I

Introduction
Organizational Rhetoric

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Organizations need to communicate. As evident as that statement is, studies continue to probe how discourse can be effective and ethical. Present research literature abounds with theoretical advances that provide advice for how organizations can participate in dialogue and engage with their stakeholders (e.g., Johnston & Taylor, 2018). Some sort of discourse, including narrative form and content, is presupposed in this regard, and rhetoric, because of its origins in classical Greece, is arguably the foundation for these concepts. As the first of the communication disciplines, rhetoric has both practical and theoretical applications that have not only stood the test of time but redirected, and corrected, nation states' relationships with citizens. Furthermore, the rhetorical tradition offers scholars, organizational managers, and communication practitioners a resource to understand organizational discourse, its effects, and its role in society. This volume examines humans, and the organizations they create, as *homo rhetoricus*, the rhetorical animal who uses words to co-create meaning, share ideas, and motivate actions, the building blocks of self-governance (Oesterreich, 2009).

Rhetoric helps explain the ways in which organizations attempt to achieve specific political or economic goals, build identity, and foster relationships with their stakeholders. Rhetorical theory sets itself apart from disciplines such as discourse studies (e.g., van Dijk, 2011) by tracing its tradition back to ancient time and by harboring a normative and practical ambition (Conley, 1994). In addition to offering down-to-earth practical advice, rhetoric also presents epistemological perspectives that temper theoretical tendencies toward naive realism and platonic notions of absolute truth (Vickers, 1999). Rhetoric helps us to understand how knowledge is generated and socially constructed through communication. People create the world in which they work and live via words. They also contend with one another over values and policies. They seek to demonstrate and critique ideas as ways of enlightening choices. Thus, the topic is both ancient, and as current as some outraged position-taking on Facebook, as is evident by the coverage of the many facets of rhetoric in, for instance, the *International Encyclopedia of Communication*, edited by Donsbach (2008) and area specialists. Rhetoric and its companion concepts *heritage* and *current relevance* arise from the need for shared meaning to enact societies, and the layers of individual identities, identifications, and interpretations of reality that constitute the pillars of self-governance, the rationale for society.

In the time of ancient rhetoricians like Aristotle (2007), Isocrates (2000), and others, the goal was to understand rational, values-based, and wise policy-formulating discourse for individual

agency, and then society. Today organizations of all types have taken on the individual roles, but as a collective endeavor to achieve societal agency. In recognition of the centrality of discourse, there has been a (re)turn toward rhetoric in many academic disciplines. Scholars of philosophy, management, economics, law, political science, social psychology, history, anthropology, political science, sociology, and literature have all drawn on the rhetorical tradition (e.g., Harmon, Green, and Goodnight, 2015; Heath, 2011; Lucaites, Condit, and Caudill, 1999; Sillince and Suddaby, 2008). However, presently, the rhetorical scholarship that is of relevance for the analysis of *organizations* is largely confined to its respective disciplinary contexts, be it public relations, organizational communication, marketing, advertising, organizational theory, or management studies. A goal of this handbook is to go beyond the silos and bring this scholarship together to demonstrate its currency and impact on today's fractured world and complex societies. We seek to extend the scholarship that has used rhetoric to analyze the internal as well as external communication of organizations, and discuss how dialogue, discourse, narrative, and engagement (as key rhetorical forms) have become parallel lines of exploration to investigate the enacted role of discourse in human affairs.

The book presents a research collection on rhetoric and organizations while discussing state-of-the-art insights from disciplines that have and will continue to use rhetoric. With its organizational focus, it examines the advantages and perils of organizations seeking to project their voices to shape society to their benefits. As such, the book contains chapters working in the tradition of neo-Aristotelian rhetorical criticism that asks whether the rhetorical strategies have fulfilled their function, but also chapters that incorporate perspectives with a view of whose interests that are served by particular rhetorical means (Conrad, 2011; Ihlen, 2015). The book discusses the importance of nuanced strategies such as discourse interaction that balances dissensus as formative and consensus as daunting. It explores the potential, risks, and requirements of engagement which presumes that discourse improves ideas, reputations, policies, and relationships as ongoing efforts to draw on the best all parties can offer.

This introductory chapter proceeds to offer a brief overview of the art of rhetoric, anchoring it in the Western tradition from Greece (Aristotle, 2007), but also with a view on new rhetoric á la Kenneth Burke (1969a, 1969b). While the volume includes several chapters that explore the link between and history of rhetoric and organizations, a short preface is given in this introduction chapter as well. Finally, the chapter also includes a presentation of the structure of the volume.

The Ancient Art of Rhetoric

Several excellent introductions to rhetoric point out that the Greek–Roman tradition of rhetoric can be traced back to around 500 BCE (e.g., Golden, Berquist, Coleman, and Sproule, 2011; Herrick, 2011; Kennedy, 1999). At this time, a system for making speeches was developed for ordinary citizens who had to present their own cases in court. The emergent study of rhetoric advised that speeches should include an introduction, presentation of proofs, and a conclusion. Later, more elaborate systems were introduced on the Greek mainland and teachers and sophists offered their services in this regard.

From this period stems the so-called rhetorical canon. Rhetoricians had ideas for the five stages of the preparation of a speech: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. The later Roman rhetorician, Cicero, described the phases as follows:

> Invention is the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one's cause plausible. Arrangement is the distribution of arguments thus discovered in the proper order. Expression is the fitting of the proper language to the invented matter. Memory is the firm mental grasp of matter and words. Delivery is the control of voice and body in a manner suitable to the dignity of the subject matter and the style. (Cicero, 1949, I.9)

A well-known dispute developed between philosophers, Plato (1960) in particular, and rhetoricians. Plato positioned philosophy, or more specifically dialectic, as a form of truth-finding superior to rhetoric which could only create the appearance of truth. Rhetoric deals in deception and manipulation, and allows non-experts to outmaneuver the real experts. Thus, rhetoric is actually dangerous, according to Plato. In the dialogue *Gorgias* he pits Socrates against the discipline and the sophist Gorgias with the following statement: "an ignorant person is more convincing than the expert before an equally ignorant audience" (Plato, 1960, p. 459). Sophists like Gorgias adhered to the idea of competing truths (*dissoi logoi*) and saw pros and cons for all arguments, and that truth, being a social construction, could change accordingly. Plato, however, only saw rhetoric as legitimate if it supported the truths that philosophy had established. Truth exists outside of language, it is singular and stable, and can be grasped by dialectic approaches.

Plato's arguments have been recycled throughout history in different versions. Critics have for instance pointed out that rhetoric will utilize all there is, including appeals to emotions, to achieve its goals. For philosophers like Rene Descartes (1956), this was something of an affront since clear logical arguments are what should take precedence.

Aristotle (2007) is recognized as attempting to straddle the two disciplines of rhetoric and dialectics in his treatise on the former. Rather than seeing multiple, equal truths or absolute truths, he preferred to talk about *probable truth*. Aristotle defined rhetoric as "an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion" (Aristotle, 2007, 1.2.1; see also chapter 32 on three different Aristotelian conceptions of rhetoric). In addition to Aristotle, however, the ancient tradition also contains the writings of others such as Isocrates that emphasized the epistemic quality of rhetoric, as he stated that "we use the same arguments by which we persuade others in our own deliberations" (Isocrates, 2000, p. 15.256). In other words, it is crucial to use rhetoric for our own thinking and understanding. This point has also been supported by later writers. A prevailing notion is that all language use is rhetorical and that our knowledge of reality is formed by rhetoric. This type of epistemology has been called the *rhetorical turn* in social science and humanities. It calls for studies of the constituting effect of rhetoric (Charland, 1987). Despite the fact that material structures exist, we do need rhetoric to mediate this knowledge. While rhetoric is epistemic in this sense, the relationship with the ontological might be comprehended more fruitfully when it is perceived as a dialectic relationship (Ihlen, 2010). Rhetoric deals in opinions (*doxa*), rather than certain knowledge. While Plato held *doxa* in disregard, as "mere opinion," Aristotle recognized its usefulness, building on the contrast between what is certain and what is probable (Herrick, 2011). Since we cannot have certain knowledge, rhetoric deals with the contingent, the probable, or in other words, *doxa*. In essence, the knowledge of today might look different tomorrow. Still, if something is established as a fact, this must necessarily happen through rhetoric.

