INTRODUCTION

While scholars have been studying the subject of political communication for some time, it has become recognized as a distinct field of study only recently. Like the larger disciplines with which it is associated, the field of political communication is characterized by a remarkable diversity of theories and approaches ranging from the purely quantitative to the strictly qualitative. This volume celebrates the variety of theoretical perspectives and the multiplicity of practical applications of those perspectives in political communication research by presenting a collection of diverse essays that represent the range and types of work being done in political communication.

Not all of the substantive areas of political communication are included here—polling, parties, and campaigns, for instance, are not explicitly treated. The areas that are not represented are excluded not because they are less important than those included, but because they are the most often analyzed and accessible areas of political communication. This volume attempts to focus on approaches that are less prominent in the field; the contribution of this volume is to increase the visibility and understanding of the subfield as a whole.

Political communication scholars, regardless of their discipline, share certain basic assumptions. For example, as a field, the study of political communication is predicated on the observation that people inhabit what Ernst Cassirer called "a symbolic universe." For Cassirer, "language, myth, and religion are parts of this universe. They are the varied threads which weave the symbolic net" (quoted in Swanson, 1982: 380). Communication research focuses on analyzing the complex workings of this symbolic universe so that our understanding of human interaction will be heightened.

In his seminal work, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, Murray Edelman presented an analysis of the consequences of human's symbolizing to our understanding of politics (1964). Edelman understands political messages as communication supporting the relative positions of the leaders and the led through structuring threat and reassurance. For Edelman, leadership is

always situational and depends on the relationship between leaders and their followers. That relationship is perpetuated through the symbols embedded in political communication.

Most political communication scholars following Edelman would probably agree with Robert E. Denton and Gary Woodward's claim that, "the essence of politics is 'talk' or human interaction. Such interaction is formal and informal, verbal and nonverbal, public and private—but always persuasive in nature, causing us to interpret, to evaluate, and to act. Communication provides the basis of social cohesion, issue discussion, and legislative enactment" (1990: xviii). The challenge of political communication research is to unite, in a systematic way, theories on information processing and cognition, of social activity, on persuasion, and on political processes and behavior in such a way as to make sense of the communicative aspects of our shared political worlds.

The task of political communication scholars, then, is to analyze the creation, dissemination, and absorption of the symbolic messages that comprise our political life. The problem and the great potential strength of the field of political communication is that there are a wide variety of approaches to this analytic task (Johnston, 1991: 329). Political communication research, of necessity, crosses the boundaries of conventional academic organization. While this increases the difficulty of intellectual integration, the diversity characterizing the field contributes to the richness of the scholarly endeavor. As research becomes more interdisciplinary, there is increasing interest in theoretical perspectives and research tools that can be transferred across disciplinary boundaries.

This diversity makes the focus on theories and methodologies particularly appropriate. While different disciplines may have different understandings of what constitutes political communication, by focusing on the theories that inform research and the methodologies that expedite it, scholars may find areas of commonality that would be obscured by an emphasis on content. Unless they share certain assumptions and study similar phenomena, researchers are apt to continue in ignorance of one anothers' existence. This project is designed to provide a forum where scholars from different disciplines and who pursue research from different perspectives present research that crosses the boundaries of their disciplines.

The chapters presented here include explications of existing models of analysis, advice on data collection, new models, new applications of old models, and new combinations of existing models. They combine to illustrate just how vibrant the field of communication research continues to be.

The volume begins with essays that address broad theoretical questions, and moves to more specifically focused case studies, including chapters on

the mass media, presidential communication, and communication in foreign affairs and international relations.

In "Political Communication and the Study of Rhetoric: Persuasion from the Standpoint of Literary Theory and Antropology," David Lorenzo focuses on culture as a communicative medium for the exercise of power. He gives the theoretical openings for the study of power in communications created by Foucault's and Fish's theories of discourse and Bourdieu's work on symbolic capital particular emphasis, and provides a methodology that yields new insight into how power is culturally exercised.

In "Political Linguistic Discourse Analysis: Analyzing the Relationships of Power and Language," Kenneth L. Hacker shows how discourse processing, critical linguistics, political linguistics, and semiotic approaches to political discourse analysis vary and contribute to the analysis of language and power, as well as the everyday struggles to maintain, change, or define those relationships.

Matthew R. Kerbel, in "Questioning the Questioners: Cracking Television's Protective Shell, and Other Impossible Requirements for Researching the Development of Media Content," makes a different contribution, beginning the section on mass media, and arguing that access to media personnel, while an important aspect of political communication research, is very limited. Newspeople tend to look skeptically upon the motivation of academic researchers, and tend to be closemouthed about their work and workplace. This chapter lays out the problem of access to media personnel and suggests strategies for addressing it. He expands our existing notions of what data are attainable, increasing the scope of research designs.

