Center and Periphery: Toward Disciplined Interdisciplinarity in Communication Study[1]

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Abstract

In this article I address, in meaningful ways, a major problem in the literature on human communication (and in the literature of many other academic disciplines), that is, the proliferation of "episodic" studies that all too often do not contribute to useful model building and/or theory construction. The major goals of this article are, (1) the identification of differences between "episodic interdisciplinarity" and "disciplined interdisciplinarity,' and (2) the analysis of the relative contributions of these two approaches in terms of interdisciplinary processes of restructuring theoretical ideas of specific domains. The heart of this article is the argument that communication study can profit from scholarship characterized as disciplined interdisciplinary work.

I argue that Communication study can be thought of as disciplined interdisciplinarity, defined as cross borrowing practices attenuating the distinctions between disciplines, while allowing for a certain amount of disciplinary roots to remain intact. I argue this in multiple forms. First, I consider the meaning of the term interdisciplinarity in theoretical terms and propose an enriched and practical concept of disciplined interdisciplinarity. Then, by selecting for closer scrutiny two exemplary alternatives from communication literature, I distinguish between episodic and disciplined interdisciplinarity and discuss their very different theoretical implications.

Key Words: Communication study, interdisciplinarity, disciplined interdisciplinarity, center and periphery.

Uncertainties about relatively new fields in social science are not uncommon these days. Ever since the early 1900s "Uncertainty about the new field of communication was great[er] because much of the literature that was utilized came from communication research by non-communication scholars" (Rogers, 2001, p. 241). Rogers has identified the "Founding Fathers" of communication studies as: political scientist Harold Lasswell, social-psychologist Kurt Lewin, psychologist Carl Hovland, and sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld (Reese & Ballinger, 2001).

Even today, as communication scholars, we sometimes function in a nether world. John Fiske (1982) notes, for instance, that there are two main schools in the study of communication. One school is the "process" school, which "tends to draw upon the social sciences, psychology, and sociology in particular," whereas the semiotic school "tends to draw upon linguistics and the art subjects" (Fiske, 1982, p. 2, 3).

Yet one can find some evidence for genuine communication theory that acknowledges the consequentiality of communication (Sigman, 1995), and communication itself as a fundamental mode of explanation (Deetz, 1994). The discipline tried to develop and build coherent networks of ideas and citations, although somewhat minor, to publish in and influence other disciplines. At the beginning of the second half of the 20th century, communication scholars from the process school integrated the "Mathematical Theory of Communication," introduced by Shannon, and published as a book by Shannon and Weaver (1948). Moreover, Shannon's mathematical theory is since accepted as "one of the main seeds out of which Communication Studies has grown. . . . This basic model of communication became applicable over the whole question of human communication" (Fiske, 1982, p. 6). Unfortunately, it is more common for communication scholars, to "discover" by mere chance conceptual developments in communication study that are waiting to be redeemed from the oblivion of non-circulation. An exemplar of such a discovery, which is analyzed for the purposes of the present article, belongs to the paradigm of news-work and journalism study, and represents interdisciplinarity. This is Matthew Ehrlich's (1996) "Using Ritual to Study Journalism," which was published in the *Journal of Communication Inquiry*. Looking at news-work as a ritual suggests, "a way of examining patterned behavior that emerges through collectivity," contends Barbie Zelizer (1993, p. 84). This view of news-work uses a cultural approach to journalism, i.e., interdisciplinary scholarship. Still, research on journalism seems to have made little use of Ehrlich's framework for studying journalism, since his article was first published in 1996.

In the present article I address this problem. I select for close scrutiny two exemplars from the field of communication in order to elaborate my major argument that communication can profit from scholarship characterized as disciplined interdisciplinary work. I chose for this purpose to examine Ehrlich's (1996) development of the "ritual" as a heuristic device for studying news-work and journalism, and John Fiske's (1982) elaboration on Shannon's theory. Both were initiated to address "gaps" in communication knowledge, albeit in different paradigms. Paradoxically, although a product of communication scholarship, it is the "ritual" as a heuristic device for studying journalism (Ehrlich, 1996) that has gained almost no currency within its relevant paradigm. Of the two exemplars selected from literature about human communication for the purposes of the present article, Shannon's theory has made a far greater contribution to communication study. Even an unsystematic search in textbooks that focus on mass communication or interpersonal communication theories reveals the wide-scope of its applicability (McQuail, 1981, 1987, 2002).

Two assumptions form the basis for this essay and define the contours of the discussion that follows. First, communication is a relatively new field that aspires to make a full social contribution. To accomplish this goal, communication scholars have "to move from studying communication phenomena as formed and explained psychologically, sociologically, and economically, and produce studies that study psychological, sociological, and economic phenomena as formed and explained communicationally" (Deetz, 1994, p. 568). Communication is not a secondary perspective that can be explained by antecedent psychological, sociological, cultural, or economic factors. Rather, communication itself is the primary, constitutive social process that explains all these other factors. Theories about communication from other disciplinary perspectives are not, in the strict sense, within the field of communication theory, because they are not based on a perspective derived from communication theories. The second, and foremost, argument is a logical derivative of the former. In order to fully benefit from initiatives of communication scholarship, which explain social phenomena from a communication point of view, a wider proliferation of newly worked ideas is essential.