New Rhetoric

In the twentieth century, scholars like Kenneth Burke (1969b) and Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca (1971) were the driving force behind a renewed interest in rhetoric. The philosophical orientations of the ancient discipline were brought back to the fore: rediscovered, restored, and also developed further. Rhetoric was seen in all forms of purposive symbolic action by human agents, including mass media use, and not tied to the delivery of a speech to a live audience. Furthermore, material conditions and their consequences can also be analyzed using rhetorical theory. This expansion has led editors and commentators to expand the rhetorical umbrella to include scholars who do not explicitly draw on the work of, say, Aristotle, Isocrates, Cicero, or Quintilian. *Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric* (Foss, Trapp, and Foss, 2002), for instance, included entries on scholars like Jürgen Habermas, Jean Baudrillard, and Michel

Foucault. The list is even longer in *Twentieth-Century Rhetorics and Rhetoricians* (Moran and Ballif, 2000), adding names like Jean-Francois Lyotard. Purposive communication is central in the writings of all these figures.

Besides Aristotle, the one rhetorician quoted most by the authors in the present book is Kenneth Burke. For him, rhetoric was not so much about persuasion as *identification* (see chapter 8). In his "Introduction" to *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1969b) he emphasized the types of symbolic action by which humans influence one another: poetry, rhetoric, and dialectic. Symbolic action, the dominating theme in his work, is inseparable from motive, "the process of change" (Burke, 1969b, p. xiii). In his view, rhetoric accomplishes identification. Dialectic is the joining in a progressive form of element of thought to achieve a coherent conclusion. Poetry is the use of language for sheer pleasure (but can influence judgment and behavior).

Eloquence plays to the psychology of the audience; the poet or rhetor creates an "appetite" and tries to satisfy it by using tropes and figures (Burke, 1968, 1969b). Form uses audiences' appetites and by progressive, emergent resolution prepares the audience for the next part (or step) of each text's theme. The rhetor hopes to get the audience to agree to each step achieved in form and thereby become engaged in completing (resolving) the progression. Resolution is complete when the audience agrees (identifies) with the perspective advocated by the rhetor. By featuring resolution, Burke's rhetoric addressed how humans engage in competitive and cooperative (and even courtship) actions. Dialectic, an inherent dimension of language, consists of transformations, tensions, conflicts, paradoxes, guilt, ironies, polarities, interactions based on pitting words and meanings against one another to create and track down conflicts, tensions, transformations, and other resources of cooperation.

Burke's discussion of thought through symbolic action centered on the nature of vocabulary— the power of words and other symbols to order the world. In the 1930s, he announced: "Man is vocabulary. To manipulate his [sic] vocabulary is to manipulate him. And art, any art, is a major means of manipulating his vocabulary" (Burke, 1968, p. 101). Human choice and action is inherently problematic. Burke (1934) cautioned, "if language is the fundamental instrument of human cooperation, and if there is an 'organic flaw' in the nature of language, we may well expect to find this organic flaw revealing itself through the texture of society" (p. 330). By the mid-1930s he had sown the seeds that would grow into a comprehensive theory of the rhetoric of identification (George and Selzer, 2007; Heath, 1986).

This inherent associational flaw that affected the thinking and actions of these "wordy people" motivated Burke (1966) to define humans as "*the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-mis-using) animal, inventor of the negative (or moralized by the negative) separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making, goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (or moved by the sense of order) and rotten with perfection*" (p. 16, italics in original). Talk about their physical realm inherently separates people from reality, but in doing so, words allow humans "to invent ingenious ways of threatening to destroy ourselves" (p. 5). It allows us to create ideologies which are "like a god coming down to earth, where it will inhabit a place pervaded by its presence. An 'ideology' is like a spirit taking up its abode in a body: it makes that body hop around in certain ways; and that same body would have hopped around in different ways had a different ideology happened to inhabit it" (p. 6). Wars, disputes—all of the implications of division—arise from separation. Consequently, competing vocabularies produce different ideologies (as complexes of god-terms and devil-terms) which predict whether German boys and girls become traditional citizens, or "Hitlerite fiends" (p. 6). In these ways, words shape perspectives and perceptions, Consequently, they impose preferences on issues and therefore guide choices which can variously lead to productive or unproductive, as well as moral or immoral, outcomes.

This interplay of language and ideology allows for many mental tricks such as condensation, displacement, transubstantiation, substitution, and abbreviation. For instance, the power of the negative allows "shall not"s of morality to displace positive incentives of "must"s and "should"s.

Perfection and imperfection intermingle and compete for idiomatic advantage; as one rhetor pushes against another, one group is pitted against another.

With maturer insight, courtship increasingly became Burke's paradigm of association, as estrangement became motive. Either estrangement's discomfort presses people to engage in courtship, or courtship is a tool for combating division. As courtship, rhetoric addresses estrangement, division, merger, and other tensions. "All told, persuasion ranges from the bluntest quest of advantage, as in sales promotion or propaganda, through courtship, social etiquette, education, and the sermon, to a 'pure' form that delights in the process of appeal for itself alone, without ulterior purpose" (Burke, 1969b, p. xiv). Rhetoric presumes opposition, difference, and dialectical (op)positions. It is the "use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols" (Burke, 1969b, p. 43). It occurs in "the region of the Scramble, of insult and injury, bickering, squabbling, malice and the lie, cloaked malice, and the subsidized lie" (Burke, 1969b, p. 19). Rhetoric "*is rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols*" (Burke, 1969b, p. 43, italics in original).

Ever the explorer of paradoxes, Burke balanced classical rhetoric as the use of "explicit design in rhetorical enterprise" with an incentive to "systematically extend the range of rhetoric." This can be done "if one studies the persuasiveness of false or inadequate terms which may not be directly imposed upon us from without by some skilled speaker, but which we impose upon ourselves, in varying degrees of deliberateness and unawareness, through motives indeterminably self-protective and/or suicidal" (Burke, 1969b, p. 35).

Thus, the rhetoric of Burke is far removed from a mechanistic neo-Aristotelian approach to discourse. It is also a crucial illustration of what a rhetorical perspective can entail. Obviously, the many other authors mentioned above offer other takes on rhetoric which can be fruitful. Some of these are also used in other chapters of the book.

Organizational Rhetoric: Domain and Practice

Sometimes in the history of rhetorical practice it has been seen as the making of elegant/artful statements for the sake of making such statements. Far more often, however, rhetoric has been understood to be a powerful work horse that is expected to do heavy work. To the Ancient Greeks it was the means of self-government, personal influence on important matters in public forums, and democracy. Over the ensuing centuries, it was used in the advancement of republican forms of government and religions—the propagation of faith and the working of conversion. It became fundamental to university educational training and curriculum—and reputation building. It was practiced and refined as it navigated unity and division. It empowered a prime minister to galvanize a people against tyranny. It both seamed torn societies together and ripped them to pieces. It was the practice of public influence, putting ideas into action. Generically, the question has been whether many minds and voices together produce better conclusions, or whether wise people understand the true and propagate it to those who do not.

However much the Greeks achieved a democratic voice of community leadership, over time other pockets of democratic discourse emerged in Europe and the Americas, but the trend toward organizational rhetoric, as in government-speak, gained impetus. Ancient Persian leaders used government communication to foster coordination and service on the part of the ordinary people; leaders even announced laws aimed at shaping public order and allegiance. The same was true of Assyria, where government sought to create an orderly society by communicating public policy norms to the common people (Heath and Xifra, 2015).