In his chapter, "From Agenda Setting to Priming and Framing: Reflections on Theory and Method," Henry C. Kenski analyzes how television media framed policy issues in 1992. He pays particular attention to theories of agenda setting (what we think about) and priming (how we think about issues and the criteria we use). The former is affected by the amount of coverage given to a policy issue, and the latter by the nature of the coverage. Among the various questions that he addresses are: the amount of coverage, the nature of the coverage (thematic v. episodic), the question of bias, and the homogeneity of news coverage among the major networks.

In "Video Verite: Language and Image in the Interpretation of Power," Bethami A. Dobkin focuses on the videotaped beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers and examines the impact of images in the mediation of conflict. For Dobkin, the King case represents the use of video in two domains of authenticity: television news and the courtroom. Based on an analysis of the King video, she argues that models of media impact and political communication must account for the interaction between verbal

context and visual text in the construction of "common sense" understandings of conflict.

Turning to presidential studies, Jian-Hua Zhu and Ronald Milavsky in, "Equal Time Within Televised Presidential Debates," provide a solid contribution to the literature on debates by presenting a theory of time allocation in debates based on both structural and individual factors. They make a distinction between the concepts "equality" and "fairness," and as a result, suggest that we may need to reconsider our normative assumptions about political debates.

"Presidential Rhetoric in Political Time," by Mary E. Stuckey is based on the premise that the presidency is a complicated institution embedded in a complex environment. Political scientists are adept at studying and explaining the institutional structures of national governance, but are less able to explain the success or failure of specific political actors. Communication scholars excel at analyzing certain political events, but are limited by their lack of understanding of and reference to political structures as determinants of political behavior. This model unites institutional influences with individual rhetorical choices to explain the success or failure of presidential leadership, thus adding to the traditional models in both fields.

In a similar vein, Andrew Valls, author of "The Public Presidency: A Social Constructionist Approach," presents an analysis of the psychological and symbolic dimensions of relations between leaders and publics. His primary focus is on how American presidents manipulate symbols and interpret reality in order to create and maintain public support for their actions, and how the social constructionist approach can improve our understanding of the public presidency.

The section on foreign affairs and international relations begins with "Body, Mind, and Soul in the Gulf War Debate," by Francis A. Beer and Barry J. Balleck, which provides an analysis of how the congressional debate on the Gulf War presents a rhetorical template of the national mind. Metaphorical reasoning is a key to improved understanding of previously neglected dimensions of peace/war consciousness. Embodiment theory, rooted in the physical reality of human existence, provides an alternative and supplement to international realism for interpreting and coding this debate. Rhetoric provides empirical evidence concerning multiple dimensions of collective consciousness that must eventually be included in a comprehensive theory of peace/war decisions.

In "How Past Is Present in Writing International Affairs: Telling the Cambodian Story," G. R. Boynton argues that two types of stories play a prominent role in the practice of American foreign policy. One is the "it's Munich; it's Vietnam; it's Angola all over again"—a story from another time

and place. Even more prominent is the storytelling that recreates the events leading to the current state of affairs—the present interpreted in light of the past and projected into the future. Boynton uses data from *The Washington Post* and from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to analyze the narrative logic used by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as they determined policy toward Cambodia. Boynton's work, here as elsewhere, is a powerful argument for widening the definition of "data" to include material not traditionally considered.

"Toward a Critical Hermeneutic: Methodological Quandaries in Studying Nazi Racial Doctrines," by Roy J. Schwartzman, uses previously untranslated material written by racial scientists in the Nazi era to resolve three methodological quandaries that arise in exploring the propagation of racial doctrines in Nazi Germany: how objects of analysis might be treated systematically; the relevance and utility of content analysis; and the promise and pitfalls of employing ideology critique. His unique combination of methodologies yields a research method that can ameliorate many of the difficulties inherent in cross-cultural analyses.

The volume is completed by a conclusion that pulls together the perspectives presented, contrasts those perspectives, and offers some ideas for how future research can be directed by the essays presented here.

There is demonstrable interest in the field of political communication. But, as with all nascent academic disciplines, there is little widespread agreement on exactly what unites the field. Instead of focusing on what divides scholars, this volume allows the authors to explore areas of intellectual community and to begin building a foundation for a more systematic and rigorous understanding of the field as a whole.

Political communication is not an area of purely theoretical or academic concern, however. It is also a matter of practical and ethical consideration, and as such, is a matter of some concern for a broad audience, including voters, political consultants, office holders, and scholars from a variety of disciplines. By broadening and deepening our understanding of the field, it will also be possible to provide some insight into political processes that would otherwise be lacking.

The anonymous reviewers were insightful and expeditious. The staff at SUNY Press were all that can be desired, and then some. The authors were cooperative, enthusiastic, and patient. I thank them all.

Edited books, more than those that are single authored, require patience, cooperation, and compromise. It thus seems only fitting that this book be dedicated to my niece Amanda Grace, who requires these as well, and to her parents, who excel at providing them.

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