Although the problems addressed in the present article are generic to the domain of research and theory building, they are more common to communication than other disciplines. Communication study can be oriented toward disciplined interdisciplinarity, defined as a "practical position . . . [that] requires a disciplinary home . . . [plus] a grounding in cognate disciplines" (Klein, 1990, p. 106). It can be envisioned as a practice of cross borrowing among domains of knowledge, which attenuates the distinctions between them, while allowing for a certain amount of disciplinary roots to remain intact. I argue this in multiple forms. At the theoretical level, I present some

approaches to the concept of "interdisciplinarity," and propose an enriched and practical conceptualization of disciplined interdisciplinarity. Then, by examining two exemplary alternatives selected from communication literature and juxtaposing them, I identify and distinguish between episodic and disciplined interdisciplinary characteristics. Finally, I discuss their very different theoretical implications.

Literature Review

Communication is enormously rich in the range of ideas that fall within its nominal scope, and new theoretical work has flourished recently.[2] Despite the growing profusion of communication theories, it has been consistently argued that the proliferation of "episodic" studies, which all too often do not contribute to useful model building and/or theory construction, was more endemic to communication. The lack of proliferation in the literature of human communication was partly explained by communication theory's multidisciplinary origins. Littlejohn (1982), in what may still be the closest attempt we have to a comprehensive schematic overview, traced contributions to communication theory from disciplines as diverse as literature, mathematics and engineering, sociology, and psychology.

The other explanation constitutes the core of this article. Behind this explanation, there are issues such as the ways by which the proliferation of publications works, which were largely neglected until recently. The explanation intersects with the assumption that for ideas to proliferate effectively throughout specific academic fields, attention should be given to the particular ways in which scholars use the intellectual fruits that pour from their disciplinary, interdisciplinary and/or multidisciplinary origins. The explanation is closely related to the most critical criticism so far expressed concerning how communication scholarship failed to manage interdisciplinary efforts:

> I claim that communication is a central discipline but often not practiced by people in communication departments and doing communication studies. . . . [Furthermore], *members of communication departments most often have thought of us as the field of communication, rather than a discipline*[emphases added]. . . . In our field of communication, the incorporation of so many different disciplinary approaches has presented scholars with a difficult challenge of how to manage interdisciplinary efforts (Deetz, 1994, p. 567).

Deetz (1994) recommends that "scholarship should display a world organized around topical interests . . . a world organized around competing modes of explanation" (p. 567).

Critics provide evidence to show that integration of knowledge is rather unattainable, "since disciplinary approaches were developed within various disciplines to address various intellectual problems, these approaches are, in Kuhn's (1970) sense of the term, incommensurable. They neither agree nor disagree about anything, but effectively bypass each other" (Craig, 1999, p. 124). The critical view further contends that communication scholars have seized upon every idea about communication, whatever its provenance, but accomplished little with most of them—entombed those ideas, you might say, after removing them from the disciplinary environments in which they had thrived and were capable of propagating. The most serious charge, repeatedly advanced by such critics, is that communication scholars have contributed few original ideas of their own (Craig, 1999).

Such critical views, however, tend to admit that interdisciplinary projects and cross-disciplinary borrowing are useful practices in themselves, which ought to be encouraged in order to mitigate the fragmentation of knowledge among disciplines. The problem, as Peters (1986) suggests, is that "mostly borrowed goods were leveraged to sustain institutional claims to disciplinary status without articulating any coherent, distinctive focus or mission for this putative communication discipline" (p. 530). Whatever contribution to communication study that has been achieved, it did not grow out of a set of explicit propositions with which every communication scholar is familiar. Deetz's succinct contention captures this idea:

> What we need, therefore, is an understanding of disciplines as holistic but complementary: Effective Interdisciplinary work is . . . not antidisciplinary but requires the development of productive disciplines, otherwise interdisciplinary work becomes superficial and uninformed—a mere debate of opinions. Interdisciplinary work promises a problem-centered approach not encumbered by the

parochial nature of 'disciplines' (Deetz, 1994, p. 571).

Deetz (1994) concludes that communication study is about the creation of more participatory communication practices: "Communication explanations [that] explain political practice by showing how goals, needs, reinforcements . . . are produced and reproduced in interaction" (p. 577).

There is a lot at stake that merits a serious effort to develop viable directives in the form of a model or a theory and make progress in the direction of productive work in communication studies, especially in the area of interdisciplinarity. Cross-disciplinary borrowing of research tools, concepts, theoretical constructions and models are a rather common practice among academic practitioners. In what follows, I turn to interdisciplinarity as a concept in order to evaluate how communication study can profit from scholarship characterized in terms of productive interdisciplinarity. My scholarly orientation for this purpose is rather methodological: constructing a schematic plan for facilitating our comprehension of where and how interdisciplinary work can promote the proliferation of communication research, as well as communication as a holistic discipline. The general question addressed here is: In what ways can common scholarly practices of cross-disciplinary borrowing contribute productively to the reconstruction of theories and models in specific domains of research, with a focus on communication study? And more specifically: In what circumstances is the proliferation of scholarly knowledge limited due to "episodic" characteristics?

Approaches to Interdisciplinary Work: The main thrust, to deal with the problems addressed in this essay as endemic to the field of communication, results from the author's disciplinary affiliation. However, the problems are also present in other disciplines, but are not addressed here due to the limited scope of this article.

In her seminal book, *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, and Practice*, Julie Klein (1990) lays out a set of terms, definitions, complications and possibilities for interdisciplinary theory and research. Starting with a familiar definition, Klein notes that disciplinarity signifies the tools, methods, procedures, concepts and theories that account coherently for a set of objects or subjects. Over time they are shaped and reshaped by external contingencies and internal intellectual demands. In this manner a discipline comes to organize and concentrate experience into a particular worldview. Taken together, related claims within a specific material field "put limits on the kinds of questions practitioners ask about their material, the methods and concepts they use, the answers they believe and their criteria for truth and validity" (Klein, 1990, p. 104). Klein then offers an entire chapter on definitions of interdisciplinarity, which range broadly from "the simple communication of ideas to the mutual integration of concepts, methodology, procedures, epistemology, terminology, data, and organization of research and education in a fairly large field." (Klein, 1990, p. 63). Klein also cites the common metaphors for interdisciplinarity:[3] "bridge building," which merely establishes connections between firmly established disciplines, and "restructuring," which indicates radical changes in the organization of knowledge within and across fields.