Organizational rhetoric often took nonverbal forms through statuary, architecture, apparel, totems, armies, monuments, and events (what Burke, 1969b, for instance, would call forms of

the rhetoric of identification). Add to this list the proselytizing rhetoric of the church, and events of a commercial nature such as fairs. Add executions, coronations, and the list goes on. Political philosophers as long ago as Plato and Aristotle recognized the role of discourse in creating social order. That tradition was continued by the likes of Machiavelli, Aquinas, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and so on. This steady stream of political philosophers pondered the means by which uncertainty is overcome, power is forged, and risks and rewards are distributed. The arenas of political discourse were as often as not the backstage conferences and whisperings of councilors as it was aimed at allegiance to a cause and central figure.

Although organizations had used or engaged in rhetoric for commercial advantages prior to the nineteenth century, that variation of organizational rhetoric flourished with the industrial revolution (the coming of a mass production/mass consumption society). It is no wonder that this new era of organizational rhetoric was shaped by the steady increase in organizational size and power; reflexively, large corporations need to gain acceptance for their size and power and success spawns more success. This new order required sophisticated communication, and thus the modern era of public relations and organizational communication in its many permutations was launched (see e.g., Cutlip, 1994, 1995; Marchand, 1998).

Despite the crucial role of rhetorical practice, searching Google Scholar for academic publications where "organizational rhetoric" is used in the title only yields 72 hits (July 2017). Even fewer books are primarily devoted to the topic: a textbook called *Organizational rhetoric: Situations and strategies* (Hoffman and Ford, 2010) and also a monograph published in the introduction series *Key Themes in Organizational Communication: Organizational Rhetoric: Strategies of Resistance and Domination* (Conrad, 2011). Searching the journals in the field of rhetoric (e.g. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, *Rhetoric Review*, and *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*), does not yield many hits on the strategic communication of organizations either.

As will be evident in the present volume, however, rhetoric has been used in many disciplines related to the communication of organizations. It is of course possible to build on the notion that rhetoric concerns the use of symbols in the widest sense, and, as Burke (1969b) reasons, is something that occurs normally and necessarily and not merely occasionally. This would mean that all analyses of the communication of organizations would qualify as organizational rhetoric in one sense or the other. However, in this book, the authors specifically draw on rhetorical concepts and tools to study the communication of organizations. In other words, the chapters contain references to either ancient theorists or modern scholars working within the rhetorical tradition. Nonetheless, the *extent* to which this is done varies.

What also varies is the degree to which the authors relate themselves to what we call the tradition of organizational rhetoric. Some authors place their work squarely within, say, organizational theory, others within marketing, organizational communication, or public relations. Where relevant we have urged our contributors to look beyond their particular disciplines. Still, it is likely that it is the combined effort of the book as such that is the best testament to the richness of organizational rhetoric.

Structure of the Volume

This Introduction forms Part I. The rest of the book is structured in five parts:

II Field overviews: foundations and macro-contexts

The first section following this introduction is devoted to discussion of how the rhetorical tradition has been treated in relevant key academic disciplines such as organizational communication, public relations, marketing, management, and organization theory. The contributors have been

challenged to provide answers for questions such as "How is rhetoric defined in this discipline?"; "How large is the literature on rhetoric in this discipline?"; "What different strands of research exist?"; "What are the tensions that are spelled out?"; "What are the contributions from this discipline?"; "Have these contributions had any impact beyond this discipline?"; and "What research agenda could be suggested?"

Arguably, the development of organizational rhetoric is intertwined with the field of organizational communication. Thus, this section starts with double barrel action (chapters 2 and 3) provided by the duo Charles Conrad (Texas A&M University) and George Cheney (University of Colorado at Colorado Springs): The first of their chapters focuses on how certain intellectual traditions merged in organizational communication to give birth to the discipline of organizational rhetoric. The second lays out the development of organizational rhetoric as a distinctive field of study.

In chapter 4, Robert L. Heath (University of Houston) and Øyvind Ihlen (University of Oslo) chart the terrain of rhetorical studies within *public relations*. A crucial point in their discussion is that however skilled an organizational rhetor is, that success is inseparable from ethical considerations of self-governance and the constant test of the contribution of organizations of all types (like citizens in Ancient Greece) to the quality of community and the strength of society.

In chapter 5, Simon Møberg Torp (University of Southern Denmark) and Lars Pynt Andersen (University of Aalborg) detail the relationship between rhetoric and *marketing*, and the providing of fact/evidence and reasoning, ethics/moral judgment, and emotional appeals that seek favorable responses from customers.

Continuing the focus on context, chapter 6 addresses the field of *management*. Larry D. Browning (University of Texas at Austin/Nord University) and E. Johanna Hartelius (University of Pittsburgh) articulate six themes that are dominant in the management and organization literature which draws on rhetoric as a central research concept.

In chapter 7, John A.A. Sillince (Newcastle University) and Benjamin D. Golant (University of Edinburgh) go deeper into the *organization theory* field to explore organizations as one of the grand contexts in which rhetoric is located.

III Concepts: foundations without which rhetoric could not occur

This section turns to the discussion of key concepts in rhetorical theory. The rationale for this section is the insights gained by generations of scholars who have carefully examined the strategic nature of rhetoric as a means for understanding that it both contributes to but is also held close to (even myopically so) individual perspectives, societal rationales, and cultures, and even confounded by them. The contributors have been asked to address questions such as "What is the concept about?"; "What is the history of the concept?"; "How can the concept be related to organizational rhetoric?"; "How have the concepts been used in the analysis of organizational rhetoric?"; "What are the implications for academia and for practice?"; and "What research agenda could be suggested?"

The concept of *identification* is discussed by the trio of Robert L. Heath (University of Houston), George Cheney (University of Colorado at Colorado Springs), and Øyvind Ihlen (University of Oslo). They argue here that creating identification is perhaps the fundamental challenge of human association and organization as laid out by Kenneth Burke.

Chapter 9 returns to classical rhetoric and the starting points for rhetors: Greg Leichty (University of Louisville) discusses *topics* (classically *topoi*) that prompt rhetors' ability to discover and invent arguments. In modern rhetoric, the notion of *ideograph* has been used to point to broadly accepted cultural values and commitments that can both truncate arguments and point to which ones are situationally most relevant to an issue. An ideograph can be encapsulated in a single word or phrase (such as "free market"). Josh Boyd (Purdue University) traces the origins

and development of this concept in chapter 9. His discussion of ideograph corresponds to *myths*, a notion discussed by Graham Sewell (University of Melbourne) in chapter 11. Sewell argues that myth is indispensable when it comes to creating knowledge about the social world, but reminds us that myth is not "fiction," but a short-hand approach to important ideologies and decisions.

Again, returning to ancient theory, Charles Marsh (University of Kansas) next investigates *stasis theory* as a way of identifying the key points of contention within each debate, and the discovery of which leads communicators to relevant strategies needed to advance their point of view. A key point of contention within a debate can concern organizational wrongdoing. Keith M. Hearit (Western Michigan University) explores the notion of *apologia* in more depth in chapter 13. The language of self-defense can be analyzed with this notion as a form of secular rituals seeking remediation of wrongdoing.

Aristotle held that *ethos* was the first and "controlling factor in persuasion" (Aristotle, 2007, 2.4). The richness of this concept is discussed by James S. Baumlin (Missouri State University) and Peter L. Scisco (Center for Creative Leadership) who add to the treatment of the concept as presented by Cicero and Kenneth Burke. Chapter 14 emphasizes how character is important in persuasion.

Closely aligned with *ethos* is the Roman concept of *persona*. The four-person team of Jill J. McMillan, Katy J. Harriger, Christy M. Buchanan, and Stephanie Gusler (all from Wake Forest University), revisit the classical concept and follow its historical transition to a modern-day descriptor of identity formation in groups and collectivities. They use the tradition of persona by demonstrating how students (who represent organizations) benefit from early instruction as to the importance of persona as articulate citizenship.

