention as an appropriate part of organizational communication; the more prevalent view, however, has been to emphasize, if not limit, the field to investigation. Those who favor the intervention model emphasize organizational communication as a means of accomplishing organizational goals. Haggblade (1982), for example, suggested that “Organizational Communication is concerned with any type of communication activity as it affects the managing of an organization” (p. xxvi), while Gibson and Hodgetts (1986) concentrated on “the transfer of information and knowledge among organizational members for the purpose of achieving organizational efficiency and effectiveness” (p. 8). Greenbaum’s concern with coordination is also consistent with an intervention perspective (cited in Goldhaber, 1979, p. 12).

Many, if not most, writers emphasize organizational communication primarily as an end, however, a subject for investigation. Defining the term as “the study of sending and receiving messages that create and maintain a system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more persons,” Tompkins (1989) articulated the view that “In its best practice organizational communication avoids the ‘management bias’ of the business schools and engages in the critique of organizational practices” (p. 2).

Organizational communication scholars use both analysis and synthesis as processes to understand and explain the various phenomena they investigate. The widely used communication audit, for example, is primarily a tool for analysis (Downs, 1988; Greenbaum, 1974). On the other hand, theory building, a major disciplinary objective, demands synthesis (Goldhaber, Dennis, Richetto, & Wiio, 1979).

Though a few scholars include skills within organizational communication’s domain, the interest is predominantly theoretical. Systems theory has historically provided fundamental grounding for the field. Kefalas (1977) represents a contemporary view, conceiving of the
organization as "an open system which 'feeds on information'" and of
organizational communication as "a network of interrelated and inter-
dependent transmissions of information, both human and electronic"
(p. 42).

The question of whether skills training is a legitimate part of organiza-
tional communication is a part of the larger debate over the discipline's
scope. Knapp's (1969) taxonomy included training as one of five organiza-
tional communication categories. A subdivision of that category,
"Prescriptive Materials (from a skill improvement viewpoint)," included
public speaking; conferences, meetings, group process; communication
process in general; writing skills; listening; and interpersonal skills (pp.
43-44). Similarly, Organizational Communication 1977: Abstracts,
Analysis, and Overview, jointly published by the American Business
Communication Association and the International Communication As-
sociation, included "Skill Improvement and Training in Organizational
Communication" in its classification system of nine major literature
groups (Greenbaum & Falcione, 1979). Contemporary writers who come
from a business communication perspective tend to include skills as a part
of organizational communication (Wells & Spinks, 1992), while those
oriented toward speech communication more readily minimize or ignore
skills training (Kreps, 1986). Scholars who emphasize skills view their
subject as a method. They generally agree, however, with the prevailing
view that organizational communication is first and foremost a discipline
and only secondarily a set of skills.

Business Communication Boundaries

Whereas organizational communication scholars have been preoc-
cupied with defining their field, business communication writers have
traditionally assumed and largely agreed on the nature and scope of their
subject (Leipzig & More, 1982, pp. 80-81). Within the last decade or so,
however, they have begun to grapple with identity issues as the field has
become more dynamic, more inclusive, and, consequently, more
ambiguous. The definitions, which are often implicit, reflect an expanding
domain that at times merges with various other communication forms
treated in this paper.

As Haggblade (1982) among others has noted, business communication
has historically focused primarily on written communication in business,
the emphasis being on "the exchange of messages that support the goal of
buying and selling goods or services" (Dumont & Lannon, 1990, p. 3). As
late as 1984, Wilkinson suggested that "most courses in business writing
... tend to emphasize the kind of writing done in retail businesses—
merchandising, sales, and promotions" (p. 37). Gieselman (1985) reported on the rise since the mid-70s of “new and radically different emphases in the teaching of college-level writing,” including problem solving, planning for audience, heuristics, recursive writing process, role of cognitive processes, revision, technology, and summer workshops and proseminars (p. 3).

Business communication’s expanding pedagogical parameters have called for new conceptualizations. Sorrels (1984), among others, responded by “merging” business and human communication definitions, the result of which was to include within the discipline oral and nonverbal messages along with written forms and formats. Harcourt, Krizan, and Merrier (1991) went so far as to embrace within the field “all contacts among individuals both inside and outside organizations—formal as well as informal” (p. 3).

Analyzing business communication definitions using contrary descriptors results in the following generalizations about the field’s conceptual boundaries. Business communication has an historical interpersonal focus (Himstreet & Baty, 1987), with the dyad being the basic unit of analysis. Collectivity has gained relatively recent attention, however, with the inclusion of meetings (Bovee & Thill, 1986) and public speaking (Murphy & Hildebrandt, 1988) as legitimate topics for study. Business communication has been and continues to be interested in communication both inside and outside the organization (Sorrels, 1984). Internal messages common to the discipline range from memoranda and reports to interviews and meetings; external messages include letters and conferences, while speeches are for both inside and outside audiences.