Restructuring the organization of knowledge within or across fields, which results from such interdisciplinarity processes, has its spectacular successes and notable failures. Relating to the organization of knowledge, Klein cites the success of "entirely new fields such as biochemistry, molecular biology, radioastronomy, psycho- and sociolinguistics, ethnomusicology and American studies." (Klein, 1990, p. 56). A notable failure of interdisciplinarity, however, is in what Klein describes as simply the "juxtaposition of disciplines. It is essentially additive, not integrative. . . . The participating disciplines are neither changed nor enriched. . . . Lack of a well-defined matrix of interactions means disciplinary relationships are likely to be limited and transitory" (Klein, 1990, p. 56). The persistence of disciplinarity can be seen when "scholars still work on problems posed by their original disciplines. . .[rather than] integrate new concepts, methods, epistemologies, and cultures of other disciplines; thus they neither share nor change disciplinary worldviews" (Klein, 1990, p. 58)

Disciplined Interdisciplinarity. Among several views of interdisciplinary work, Klein presents one, in which "the intersection of fields aspires to more than bridge building but less than total restructuring" (Klein, 1990, p. 106). This view represents a middle position between the total collapse of disciplinary borders and the fortification of traditional disciplinary lines. This position has a role for both disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity in what Klein (1990) calls "disciplined interdisciplinarity:"

> The disciplinary position holds that disciplinary work is essential to good interdisciplinary work. It is important not only to have a disciplinary home but also to have a grounding in cognate disciplines: to recognize that disciplines are the fundamental tools for interdisciplinary work, the source of instrumental and conceptual materials for problem-solving, the base for integration, and the substance for meta-critical reflection (Klein, 1990, p. 106).

Although this is a conservative position, it can contribute to productive relationships between, say, communication studies and sociology, psychology and so forth. It takes a step back from invoking a commitment to restructuring disciplinary knowledge. It takes a step forward toward a focus on describing and explaining areas of mutual concern and interest.

This concept of disciplined interdisciplinarity is especially appealing because it has the potential to work in a very practical and productive manner to explain social phenomena using disciplinary tools, concepts, models, etc. In this practical view, interdisciplinary scholarship reflects its importance to the participating fields by being publishable in the research literature of both (or multiple) disciplines. The goal of interdisciplinary effort, then, is to significantly integrate fields at points of mutual interest so that this effort is reflected in the practical measure of new knowledge potentially useful across the related fields.

In the following section I introduce a recent exemplar of cross-disciplinary borrowing by communication scholarship from cultural studies. The goal in that particular effort was to fill a "gap of knowledge" in journalism study. Judging from what the author did and accomplished in terms of interdisciplinarity, I illustrate how this work reflects interdisciplinary scholarship.

A Narrative Account of (Episodic) Interdisciplinarity?

The goal of this section is to add a pragmatic frame to the above theoretical discussion. Furthermore, the following account provides an opportunity to better comprehend the dilemma addressed in this article, and begin to deliberate its resolution. The question addressed is: What criteria must be met by interdisciplinary scholarship in order to work more productively on cross-disciplinary borrowing? Recall the main issue addressed in this essay concerns the prospects of effective proliferation of interdisciplinary research or theories and their potential to promote a coherent body of knowledge in communication study. This section also highlights the pitfalls that hinder productive interdisciplinary work. The accomplishment of such a guiding model in the present discussion is meant for promoting future scholarship work on interdisciplinary projects, and to develop informed research programs, while bypassing pitfalls more consciously. The specific goal of this section is to distinguish between effective and ineffective interdisciplinary work by means of examining a recent scholarly effort that used a non-communication concept to study journalism. The selected work conducted by Ehrlich (1996) generally fits Klein's terminology of interdisciplinary work, which varies from communicating new ideas to completely restructuring disciplinary knowledge. Thus, Ehrlich's work was selected for the present essay's purposes as a recent example of interdisciplinary work that meant to close a gap in journalism studies. Published in the *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, a respected and recognized journal in the field, Ehrlich's (1996) skillful effort was preceded by concerns raised by prominent scholars of journalism study (Schudson, 1996; Whitney, 1991; Zelizer, 1993). In this sense it is a scholarly response to disciplinary concerns; Ehrlich's accomplishment contributed to a "broad-based conceptualization of ritual in journalism" (Ehrlich, 1996, p. 3).

Journalism scholars such as Zelizer (1993) and Schudson (1996) have expressed their concerns about the lack of theoretical tools on such topics as the dysfunctions of the media for journalists themselves. Zelizer (1993) remarked about the negative implications of this position for the public of media users: "Journalism researchers, I contend, have allowed media power to flourish by not addressing the ritual and collective functions it fulfills for journalists themselves" (p. 80). Hence, Zelizer argued for "a more interdisciplinary approach to journalism scholarship in order to provide a fuller account of media power" and further noted that "In adopting a sociological tenor in their scholarship, [researchers] have understated journalists' consolidation of power derived from reporting any given event" (p. 81). Finally, Zelizer (1993) acknowledged journalism's complex and multifaceted dimensions, and proposed to use "other lenses for examining the trappings of journalism" (p. 81), namely, the ways in which authority and power function as a collective code of knowledge for journalists. Zelizer explicitly drew scholarly attention to the benefits that may accrue by using interdisciplinary methods: "this will provide a better account of

media power" (p. 80). She added a sense of urgency toward this issue: "new paths of inquiry can be developed that would enrich journalism theories with most needed research tools" (p. 83). Zelizer (1993) concluded, "this step is a necessary corrective to our commonly held view of journalism . . . that . . . has prompted us to examine journalism in narrowly defined ways" (p. 85). Ehrlich (1996) addressed these concerns about the lack of appropriate tools, and using an interdisciplinary approach, he developed a pluralistic view of "ritual" in order to explain how and why journalism works.