Next, chapter 16 recalls the ancients' interest in *elocutio* or the stylistic phase in ancient rhetoric. Here, *rhetorical figures* are discussed by Bruce A. Huhmann (Virginia Commonwealth University) who uses advertising as an illustrative case. The chapter presents a taxonomy to categorize verbal and visual figures and reviews research into their efficacy in producing advertisers' desired communication effects.

Next, Damion Waymer (North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University) unearths the role of *metaphors* in organizational rhetoric, not as artifice but as argument. Metaphor, argues Waymer, is a means by which materiality is connected to language. It has been featured as artifice, but gains importance when viewed as means for disclosing how a rhetor thinks, and how that rhetor wants an audience to think and act.

Chapter 18 also focuses on the *elocutio* phase and one of the four so-called master tropes, *synecdoche* (metaphor, simile, and irony being the others). The latter term is broadly understood as a trope of representation where the part of something is represented by the whole or vice versa. Peter M. Hamilton (Durham University) points out that the use of synecdoche can indicate what is supported or opposed and the directions in which particularly powerful actors wish to drive organisational strategies and policies.

IV Process of rhetoric: challenges and strategies

This section of the book investigates the processes of rhetoric and the challenges and strategies involved. Crucial questions are addressed: "What is the process about?"; "What have rhetorical scholars written about this?"; "How can it be related to organizational rhetoric?"; "What are the contributions and implications for academia and for practice?"; and "What research agenda could be suggested?"

The penultimate process of organizational rhetoric is *legitimacy*. Organizations need to be viewed as legitimate as the license to operate for reward. This enduring rhetorical problem is discussed by Ashli Stokes (University of North Carolina at Charlotte) in chapter 19.

To strengthen their legitimacy in order to achieve other goals, organizations make use of *rhetorical agency*. Elisabeth Hoff-Clausen (University of Copenhagen) explores the constraints and conditions of this ability to achieve agency with words and other symbols.

As discussed in many of the chapters (because of its historical role in the human condition), rhetoric concerns exchanges among competing voices as differences of opinion. If no such division existed, there would be no need for rhetoric, as pointed out by Burke (1966). Relying on *agonism*, Scott Davidson (University of Leicester) puts emphasis on vibrant rhetorical exchanges and dissensus as essential for ensuring that democracies do not slide into the control of narrow elites.

On a parallel topic, *dialogue*, Michael Kent (University of New South Wales) and Maureen Taylor (University of Tennessee) devote chapter 22 to pointing out that dialogue is about seeking to understand others and co-create meaning. Integrating both dialogue and rhetoric into individual and organizational communication creates opportunities for more ethical relationships at multiple levels of society among many voices.

Discussion of the ethics of rhetoric necessarily evolves around processes of *persuasion*. The Swiss-based trio Ford Shanahan (Franklin University), Alison Vogelaarm (Franklin University), and Peter Seele (Università della Svizzera italiana in Lugano), addresses this topic by giving special attention to it as a deliberative or facilitative form.

Turning to practicalities, in chapter 24, Peter Smudde and Jeff Courtright (both from Illinois State University) address what they call the "bread and butter" of the livelihood of practitioners within public relations and strategic communication, namely *message design*. A argument in their chapter is that message design is a strategic (rather than random or haphazard) process that should be defined as a prospective, *propter hoc* rhetorical practice built on sound theory and strategy.

Even though organizations run on words, to paraphrase Jens E. Kjeldsen (University of Bergen), the world is also visual. In chapter 25 on *visual and multimodal communication*, he addresses the interdependence of such forms of organizational communication as being both event and language.

The section on processes is rounded off with a focus on the role of the *audience* in the communication process. In chapter 26, Heidi Hatfield Edwards (Florida Institute of Technology) traces the treatment of audience in rhetorical studies since Aristotle and adds a discussion of the role played by the audience in the social media era.

V Areas: contextual applications and challenges

The fifth section is then devoted to discussing *rhetorical areas* or *genres*, in other words, contextual application of rhetoric and the challenges that arise from it. Key questions have been "What have scholars in general written about this particular area of rhetorical practice?"; "What can rhetoric contribute to an understanding of the area?"; "How can it be related to organizational rhetoric?"; "What are the contributions and implications for academia and for practice?"; and, yet again, "What research agenda could be suggested?"

This section starts off with two chapters relating to public interest, organizations and rhetoric. The first of these (chapter 27) discuss the dependence of *strategic issues management* on rhetoric as argumentation. Robert L. Heath (University of Houston) contends that the discipline arose as a means of helping large organizations to avoid and address legitimacy gaps between management practices and stakeholders' expectations. Thus, issue communication can foster understanding, minimize conflict, collaboratively engage, and otherwise enlighten choices to serve private and public interests. A companion chapter (28), written by Amy O'Connor (University of Minnesota) and Øyvind Ihlen (University of Oslo), traces the notion of *corporate social responsibility* (CSR) and the use of rhetoric. Combined, these chapters explore the challenges posed by the interdependence of legitimacy and corporate social responsibility.

Two similarly intertwined research areas relate to risk and crisis: Mike Palenchar (University of Tennessee) and Laura Lemon (University of Alabama) seek to bring together organizational rhetoric and communication to better understand risk communication, in an effort to more

fully explicate and expand the components that construct the infrastructural approach to risk communication. Concerning, crisis, W. Timothy Coombs (Texas A&M), points out that rhetoric has had a profound effect upon the creation and development of crisis communication. It was the progenitor of crisis communication and remains a vital guiding light for this expanding research area.

While much of research on organizational rhetoric and communication tends to be corporate centric (and focused on profit), this section's discussion of contexts is rounded off by looking at the area of activism as a form of organizational rhetoric. Michael F. Smith (La Salle University) and Denise P. Ferguson (Azusa Pacific University) specifically address the concepts of issues, identity, and legitimacy through a rhetorical lens in chapter 31.

VI Conclusions: from origins, to now, and beyond

The final part of the book consists of three chapters that seek to answer questions such as "What contribution do the chapters in the handbook provide to the understanding of organizational rhetoric?"; "What perspectives are lacking?"; and finally, "What future can be envisioned for the study of organizational rhetoric?"

The first chapter revisits the works of the two most cited rhetoricians throughout this book, Aristotle and Burke. In chapter 32, with the title "Aristotle, Burke and beyond," George Cheney (University of Colorado at Colorado Springs) and Charles Conrad (Texas A&M University) suggest that the two rhetoricians can be used to examine socio-economic-political issues that transcend specific organizations, industries, and institutions and at the same time have important implications for the understanding of organizational rhetoric. The chapter as a whole is a passionate call for the revival of organizational rhetoric as a field of study, and a call to look beyond discrete rhetorical situations and include a broader focus on organizational rhetoric in society building on the two mentioned luminaries.

In chapter 33, Rebecca Meisenbach (University of Missouri) joins the previous chapter's call to broaden the scope for organizational rhetoric, including the intersection of different levels of discourse. Meisenbach argues there is a need to augment traditional studies of organizational communication with a wider range of conceptions and applications of rhetoric, especially those that focus attention on the intersections between micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of suasory discourse. More studies need to be conducted and published that examine discourse and rhetorical agency as means for achieving organizational communication.

Finally, Robert L. Heath (University of Houston) and Øyvind Ihlen (University of Oslo) tie together the collective wisdom of the contributions in this book in the form of some conclusions and take away points.