Characteristically intervention driven (Kohut & Baxter, 1990), business communication has been invigorated by new approaches to communication strategy (Dulek & Fielden, 1990; Huseman, Lahiff, & Penrose, 1988; Munter, 1987). Similarly, notions of the business communication task have expanded to include an emphasis on the writing process (Bowman & Branchaw, 1987; Sigband & Bell, 1989). Though some writers give attention to theory (Lesikar & Pettit, 1989; Locker, 1992), most view theory as secondary, if not peripheral (Herbert, 1977), and prefer a skills emphasis (Wilkinson, Wilkinson, & Vik, 1986). Predictably, definitions of business communication as an “applied” discipline (Gros, 1979) have met with strong resistance from those who insist that it is not a discipline at all, but instead, a practical method (Daniel, 1983). As Leipzig and More (1982) put it, “Business Communication [italics deleted] . . . is unashamedly pragmatic in orientation” (p. 80).
Management Communication Boundaries

Management (or managerial) communication is clearly "still a fledgling area" (Suchan, 1991, p. 1). As Trujillo (1985) observed, "although the link between management and communication has been known for some time, organizational literature has only recently reaffirmed the symbolic nature of managerial communication" (p. 201). For Level and Galle (1988), that reaffirmation means "that managerial communication has its own identity and can stand alone in respectability" (p. 3). Sometimes used as a substitute for business communication, the label clearly reflects a shift in emphasis and often course content. As Feingold (1987) noted, the change in terminology "recognize[s] the growth of the field beyond business writing and speaking" (p. 122). His typology of management communication includes managerial writing, managerial presentations, interpersonal communication, organizational communication, and external corporate communication.

In surveying management communication definitions, Suchan (1991) identified four general, overlapping patterns that "reflect managerial communication as a strategic choice activity, an integration of theory with skills, a process, and a reflection of managerial roles" (p. 3). Those constructs are particularly helpful in differentiating business communication from management communication, for they suggest not only parallels, but differences as well. On the one hand, the focus on strategic choice and managerial roles corresponds to the intervention focus of business communication. On the other, management communication tends to place greater emphasis on integrating theory and skills than does business communication.

Analysis of definitions based on contrary descriptors provides the following boundary distinctions for management communication. Its scope includes both dyads (memoranda for single readers, performance reviews) and various collectivities (management memoranda for multiple audiences, meetings, briefings). Furthermore, its focus is typically inside the organization (Timm, 1980, p. 16).

Management communication is both investigative and intervention oriented. A quick read-through of Management Communication Quarterly issues indicates that much of the research does not have immediate practical application. On the other hand, the discipline is clearly concerned with intervention. Both Level and Galle (1988) and Williams (1984) articulated an intervention perspective, the former finding management communication to be "the basis for guiding the organization's internal
operations” (p. 17), the latter noting its bias “toward the achievement of organizational goals” (p. 18). Hawkins and Preston (1981) went so far as to define the field as “the process through which modification of interpersonal and organizational outcome occurs as a result of message exchange” (p. 27).

Toward intervening successfully in accomplishing organizational goals, management communication combines analysis with synthesis. Through analysis, it investigates the parts of communication phenomena (for example, audiences, available channels, strategic message options). Through synthesis, it relates those parts to organizational structure and decision making.

Suchan (1991) noted that one emerging pattern in definition is to view management communication as “an integration of theory with skills” (p. 3). The result of such an approach is that management communication includes more theory and fewer skills than business communication (Smeltzer, Glab, Golen, & Gilsdorf, 1986, p. 35), but less theory and more skills than organizational communication (Pace et al., 1990, p. 48). Management communication is also conceptualized as both a method and a discipline. It is method, anchored by managerial writing and speaking (Feingold, 1987, p. 122). As “the art of discovering and advocating valid assertions within contemporary organizational settings,” it is discipline as well (Micheli, Cespedes, Byker, & Raymond, 1984, p. 3).

**Corporate Communication Boundaries**

A full-fledged functional area in many organizations, corporate communication provides an umbrella for a variety of communication forms and formats. What corporate communication entails varies, however, from organization to organization. The cafeteria from which choices are made includes public relations (speech writing, press/community relations), public affairs (including lobbying activities), and employee, customer, and stockholder communication. Corporate communication may also involve corporate policy decision making (issues management) and/or communications policy and strategy development and implementation.

According to the contrary descriptors, corporate communication may be defined as follows. Its locus is collectivities that exist inside and outside organizations. Its focus is intervention, based on both analysis (environmental scanning, for example) and synthesis (comprehensive issues management plans). Its practical grounding is skills and method.
BOUNDARY RELATIONSHIPS

Inquiry based on the contrary descriptors provides a conceptual basis for determining boundaries for organizational, business, management, and corporate communication. Discovering relationships between the disciplines, however, requires a second level of analysis. The approach here is to plot the disciplinary boundaries identified in the preceding section on system, product, and process cross-disciplinary matrices to assess boundary discreteness and overlap; in short, their fundamental relationships. According to the conceptual model outlined earlier in the paper, dyad/collectivity and inside/outside descriptors are system indicators; intervention/investigation and analysis/synthesis have to do with process; skills/theory and method/discipline relate to product, that is, what a subject area offers to its target market.