What characteristics stand out in Ehrlich's (1996) effort that fit Klein's (1990) concept of interdisciplinarity? One point is clear: Ehrlich utilizes the cultural studies approach in order to develop a broad-based conceptualization of ritual in journalism, and to better address the problem at hand, the gap in the theoretical framework for studying journalism study, as well as the specific hypothesis, he formulated concerning the occupational practices of journalists.

The concepts ritual, rite, and routine have been employed and applied previously in journalism research from the organizational sociology perspective. Raising concerns about the limitations of the organizational sociology approach to the study of news-work, and citing Ettema and Whitney (1987, p. 749), Ehrlich (1996) remarks, that "this approach is more attuned to how symbols are produced rather than to what they mean" (p. 5). Hence, Ehrlich refers to Zelizer (1993) and Schudson (1996) who argue for "a cultural studies approach to journalism, one that does not reduce all the meanings produced by and within news organizations to ideology or hegemony" (Ehrlich, 1996, p. 5).

Specifically, Ehrlich (1996) suggests "a pluralistic understanding of ritual" mainly because "it can open a door to a broader cultural understanding of journalism" (p. 6). His framework uses "ritual as a heuristic device to locate specific practices which display the 'family characteristics' of ritualization" (p. 7). Ehrlich's concluding remark is most relevant to the core problem addressed in the present article, for he promotes the idea of "demonstrating the power of ritual not only as a cultural force, but also as a scholarly tool for studying journalism" (p. 14). This accomplishment could not be achieved otherwise. The employment of cross-disciplinary borrowing and the application of ritual as a heuristic device clarifies how newsworthy events "grant journalists extra status and legitimacy . . . and have the long-term effect of enhancing journalism's institutional and cultural authority" (Ehrlich, 1996, p. 13)

By applying a cultural approach to news and journalism research, in addition to adopting social organizational insights concerning the production of news, Ehrlich reaches a more complete and meaningful view of news-work within a news organization, carried out by individual journalists. At the institutional level of analysis, news media interact with powerful institutions and help block significant social change. Mass-mediated ritual seems to operate also at a level of analysis higher than, or at least distinct from, the institutional level, (e.g., the cultural, political or economic environment in which the media operate), as well as supranational, pan-national and the ideological environments. Ehrlich indeed provides an elaborated and convincing case against the common image of journalists as champions of truth and openness. His interdisciplinary work is indeed an accomplishment and a significant contribution to journalism. However, further examination can reveal whether it can be thought of as an effective, as opposed to ineffective, interdisciplinarity.

The relevant question is: In what ways can Ehrlich's interdisciplinary effort be thought of as effective in terms of its contribution to future journalism studies and mass communication research? The dimensions Klein (1990) outlined for productive interdisciplinarity are relational. Accordingly, I suggest evaluating Ehrlich's innovative interpretive framework for studying journalism according the following three general relational categories: (a) episodic-interdisciplinary scholarship, or "simply, the juxtaposition of disciplines . . . [where] the participating disciplines are neither changed nor enriched;" (b) a step toward disciplined interdisciplinarity, when "the intersection of fields aspires to more than bridge building but less than total restructuring;" and (c) total restructuring with the "total collapse of disciplinary borders" resulting in radical changes in the organization of knowledge within and across fields (Klein, 1990, p. 56).

Critical commentators such as Craig (1999) would doubt whether Ehrlich's theoretical accomplishment radically changed the organization of knowledge within the field of journalism or effected a total collapse of disciplinary

borders between the fields of journalism and cultural studies in the context of the specific problem Ehrlich addressed. A major objection, in the spirit of Craig's (1999) view, might be that the concept of ritual was originally meant specifically to treat problems unique to cultural studies, and therefore, it is incommensurate with journalism as a field of research, and/or organizational sociology. In other words, a broad-based conceptualization of ritual is endemic to the cultural approach. It is also doubtful whether Ehrlich's work can be thought of as a step toward disciplined interdisciplinarity in communication study. Klein's (1990) conception of disciplined interdisciplinarity involves more than the persistence of disciplinarity. Disciplined interdisciplinarity means "scholars . . . integrate new concepts, methods, epistemologies, and cultures of other disciplines" (Klein, 1990, p. 58). Finally, and most importantly, Klein (1990) cautions against a possible failure of interdisciplinary work, what I term "episodic," which will be illustrated in the remainder of the present article. It will suffice here to point out that Klein (1990) depicts such scholarship in terms of "lack of *well-defined matrices of interactions* . . . [so that] disciplinary relationships are likely to be limited and transitory" (Klein, 1990, p. 56, emphasis added).

Nevertheless, even in Klein's view, Ehrlich certainly "visited" the cultural approach in order to borrow an enriched and broad-based meaning to the concept of "ritual." Ehrlich skillfully formulated his research questions and utilized ritual as a heuristic device for the study of journalism. But did this amount to more than "bridge building" between the participating fields?