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Part II

Field Overviews
Foundations and Macro-Contexts

2

Organizational Communication and Organizational Rhetoric I
The Theme of Merger

Charles Conrad and George Cheney

The title of this volume, the *Handbook of Organizational Rhetoric and Communication*, represents a fundamental tension between the two subjects included in it—the conjunction "and" simultaneously unites "organizational communication" and "organizational rhetoric" and separates them. This dialectical relationship, this process of "merger" and "division" (Burke, 1973), is the focus of this chapter, as well as the following one. Taken together, these chapters argue that the two major constructs have at times been almost wholly divided from one another, at times drawn together, and at still other times interconnected in a complex hierarchical relationship whereby one is cast as the handmaiden or shadow of the other. In these chapters, we point to merger and division in non-academic realms: that is, recognizing the fundamental dialectic of human relations and symbolic action.

Like all symbolic constructs, "organizational communication" and "organizational rhetoric" are polysemous, manifesting internal tensions and contradictions that have provided the seeds of their own transformation. They also are human creations: that is, strategic adaptations to the social, cultural, and economic contexts within which their creators live. When these contexts change, scholars face new opportunities, exigencies, and constraints that they accommodate, resist, or attempt to modify. Similarly, as symbolic transformations play out, the relative salience of other, broader contexts also changes, highlighting some tensions and contradictions and de-emphasizing others. An important part of that context is composed of the relationships that scholars have with their peers, both within organizational communication/organizational rhetoric and in allied intellectual communities. Those connections have influenced both the ways in which the two focal areas have developed and the ways in which broader contextual changes have been interpreted and analyzed (Conrad & Sollitto, 2017).

The Origins and Early Development of Organizational Communication

The analysis of organizational communication in a way is as old as the first social collectives (see also chapter 1). While the roots of bureaucratic administration can be traced to nearly five thousand years ago in ancient China, it was the organizing challenges of *mass warfare* that led to the first scientific analyses of the communicative processes and patterns of large, complex

organizations (Redding, 1972, 1985) and to the study of small group decision-making (Guetzkow, 1965). As in most of the social sciences, the first steps toward developing a discipline of organizational communication involved the codification of "best practices." Initially, these practices involved both oral and written communication skills. With 1940s funding of massive War Manpower Commission programs (including "Training Within Industry"), the content of "communications" courses broadened to include many of the topics central to twenty-first-century practice and research—motivating and controlling employee actions, enhancing job satisfaction and performance, cultivating comprehensive and effective communication networks and information flow, and establishing systems and procedures for improving decision-making (Heron, 1942; Sproule, 1997).

Encouraged by economists (notably Simon, 1945) and organizational-industrial psychology (see Roethlisberger, 1945), organizational communication became an area recognized across disciplines—most immediately in practical terms but later in theoretical senses as well (Abrahamsson, 1977).These two lines of research encompassed many of the topics that would dominate organizational communication during the 1960s and 1970s: for example, the primacy of superior–subordinate communication as the focal unit of analysis, the role of formal and informal structure in information flow and decision-making, and the treatment of channels and media in largely instrumental terms. The Human Relations Movement presaged two additional features of that era: (1) a managerial bias that depicted managers, including first-line supervisors, as possessing superior expertise and information that had to be persuasively and empathically communicated to comparatively uninformed subordinates (Coch & French, 1948); and (2) a preference for a top-down form of "two-way communication," which involved a stunted form of dialogue in which subordinates' voices were valued only as a mechanism for obtaining information relevant to management's interests and organizational productivity (compare Perrow, 1979; Redding, 1985; Tompkins, 1967).

By the 1960s, multiple concepts "borrowed" from scholars interested in communication within other academic disciplines—especially management (see chapter 6), organizational-industrial psychology and organizational sociology (see, e.g., Katz & Kahn, 1978)—were combined with research in interpersonal and group communication and codified into a largely functionalist framework based on contemporaneous communication theories, primarily Shannon and Weaver's linear source–message–channel–receiver (SMCR) model of human–machine communication and Katz's model of "two-step flows" (Redding, 1972; Tompkins, 1967; also see Katz & Kahn, 1978). The primary goal of structural-functional research was to delineate the implications of popular organizational theories for communication rather than to chart those that communication theories held for organizational theories. Communication theories were developed to explain and justify organizational practices: socialization of newcomers; development and modification of communication rules, roles, networks, and norms; decision making; and leadership, which inherently involved *managing* communication.

Within this perspective, organizations were treated as *unified, cooperative systems that pursue a shared goal or set of goals*. If members had different goals or disagreed with existing methods of pursing shared goals, it was broadly construed as a sign of weakness, either in the deviant or in the organization's motivation and control system. Messages were treated as "chunks" of information that flow through stable channels within organizational containers that have relatively impermeable boundaries. Organizational structures *were* sometimes seen as emerging via long-term communicative processes but still viewed as largely stable. Organizational actors' interpretations of messages were viewed as being determined by a host of contextual factors, each of which could produce "errors" of interpretation (i.e., deviations from the meanings intended by senders—or as "authorized" by the organization) or errors of transmission. Unfiltered forwarding of messages can lead to information overload; excessive filtering can rob decision makers of the information they needed to make "boundedly rational" decisions (March & Simon, 1965). Key elements of control and coordination—such as maintaining authority relationships, developing task expertise, socializing members to organizational and

subcultural norms, and managing status differences—rely heavily on communication networks (Redding, 1972).

However, even at this early point in the development of organizational communication, depictions began to emerge of organizational members as social actors who actively "interpret" and not simply "receive" messages. Redding (1972) used his meaning-centered perspective to develop a set of prescient predictions about the impact that rapidly changing economic pressures and cultural shifts would have on organizations and their managers. Bureaucratic strategies of organizing would become progressively less effective, he argued, forcing managers to deal increasingly with a tension between stability and change, eventually leading to the development of post-bureaucratic forms. The managerial role would become more and more that of coordinating small groups of specialists operating in multiple networks superimposed on one another, rather than as distant power figures issuing commands through bureaucratic hierarchies. Horizontal communication would grow in importance; organizational relationships would become more transient and fluid; and coalitional politics would become increasingly important to organizational functioning.

Another departure from structural-functionalism foregrounded concepts of "process." Based largely on Weick's (1979) pragmatically inclined analysis of the social psychology of organizing and James March and his associates' (March & Simon, 1965) research on non-rational or "extra-rational" aspects of individual and organizational decision making, this perspective asserted that organizations are created, sustained, and changed through communication (Johnson, 1982). The essence of organizing then became the coordination of action, which relies on the presence of shared meaning systems and consensual expectations. Process models located meanings in the intersubjective cognitions of individual actors, and posited that many different types of communicative interactions function to transform aggregations of individuals into social/organizational collectivities. Operant theories of organizing—received models of leadership, core organizational values, and characteristic modes of decision making—guided and constrained organizational actors' choices and communication while also contributing to a public image of the organization (see Marchand, 1998; also chapter 32).

Organizational communication's central purpose was indeed rhetorical: that is, to persuade employees to comply with managerial commands and to sublimate their interests and goals to those of "the organization" (McMillan, 1987). Even Human Relations strategies, which were overtly depicted as *employee-centered*, were largely justified in terms of organizational control/employee motivation and improved centralized decision-making. Thus, they were designed to serve instrumental objectives. Alternative perspectives were being developed, and many of the concepts that would be central to an imminent transformation of the field were in place: a recognition of the central role played by receivers' interpretations of messages in the creation of meanings, which are multilevel and contextual; conceptions of decision making as "non-rational" processes embedded in societal and organizational meaning systems; and motivation, power, and control as communicative constructions that make sense within stable but changing organizational climates. However, little connection was expressed between the dominant social scientific models that dominated organizational communication before 1980 and humanities studies of rhetoric and rhetorical criticism. Especially important in terms of this interpretive history are studies that connected organizational communication and rhetoric, and/or combined rhetorical and social-scientific concepts in order to examine complex organizational phenomena (Bormann, 1972; Tompkins et al., 1975).