System-based Matrix

Figure 1 sets out a comparative typology of the four communication types according to system. The matrix displays organizational communication's—broadly defined—conceptual stake in the entire model. By potentially overlaying all quadrants, organizational communication provides an integrating framework for business, management, and corporate communication. In short, though its primary focus is on inside, collective communication, organizational communication may include external data flows (both to and from the organization) and dyad-based interactions. Thus, the typology accommodates both organizational systems—operational, regulatory, maintenance, and development (Thayer, 1968)—and communication systems—upward, downward, and horizontal. In a more restricted sense, however (omitting its forays into other matrix cells as designated by the arrows), organizational communication may be considered the most systemically circumscribed of the communication types.

Though business communication emphasizes dyad-based messages (written and oral) for receivers both inside and outside the organization, attention to collectivities (presentations and meetings) has definitionally expanded the subject area to all four cells of the system matrix, a position it shares with organizational communication in its broad sense. However, whereas organizational communication conceptualizes about systems, investigates systems through rigorously tested hypotheses, and builds theoretically derived paradigms, business communication is concerned mainly with using systems as conduits for messages.
Figure 1. System-based matrix.
While including both dyads and collectivities, management communication has nevertheless restricted its scope definitionally by limiting its channels to those internal to the organization. Corporate communication, which is targeted to collectivities, includes both internal and external receivers.

**Process-based Matrix**

As Figure 2 shows, though organizational communication, broadly defined, influences and lays claim to all dimensions of the conceptual model, for most organizational communication scholars its interest in intervention is secondary if it exists at all. Thus, management communication has the more substantive interest in all quadrants of the process model, combining analysis with synthesis, intervention with investigation. Corporate communication's profile includes intervention, analysis, and synthesis, while business communication, the most restricted of the disciplines process-wise, focuses primarily on analysis as preparatory to intervention. Any interest in investigation or synthesis is intervention oriented, not an end in itself.

**Product-based Matrix**

Figure 3 describes the relationships between and among the four communication types based on discipline "outputs." As in the system and process analyses, organizational communication ranges throughout the model, though its primary and more restricted focus is theoretical, discipline-based inquiry. Management communication is the most dominant and integrative of the four communication types, emphasizing both theory and skills, discipline and method. It shares its skills-method orientation with business and corporate communication, its theory-discipline grounding with organizational communication.

Figure 4 summarizes boundary relationships based on the system, process, and product analyses. In its broadest sense organizational communication is the most comprehensive of the disciplines, embracing and providing a theoretical framework for the other communication types. The broad view of the discipline is represented in Figure 4 as "Organizational Communication (1)." In its more restricted sense, however, organizational communication confines itself to inside, collective communication, and the field's goal is to understand the phenomenon through investigation, analysis, and synthesis. Its product is discipline-grounded theory. Thus, in its narrower definition, organizational communication is a discipline discrete from, but complementary to, business and corporate communica-
Figure 2. Process-based matrix.
Figure 3. Product-based matrix.
Figure 4. Boundary relationships of communication types

tion, with minimal linkage to management communication. Figure 4 depicts that approach as ‘Organizational Communication (2).’

Figure 4 also illustrates business communication as residing both within and outside organizational communication. Such placement recognizes that businesses sometimes operate outside formal organizations; an entrepreneur writing to a potential client, for example (L. Reinsch, personal communication, September, 1992). For the most part, however, business communication serves organizational goals, potentially taking
as its scope the entire system—inside/outside-dyad/collectivity. Restricted in its preferred process and product, business communication overlaps with corporate communication in its attention to intervention-analysis and skills-method. Moreover, as it ranges into collectivities, business communication shares corporate communication’s systemic focus on both internal and external communication.

The cross-disciplinary analysis supports previous research findings that management communication is an integrative discipline, most often linking organizational communication (2) to business communication. Less discrete than the other communication forms, it covers all quadrants of the systems, process, and product matrices save two: it is clearly an inside phenomenon whether with dyads or collectivities.

CONCLUSIONS

The preceding analysis contributes in at least three ways to the debate about discipline boundaries and the interrelationships of organizational, business, management, and corporate communication. First, the conceptual model derived in the study provides a theoretical framework for differentiating the disciplines. Second, the recognition that scholars use the term organizational communication to refer to different particulars results in discriminating theoretically two sets of boundaries and relationships for this field. Specifically, the paper distinguishes organizational communication (1), which defines the field as encompassing the other communication types, from organizational communication (2), which is concerned primarily with communication systems and structures internal to an organization. The paper suggests, moreover, that organizational communication (1) provides theoretical grounding and situational context for the other four fields. Thus, organizational communication (2) is conceptualized as a subset of organizational communication (1).

A third contribution is the study’s confirmation of earlier research and speculation that describe management communication as a boundary-spanning discipline. The present study suggests that management communication connects organizational communication to business communication and to corporate communication. Corporate communication’s closer ties, however, are with business communication.

The three typologies and the boundary relationships set out in this paper provide a starting point for both target practice and serious debate about what the fields study (system), how they study them (process), and what outcomes they produce (product). On-going attention to differentia-
tion, definition, and, ultimately, integration can help to clarify the sense of discipline identity that informs both our teaching and our research.

NOTES

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