Such potential reservations cast some doubts concerning the long-term contribution made by Ehrlich's innovative framework for journalism study. Notwithstanding such reservations, at this stage of developing the central idea of the present article, the following consideration deserves attention: In order to accomplish a step toward disciplined interdisciplinarity, as defined above, there has to be some degree of reciprocal relationship between the participating perspectives concerning a specific theoretical issue. This relationship guarantees a productive long-term effect (Klein, 1990). By reciprocal relationship, I mean cross citing in the participating disciplinary leading journals. Admittedly, this criterion may apply to a general and wide spectrum of cross-disciplinary borrowing practiced by scholars in many fields, including communication.
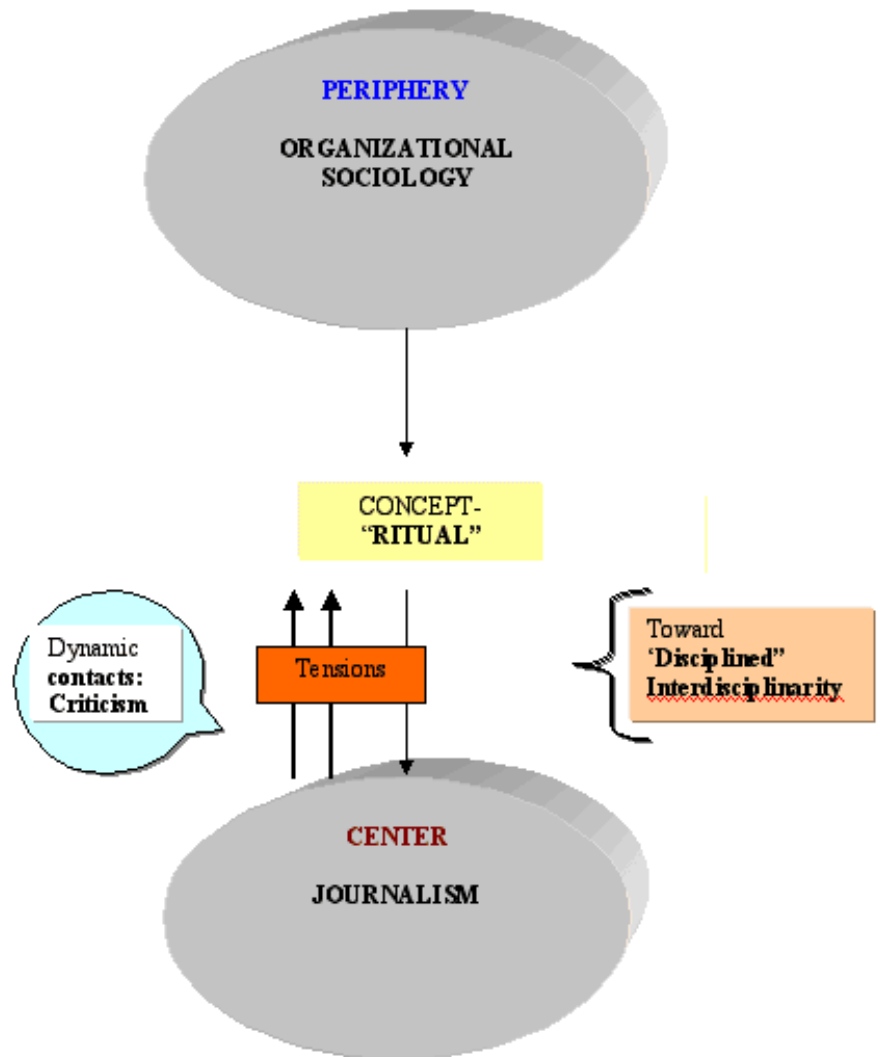
In the following section I enrich the theoretical framework designated as "disciplined intedisciplinarity" using Edward Shils's (1975) dyadic concepts of "periphery" and "center," originally employed for conceptualizing the relationship of authority within society. I argue that these concepts make a vital contribution to the present discussion. Since interdisicplinarity is about social networks as well as the incorporation and integration of academic knowledge from various relevant domains, I draw on what Shils (1975) calls "Center and Periphery" (p. 3). Based on Shils's dyadic concept "episodic," as well as "disciplined interdisciplinary," scholarship efforts are reconceptualized and reformulated schematically.

A Schematic Elaboration of Disciplined Interdisciplinarity

To better grasp what is at stake in relation to the dynamics of cross-disciplinary scholarship, and in order to capture its weaknesses as well as its benefits more conclusively, I first turned to Craig's (1999) conceptualization of "good interdisciplinarity." Craig's general aspiration is toward a long-term integration of cross-disciplinary borrowing into the field of communication, keeping with Klein's (1990) view of the benefits of interdisciplinary work. Craig's vision of how best to