The Rhetoric of Social Collectives and Movements

Although organizational rhetoric did not emerge as a truly distinctive field of study until the late 1980s, many of its key assumptions had been expressed by rhetorical theorists and critics decades earlier (see chapter 1). In addition, this research suggested that ostensibly non-rhetorical actions, such as material conditions and consequences, can be interpreted and analyzed from rhetorical perspectives.

Following World War II, most rhetorical criticism focused on symbolic acts produced by *individual rhetors.* But, beginning with Leland Griffin's (1952) "Rhetoric of historical movements," rhetorical critics moved beyond analyses of particular speeches and individual rhetors to examine the symbolic acts of social collectives (Cox & Faust, 2009; see Cheney & Lair, 2005). Doing so, Griffin (1952) argued, also would introduce the concept of *process* to rhetorical studies—especially in terms of the complex interrelationships between changing forms of rhetoric and a movement's development through phases of inception, crisis, and consummation, including the rhetorical requirements of maintaining both internal participation and external recognition (see, e.g. Simons, 1970; Simons, Mechling, & Schreier, 1984; Stewart, 1980).

As Griffin (1969) observed, following Burke (1961), human beings are motivated by dreams of a new order and the rejection of the existing order. Consequently, their actions involve a "rhetorical striving," a movement from a state of mind through symbolic action to a transcendent condition of salvation (Griffin, 1969, p. 462). The three phases of collective action outlined in his original article logically contained the various aspects of Dramatism. Transcendence, with at least some employment of a comic frame, would be the best process and result to be hoped for, in Burke's view (personal correspondence with Cheney, 1987).

Unlike functional models (see Simons, 1970), which viewed confrontation as a strategy to capture the attention of multiple audiences and force opponents to acknowledge/legitimize them, Cathcart (1972) saw them as a "consummatory" process through which members' identities are established and maintained. While the "managerial rhetorics" of rhetors who advocate minor changes operate within the value structures of the status quo and speak "with the same vocabularies of motive as do the conservative elements of the order" (Cathcart, 1978, p. 39), more radical movements seek to change both, and in the process change the identities of members.

Two perspectives, functionalism and dramatism, dominated the rhetorical criticism of social/political/historical movements during the 1970s and early 1980s. Scholars interested in social movement rhetoric became embroiled in debates over two theoretical issues that also would dominate organizational communication during the decade: (1) delineating the processes through which movements (and organizations) are constituted; and (2) the utility of critical theory (Cox & Foust, 2009). Early movement criticism focused on established movements, "already constituted entities, with empirical identities, stages of development and so on" (Cox & Foust, 2009, p. 10). Echoing Griffin's (1952) call to study movements as *patterns* of public discourse that emerge over time through rhetorical action, Michael McGee (1980), among others, argued that movements are sets of meanings that are constantly changing. Others (echoing Griffin, 1952) reminded us that the construct "social change" is invoked from a variety of ideological perspectives (see Medhurst, 1985; Warnick, 1977).

As importantly, "movements" often are composed of people whose self-perceived interests are in tension with one another, if not directly contradictory. Treating social collectives as homogeneous entities oversimplifies them, de-emphasizing the transformations that take place as a result of that rhetoric (see, e.g., Conrad, 1981). Debates over these issues became so intractable that by the end of the 1980s the search for "sweeping accounts of the rhetoric of movements ceased" (Cox & Foust, 2009, p. 9; compare Lucas, 1988), curiously parallel to times of reassessment and reflection on core strategies for "identity-based" movements related to race, gender, sexuality, and, in a different way, for the anti-war/peace movements. Each of the perspectives developed by movement scholars held important yet largely unexplored implications for organizational communication scholars.

Interpretive and Critical Turns in Organizational Communication

From World War II to 1980, organizational communication was dominated by structural functionalism. New perspectives were emerging that focused on concepts of meaning creation, processes of organizing, and organizational symbolism on the one hand, and critical theories of organizing on the other (see the history in Tompkins, 1984). With new conceptual frameworks came new communicative networks linking scholars from multiple academic disciplines who were interested in interpretive and critical perspectives on organizations and related issues including power, race, and gender, and later socio-economic class.

In addition, the rapid economic growth that "western" democracies had experienced during the 1960s and 1970s came to a halt, particularly for members of the middle class, and the distribution of wealth in the developed countries started to become increasingly unequal. New technologies and globalization combined to create new forms of economic dislocation that accelerated during the following decades, thereby challenging views of organizations as unified, goal-oriented collectives (see Rodrik, 2012; Stiglitz, 2003, 2007).

The catalyst for the interpretive/critical turn in organizational communication research and theory was a conference held in 1981 in Alta, Utah, which attracted like-minded scholars from management, organizational sociology, organizational psychology, and communication (see Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983). At the same time, a related change was taking place in traditional management circles and the popular business press that conceived of organizations as *having* cultures which can be created and manipulated by managers trained in an identifiable set of communicative strategies (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Ouchi & Wilkins, 1983; Peters & Waterman, 1982). A different conceptualization of "organizational cultures" emerged, one that depicted "culture" as composed of complex processes through which members of organizations create and disrupt shared values and norms through distinctive language, narratives, rituals, and other symbolic forms. According to this perspective, organizations *are* cultures, dynamic entities that change and evolve over time based upon how organizational members interact, make meanings, and communicate (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982; see also Smircich, 1983; Smircich & Calas, 1987). The relevant assumptions of the organizations-have-cultures perspective paralleled those of structural-functionalist views of organizational communication and functionalist views of rhetorical movements; the assumptions of the organizations-are-culture view were consistent with both constitutive views of rhetoric and dramatistic views of movement rhetoric.

The Challenges of Transition 1: Identification/Socialization/Acculturation

As early as 1975, organizational communication scholars argued that the work of Kenneth Burke provided a valuable perspective (Cheney, 1983a, 1983b; Tompkins et al., 1975); by the mid-1980s Dramatism was an important element of interpretive perspectives reflecting Burke's (1945, 1950) view that organizations are a special case of society. Hierarchy, Burke (1935) argued, is inherent in both nature and language. Hierarchy implicates order, in both the senses of authority and regularity. Authority relations are articulated in bureaucratic form and legitimized by authoritative rhetoric, which in turn relies on and contributes to mystery about others and about one's role in the socioeconomic strata (Burke, 1935, p. 277; see also chapter 32; compare Lukes, 1974). Like many Burkean concepts, mystery has both positive and negative effects. On the one hand, it is a means of maintaining social cohesion and unity (Burke 1935, 1973).

On the other, mystery/magic separates people from occupants of other socioeconomic strata, estranging some members of an organization/society from others (see chapter 8 on identification).

Socialization (assimilation, acculturation, adaptation) emerged as an important topic of research in organizational communication where interests of the organization and the individual were closely examined and where concepts of motivation, persuasion, and control came into contact with one another. The topic of socialization drew energy from structural-functionalist analyses of roles and stages (e.g., Jablin, 2001) and the interpretive impulses of organizational culture (see, e.g., Eisenberg & Riley, 2001). Although this research started with the assumption that individuals should/must adjust to organizations (compare Bryant, 1953), it quickly became differentiated through the recognition of two important points. First, few organizations are composed of monolithic cultures despite mighty attempts to create and maintain homogenous beliefs, values, and sensemaking processes. Second, individuals sometimes change organizational structures, processes, and cultures, both by "playing the games" of the culture in new and different ways, and by intentionally subverting and/or transforming them to their advantage (Burawoy, 1979). "Phasic" analyses of organizational socialization, although initiated with an overriding concern for how new members should come to "fit" into their organization, its interests and its objectives, gradually took on interpretive concerns *per* the popular idea of "sensemaking" (Weick, 1979, 1995, 2001) and turning points as experienced especially from the individual's standpoint (e.g., Bullis & Bach, 1989). The grand(iose) presumption that individuals must bend to the will of organizations even as the new members' "individuality" is being celebrated has invited rhetorical critique (Cheney, 1987; Clair, 1996).