accomplish this goal is shaped around his contention that a dynamic and reciprocal relationship must develop between the participating fields. Craig perceives dynamic reciprocal relationship as characterized by"complementarities and tensions among cross-disciplinary borrowing" (p. 126). Communication scholarship is expected to develop greater sensitivities to both complementarities and tensions when practicing cross-disciplinary borrowing if its functionality for future research is sought. In this context, Craig also cautions against the pitfalls of "sterile eclecticism," since "different types of theory cannot legitimately develop in total isolation from each other . . . they must [continuously] engage each other in argument" (Craig, 1999, pp. 124-125). Craig's ultimate goal is that communication be thought of as"a discipline in [the] sense [of] '*a conversational community with a tradition of argumentation*'" (Shotter, 1997, c.f., Craig, 1999, p. 124, emphasis added). In sum, "good interdisciplinarity" according to Craig means scholarship that sets out to: (a) accomplish long-term goals, and (b) contribute to the participating disciplines.
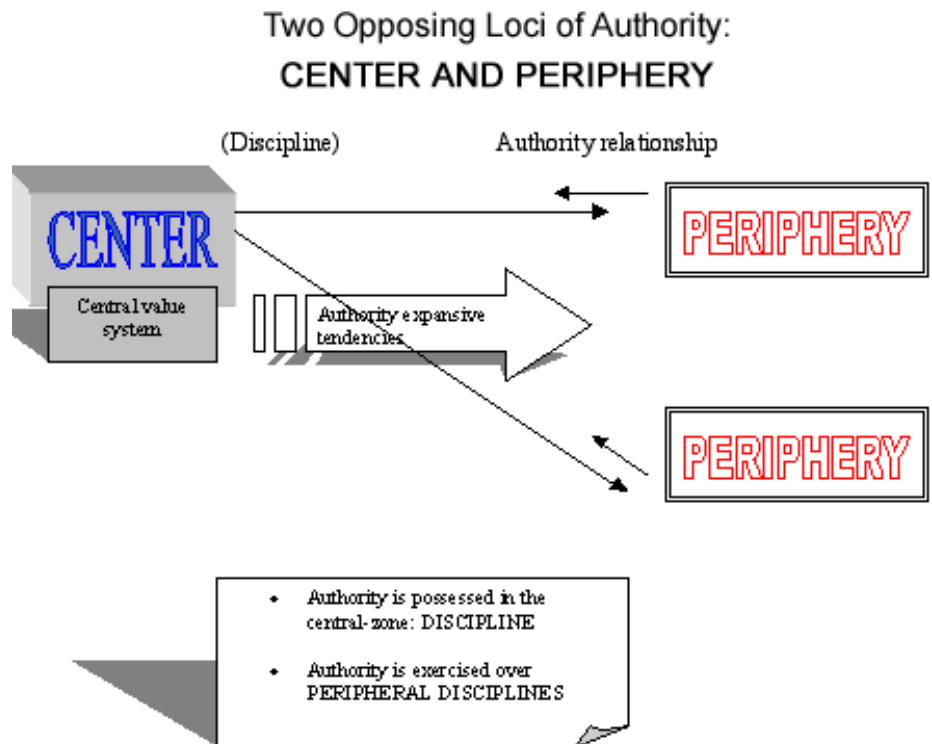

Tensions as a Potential for "Disciplined" Interdisciplinarity

PERIPHERY

ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

CONCEPT- "RITUAL"

Dynamic contacts: Criticism

Tensions

Toward 'Disciplined' Interdisciplinarity

CENTER

JOURNALISM

Focusing on Craig's (1999) notion of good interdisciplinarity, as constituted through complementarities as well as tensions, agreement as well as argument, adds a new dimension to Klein's (1990) insights of disciplined interdisciplinarity. Whereas Klein is interested mainly in the end result—disciplined interdisciplinarity as a "midway" between total restructuring and mere debate between theoretical domains—Craig pays more attention to the dynamic process of interdisciplinarity, or the interactions of agreement and disagreement between disciplinary conceptual and/or methodological tools. Interdisciplinarity entails frequent/non-frequent contacts between theoretical fields as well as between scholars resulting in the proliferation of knowledge through social networks, whose artifacts are readily discernible. Fathoming the process properly--its habitual or nonhabitual recurrences--and the secret ways in which it gets engraved into the memories of the immediate users or future researchers is what I address here. This is where Shils's (1975) social conceptualization, and the concepts of center and periphery fall into place, for better grasping the complexities and the full range of the dynamics within the interdisciplinary process, as Craig perceives it. It also contributes to our comprehension of Klein's rather abstract view of interdisciplinarity. Furthermore, it shows how important it is to delve into and explore the breadth and depth of interdisciplinary scholarship, or rather, how insufficient it is to envision the myriad of its potential implications, for

the benefit of future scholarship, based on the perspective the previously-discussed literature presents. As we shall see, Shils's framework provides concreteness to Klein's rather abstract concept of disciplined interdisciplinarity. Shils's analysis of the "central zone of society," vis-à-vis authority, order of values and control over the periphery, is relevant in this context. It helps to define metaphorically the dynamic aspects in Klein's abstract conceptions, while incorporating Craig's insightful conception of complementarities and tensions within the process of interdisciplinarity. Moreover, the fact that Shils's model is a sociological one, having nothing to do with geometry or geography, legitimates its application on scholarship patterned behaviors, at least informally, in order to schematically enrich and illustrate phases within the interdisciplinary process.

What I designate as the "contours of an enriched concept of disciplined interdisciplinarity," is based on Shils's framework and facilitates our comprehension of interdisciplinary dynamics and their implications. Shils (1975) describes two opposing loci of authority, "center" and "periphery." These loci of authority interact dynamically so that, depending on the proximity between peripheries and the center, the authority relationship and influence of the central value system over the periphery continuously change. "The center," says Shils, "is a phenomenon of the realm of values and beliefs, which govern society" (p. 3) because, "authority is thought to possess a vital relationship to the center" (p.8). Thus, the authority of knowledge is always thought of as vested in local spaces, e.g., in what is understood as a discipline in our case. Furthermore, "authority has an expansive tendency" (Shils, 1975, p. 9).

Two Opposing Loci of Authority:
CENTER AND PERIPHERY

(Discipline)   Authority relationship

CENTER

Central value system

PERIPHERY

Authority expansive tendencies

PERIPHERY

- Authority is possessed in the central-zone: DISCIPLINE
- Authority is exercised over PERIPHERAL DISCIPLINES

In the same way, disciplines strive to develop their bases of knowledge and rule over their peripheral disciplines, where "ruling . . . consists in the universalization . . . of values inherent in the order" (Shils, 1975, p. 9), or in the discipline. The resulting vivid image is that "as we move from the center . . . in which authority is possessed, to the hinterland or the periphery, over which authority is exercised, attachment to the central value system becomes attenuated" (Shils, 1975, p. 10). In analogy, then, scholarship from different domains exercises almost no authority over one another's bases of knowledge. However dynamic contacts between disciplines can lead either toward rejection or affirmation of the central value system,or the disciplinary values, theories, methods and so forth. Shils (1975) contends that society's most common behavior, and in the communication discipline's case, scholarship's behavior as well, is "an intermittent, partial, and attenuated affirmation of the central value system" (p. 10). Consensus is never total. There is always some degree of negotiation, which either leads towards rejection or affirmation, though not a total affirmation, of
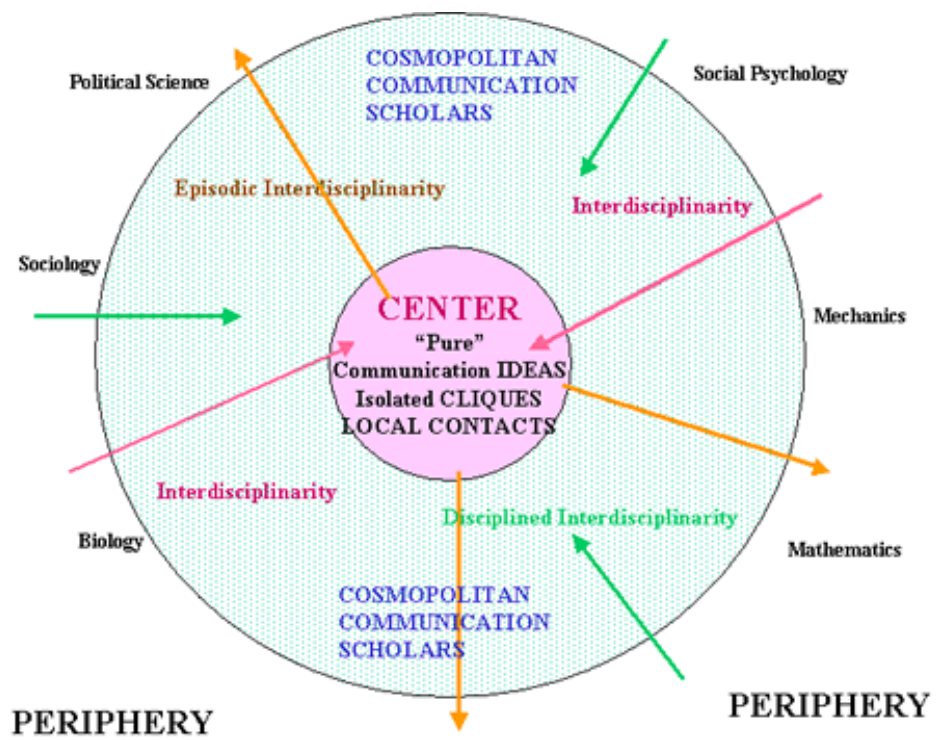
Dynamic Contacts
between:
A CENTRAL DISCIPLINE and its PERIPHERAL DISCIPLINES
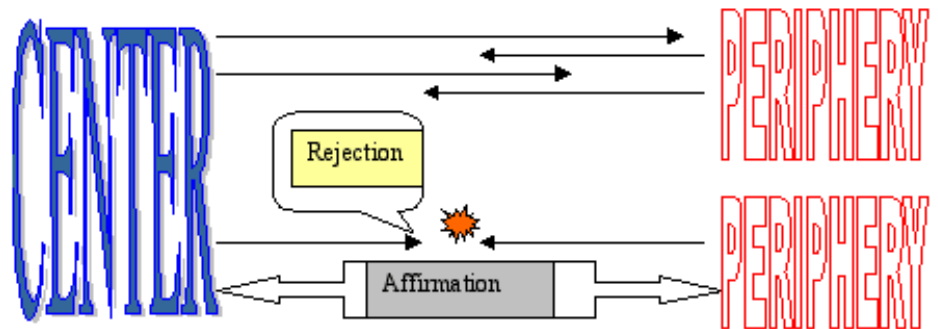
ideas. Where Craig finds complementarities and arguments, and where Klein identifies either total restructuring or mere debates, Shils metaphorically captures a clear and vivid image of the affinity between the central zone and the periphery, which encompasses the above ideas in a snapshot.

Shils's (1975) observations concerning center vis-a-vis periphery dynamic contacts led him to the conclusion that "frequent contacts with each other creates even greater mutual awareness" and wider acceptance of the central value system, "while at the same time these also increase the extent, if not the intensity, of active 'dissensus' or rejection of the central value system" (p. 11). Shils's conceptions are the most fitting for the comprehension of disciplined interdisciplinarity. On the one hand, interdisciplinary processes involve a role played by what network analysts would call "isolated cliques" of scholars. These scholars focus on developing local contacts with their colleagues from the

"center"—the field of communication—in order to preserve and extend traditional disciplinary ideas. Without these isolated cliques of scholars, the risk that "core knowledge" would be pulled too far away from the "center" is rather probable. On the other hand, other, more "cosmopolitan"[4] (communication) scholars make proliferation of the traditional scholarly knowledge possible to its peripheral environment. Then, by adjusting, adopting and assimilating knowledge that is, in turn, imported by these cosmopolitans from "peripheral" disciplines, they ensure the preservation of core communication traditions.