The vehicle of identification was used to provide more nuanced views of the individual–organizational relationship and the pushes and pulls of differing influences (Barker, 1998; Barker & Tompkins, 1994; Cheney, 1987). Consistent with Burke's expansion of persuasion-via-identification, employing the concept of identification to characterize the individual in relations with the organization allowed for the incorporation of unconscious and partially conscious motives, unspoken economic and technological alignments. It allowed departures from and critiques of what was regarded as pure strategy from both managerial and rhetorical standpoints.

The Challenges of Transition 2: Varieties of Structuration

A second perspective on communication and/in organizational cultures that emerged during the early 1980s was based on Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration (1984) that sought to resolve the agency-structure problem in social thought (see chapter 20 on rhetorical agency). Like Burke, Giddens both sought to avoid structural determinism (in Marxian, Freudian, and other forms of human agency, action, and choice) *and* rejected frameworks that ignored material conditions and/or collapsed them into ideation and voluntarism (see Alvesson & Deetz, 2013; Conrad & Haynes, 2001; Eisenberg & Riley, 2001; Poole, Seibold, & McPhee, 1985). Giddens argued that recurring practices provide actors with needed stability and predictability, but still may allow creativity, improvisation, and change. These "systems" are enacted through "structures," that is rules (principles of action or routines) and resources that knowledgeable human actors use to keep the system going ("reproduction") and/or change it in desired ways ("transformation"). Human actors can do so because they anticipate the likely effects of different courses of action, "reflexively monitor" the impact of their choices, and incorporate what they learn into their knowledge.

Although structuration was based on a linguistic analogue rather than a systematic analysis of communicative or rhetorical processes (see Conrad, 1993), organizational communication scholars quickly adapted Giddens' theory to deal with key conceptual challenges, including the communicative-rhetorical processes involved in social/organizational reproduction. Structuration helped clarify the processes through which groups negotiate relationships and

arrive at decisions through multiple, varied temporal orientations and decision–action schemas while also setting up structures for further action (McPhee,1985; Poole & McPhee, 1983). Perhaps most importantly, it eventually led to reconceptualizations of organizational structures that explain some of the most perplexing research findings on formal and informal communication networks and information flows (McPhee & Iverson, in press; McPhee & Zaug, 2000). Finally, it provided a perspective for examining interorganizational relationships and time–space relationships in a global economy, considering in effect the world as an organizing and reorganizing entity and set of processes.

Like Dramatism, structuration foregrounds the role that symbolic action plays in the creation, reproduction, and transformation of rhetorical situations, whether that term is defined broadly as Kenneth Burke (1972) does, or narrowly as the strategic use of rules and resources to manage everyday challenges in organizations. Structuration recognizes that those situations have both conscious/strategic dimensions and guidelines and constraints that typically function at an unconscious level, but can be made conscious through symbolic action, and used, critiqued, or modified. What structuration does not provide is a systematic analysis of the persuasive/rhetorical strategies that are used to implement strategic action.

The Challenges of Transition 3: Institutional Theory

Since the mid-1990s, institutional theory has been influential in organizational communication (Lammers & Barbour, 2006; Lammers & Garcia, 2013). The trend represents both a shift from the key term "culture" to that of "institution," offering another angle on the structure–agency problematic and a widening lens for examining communication processes in and around organizations, especially in terms of analyzing patterns across organizations and sectors of economies. Like many terminological shifts, institutional theory is a rhetorical move; it employs a "new" term to illuminate processes previously concealed or undervalued. Still, this infusion of ideas has not dealt as directly with either agency or intention and it has not offered a clear avenue for the entry of or merger with vocabularies of discourse or rhetoric (Cheney & Ritz, in press).

According to Orren (1995), ideas coalesce into ideologies and are solidified in institutions, meaning structures and patterns of action. Institutions are maintained over long periods of time because of their taken-for-granted character; indeed, this taken-for-grantedness is a key dimension of what it means for something to be institutionalized (as keenly observed by Weber, 1978). A key objective for institutional theorists is to show how "political choices made at one point in time create institutions that work to generate at a later point, recognizable patterns of structure, action, and public discourse" (Kitchener, 2002, pp. 397–398; also see Skocpol, 1995). Although action is guided and constrained by ideologies and institutions, actors can draw upon them as the legitimized bases of rhetorical/communication strategies.

However, ideas and institutions are always in tension with one another and exist in "disharmony" with other ideas and institutions. Historical institutionalists such as Skocpol (1995; also see Bannerman & Haggart, 2015) see institutions as sets of relationships that persist although in an inherently conflictual way. Both institutionalization and deinstitutionalization result from a "dialectical interplay between … *actions* (practices and structures), *meanings*, and *actors*" (Zilber, 2002, p. 335).

The application of institutional theory to formal organizations is rather straightforward. Oliver (1992, citing Selznik 1957) noted that institutionalized organizational behaviors are "stable, repetitive and enduring activities that become infus[ed] with value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand" (p. 19). The force of habit, history, and tradition within the organization creates value congruence among organizational members around the propriety of re-enacted activities, causing these activities to acquire a rule-like status that renders them resistant to change (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Hinings & Greenwood, 1988; Oliver, 1992).

However, institutional theorists must deal adequately with issues regarding intentionality. Suddaby (2011) argued that organizational researchers operating from an institutional theory framework must avoid institutional *determinism* and focus their attention on how rhetorical/communicative acts and patterns create, reproduce, and transform institutions. There is no question that institutional theory *can* be used to explain how communication is guided and constrained by existing structures and routinized practices. For a communication-centered institutional theory, the proof of the pudding will lie in doing the opposite: that is, in demonstrating that institutional theory *should* be used to examine selected texts. The focus of research and theorizing would be on the ways in which communication/rhetoric perpetuates and/or upsets equilibria in action patterns, social/organizational structures, *and* mutual interpenetration of action and structure (Garcia, 2011).

The Challenges of Transition 4: Organizational Communication, Power and Critical Theory

Perhaps the most important development during the 1980s was organizational communication scholars' discovery of the concept of *power*. In those rare cases in which traditional organizational communication theory had examined power, it was depicted as a function of the attributes of individual members or of the formal positions they held in social and organizational hierarchies, including the formal control of information and information flows (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Pettigrew, 1972; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). The concept, long central to organizational sociology, had been de-emphasized in organizational studies, largely because of a narrow reading of Max Weber's work. The so-called community power debate in political science (see Harding, 1996) raised important issues about the nature and distribution of power in society, especially the extent to which it is conscious and observable, eventually leading to the development of multilevel models such as Steven Lukes' (1974) "three faces of power" (for analyses see Clegg, 1989; Conrad, 1983; Zoller, 2013). In management, conceptions of power were changing as Thompson (1967) and others politicized March and Simon's (1945) concept of "bounded rationality." Links between communication (as opposed to information) and power were rarely considered, although Pfeffer and others (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Pfeffer, 1981) started to examine the power/symbolism nexus. One essay examined the role that power played in Burke's theory of society and applied it to organizations (Cheney, Garvin-Doxas, & Torrens, 1998; see Alvesson, 1991).

The interpretive/critical turn in organizational communication scholarship elevated power and its relationship to meaning creation and identity formation as emerging through struggles over meaning and sensemaking. However, interpretive organizational communication research tended "to be descriptive [and allowing for multiple sometimes equal interpretations], often lacking a critical element. The principal goal … is to generate a sense of the way in which people create and maintain a shared sense of social reality" (Mumby, 1992, p. 20). Critique or praxis was sacrificed in the search for "thick" or "rich" descriptions and a commitment to value neutrality or, at least, minimization of researcher bias (Goodall, 1984; see Cheney, 2000).

Organizations were described as sites in which technical issues are the main concern— that is, questions of efficiency, productivity, resource allocation, expertise, and so on. Managers reproduced this ideology by acting in accord with its tenets, by defining/framing situations in technical terms, and by justifying/legitimizing their actions through reference to ideology. Interpretive perspectives rarely recognize that power is connected to "organizational sense-making, which in turn is largely delimited by the communication process;" nor does it assert that "the ideology of technical rationality thus provides a means by which the existing structure of power is maintained and reproduced" (Mumby, 1992, pp. 2–3; also Deetz, 2001). Initially,

some organizational communication scholars linked power and rhetoric (see Mumby, 1992), a perspective that was developed in more detail by both organizational communication (Cheney & Lair, 2005; Conrad, 2011; McMillan, 2007; Morgan & Krone, 2001) and rhetoric scholars (Aune, 2001; Cloud, 1994, 2002).

Early critical theories of organizational communication expanded descriptions of the relationships among power, knowledge, and communication, while maintaining a focus on the strategic use of symbols to further the interests of some actors (or groups of actors) over others. Organizations were viewed as "social historical creations accomplished in conditions of struggle and [usually unequal] power relations," (Deetz, 2001, p. 25; also Deetz, 1992, 2003) and as "political sites where various organizational actors and groups struggle to 'fix' meanings [and values] in ways that will serve their particular interests" (Mumby, 2004, p. 237; also Deetz, 2001, 2003). Structures that privilege technical/instrumental decision premises and forms of decision making often close off dissent and/or the articulation of alternative perspectives and values, or artificially produce consent by organizational actors, even when it undermines their interests. Active consent of workers to managerial domination became a more important focus of research (Burawoy, 1979; Carlone & Taylor, 1998; Conrad & Ryan, 1985; Deetz & Mumby, 1990; Mumby, 1992, 2013).

Communication/rhetoric was therefore seen as central to non-coercive processes of domination and consent (Deetz, 1992, 2003). Perhaps most importantly, power relationships were reified in practice: that is, placed beyond critical analysis. Political and economic interests of capital and management were universalized, normalized, and naturalized (Althusser, 1970, 1971; Bullis & Tompkins, 1989; Deetz, 1992; Lukacs, 1971). By accepting hegemonic ideas *and* enacting practices that are consistent with them, members of organizations demonstrate that they are qualified to participate in organizational life by subjecting themselves to its demands (Alvessson, 1991; Deetz, 1992; Gramsci, 1971; Pringle, 1988; Therborn, 1980; for an example see Jacques, 1996).

Complementing critical perspectives that examined complex relationships between ideologies and structures was a second stream of research grounded in Jürgen Habermas' (1979, 1984) theory of communicative action (see Deetz, 1992; Mumby, 1988). Habermas contrasted the power-related distortions endemic to the communicative processes that characterize contemporary capitalism—practices that preclude dissent and debate, substitute interest-driven illusions for legitimate truth claims, and arbitrarily limit the "voice" of some members of society—with forms of morally/ethically driven discourse that might form an "ideal speech situation." Every communicative act, Habermas argued, does three things: (1) makes a knowledge based (truth) claim; (2) is meaningful for the actors who comprise a legitimate social relationship (a claim of propriety); and (3) discloses the interests and personal history of the person making the claim (sincerity). Each utterance allows every one of these validity claims to be challenged. In an *ideal speech situation*, there exists a symmetrical distribution of opportunities to speak, be heard, and be understood—and by implication, have influence. All actors have the right/responsibility to negotiate mutually acceptable/fulfilling relationships through communicative interaction.

While Habermas' (1979) analysis provides a plausible standard for evaluating rhetoric/communication in terms of its uses for domination, it does little to explain how power can be used to create more equitable social structures or to effect social change (Deetz, 2003). It also ignores or minimizes many of the key processes identified by critical theorists interested in the relationship between ideology and structure—issues of class, class conflict, and the symbolic/structural processes through which sectional interests are universalized (Larrain, 1979, 1983; Mumby, 1988). Perhaps more important, Habermas' communication-only "solution" ignores structural realities and excessively de-emphasizes social and material practices and the ways in which they sustain ideological distortion (Mumby, 1988; see Althusser, 1970, 1971; Giddens, 1984). As Cheney and Lair (2005) concluded, "no treatment of the symbolic without the material will account fully for the workings of power and influence" (p. 56).

Conclusion

This chapter addresses the parallel histories of organizational rhetoric and organizational communication with the theme of *merger*. It deliberately emphasizes the conceptual and practical mechanisms by which coordinated action, however uneven, is achieved. We began with the assumptions of structural-functionalist sociology and empirical social psychology because those intellectual traditions were most influential on the early development of organizational communication (up to about 1980). By the late 1980s, organizational communication and rhetoric were poised to be integrated with, or at least become meaningful supplements to, one another.

Rhetorical critique of organizational discourse had become commonplace (for example, Conrad, 1983, 1988; Crable & Vibbert, 1983; Farrell & Goodnight, 1981; Goldzwig & Cheney, 1984; McMillan, 1988; Peterson, 1990). Interpretive and critical turns in organizational communication scholarship emphasized concepts that had long been central to rhetorical analysis—meaning creation, identity formation, communication as situated discourse—as well as the complex interrelationships among symbolic action, ethics, and social and political power and politics. Scholars recognized that contemporary societies were becoming increasingly organized and that organizational rhetors had supplanted individuals as the most powerful social/political actors (Cheney & McMillan, 1990; Meisenbach & McMillan, 2006; Putnam & Cheney, 1985; Tompkins, 1987). Power and resistance, both among members of organizations and between organizations and politicians/political systems, were represented and constituted in and through symbolic action (Cheney, 1991; Cheney & Lair, 2005; Cheney, Garvin-Doxas, & Torrens, 1998). Organizations use communication/rhetoric to legitimize themselves and their actions (Boyd, 2000) by connecting individual organizations to broader institutions and institutionalized logics (Feldner, 2017; McMillan, 1987). The appreciation of such trends required new views of rhetoric and its social functions/impact. Specifically, what was needed was an integration of late twentieth century developments with traditional rhetorical influences (Crable, 1986, pp. 61–62; also see Crable, 1978; Sproule, 1989, 1990).

Critics examined the processes through which organizational rhetoric created rhetorical situations, both at the societal/cultural level (labeled Discourse by Alvesson & Karreman, 2001) and at the level of particular interactions (discourse): "organizations create situations in which their preconceived messages will be suitable. … It is not, then, a question of adapting messages to an audience; it is matter of adapting to (or finding) audiences or situations that can serve the ends already established" (Crable, 1986, p. 65).

Conversely, it was increasingly accepted that membership in an organization involves an ongoing dialogue, a dialectic between individual and corporate identities, a process of merger and division (Brown & McMillan, 1991). Organizations are constituted through communication/rhetoric, and like all other communicative creations, are defined by hierarchy, order, mystery, power, and transcendence. Organizations are persuasive arguments (Conrad, 2011; Hartelius & Browning, 2008; Hoffman & Ford, 2009). In order to examine these processes, organizational scholars needed new orientations and methods, those characteristic of interpretive social science and critical analysis—the text-centered approaches of rhetorical theory and criticism. Some organizational communication scholars, often goaded by the spirit of Kenneth Burke, saw these steps toward merger as an opportunity to develop and articulate a broad understanding of organizational life.

Overall, this potential for integration has not been realized. The last time rhetoric was cast as the primary grounding for organizational communication was in Redding's (1985) and Tompkins's (1987) surveys of related research. In subsequent decades, organizational rhetoric has been transformed from one of many parts of organizational communication into one of many possible perspectives for viewing communication within and by organizations (Cheney, Christensen, Conrad, & Lair, 2004; Feldner, 2017). While advocates of rhetorical perspectives writing during the 1980s and 1990s argued that organizational communication "has much to

gain by adopting as one of its perspectives a rhetorical point of view" (Cheney & McMillan, 1990, p. 208), it has not so far taken a central role in that growing subdiscipline. The chapter that follows, with an emphasis on division, addresses the reasons for such theoretical and practical separations.

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