Political Science

COSMOPOLITAN COMMUNICATION SCHOLARS

Social Psychology

Episodic Interdisciplinarity

Interdisciplinarity

Sociology

CENTER
"Pure"
Communication IDEAS
Isolated CLIQUES
LOCAL CONTACTS

Mechanics

Interdisciplinarity

Disciplined Interdisciplinarity

Biology

COSMOPOLITAN COMMUNICATION SCHOLARS

Mathematics

PERIPHERY

PERIPHERY

Both sets of players are essential to this complex of dynamics, so as to enrich the center through the interplay between "center" and "periphery," as well as to sustain the interdisciplinary process between disciplinary domains. Thus, "pushing away" toward the periphery and pulling toward the "center" (the field of communication study) are vital in order to generate interdisciplinary insights and ideas. This process ensures that in the long run scholarly efforts will contribute to various levels of incorporating knowledge that was "imported" from other peripheral domains. Klein's (1990) view of disciplined interdisciplinarity is accomplished at this stage of the interdisciplinary process. In Shils's model, at some stage during this dynamic process "the peak at the center is no longer so high; the periphery is no longer so distant . . . but carries with it also an inherent tension. Those who participate in the central . . . systems . . . also feel their position as outsiders" (Shils, 1975, pp. 15-16).

Importing concepts to the field of communication from other domains may involve varying degrees of conceptual and methodological adjustments. Therefore, cross-disciplinary borrowing holds the promise to initiate a dynamic process, where complementarities and tensions between the participating disciplines are considered valuable. Therefore, any scholarly effort that imports concepts in a cookbook approach cannot mature as "good

interdisciplinary scholarship," because it does not work within the worldview of any field.

The proposed schematic view is primarily a descriptive tool for grasping the dynamic character of cross-disciplinary borrowing. It captures several levels in the attenuation/attachments between distinct disciplines. Disciplined interdisciplinarity, according to this schematic view, can be thought of as a phase of "civilization" of the "imported" concepts into disciplinary domains. Most important is the insight that through this schematic model it is easier to evaluate the prospects of disciplined interdisciplinarity in communication. In what follows, a narrative account of (disciplined) interdisciplinarity will be presented in order to illustrate "complementarities and tensions" between the fields of communication and mathematics. The exemplar selected for this purpose is analyzed according to the proposed schematic model. It provides guidelines for disciplined interdisciplinarity, which is essential for "good interdisciplinarity" in communication study.

A Narrative Account of (Disciplined) Interdisciplinarity in Communication

There are many examples of cross-disciplinary borrowing, between communication and other disciplines, ranging from sociology to mathematics, as mentioned above. What concerns the present discussion is that not all such practices prove to be productive in the long run, for either communication or other participating disciplines. Many cross-borrowing practices in our field of communication are "episodic," in the sense that these interdisciplinary efforts did not give rise to established traditions in communication. They were not engraved into the mainstream disciplinary framework of communication study. In short, they are not fruitful and did not proliferate enough.
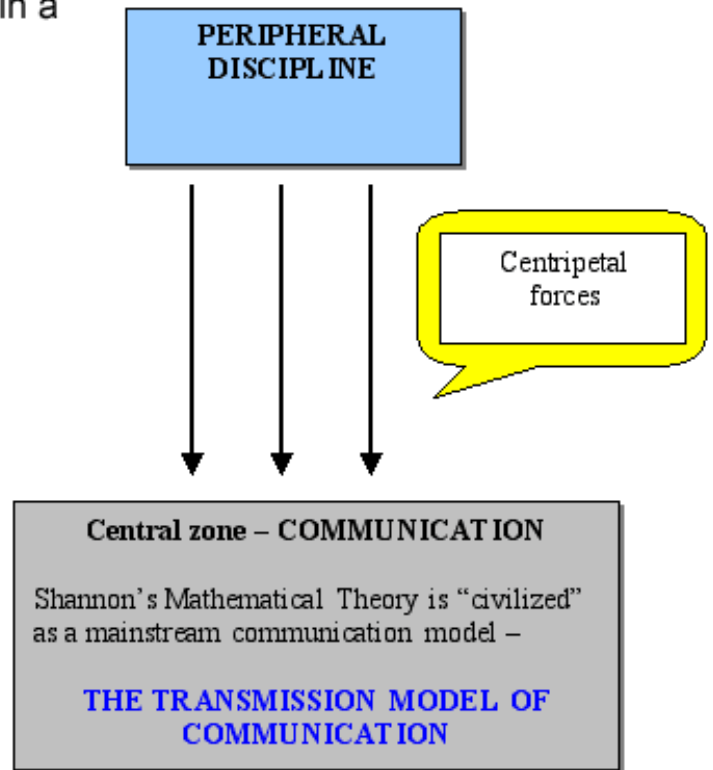
Among the few examples that are definitely within the definition of "good interdisciplinary" work, which entails a radical restructuring of knowledge bases, is the following exemplar--the most interesting work of Shannon's Mathematical Theory of Communication (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). Shannon's theory focuses on information flow and was developed during the Second World War in the Bell Telephone Laboratories in the USA. Shannon and Weaver's main concern was to work out a way in which "the *channels* of communication could be used more efficiently" (Fiske, 1982, p. 6). Their theory "is widely accepted as one of the main seeds out of which Communication Studies has grown" (Fiske, 1982, p. 6).[5] Further, "Shannon contends that his theory is widely applicable over the whole question of human communication" (Fiske, 1982, p. 6). Shannon's theory treated information as a general concept, which could be expressed mathematically and, thus, could unify questions in human communication, computers, and biology, spanning across mass and interpersonal communication, regardless of "channel." (Reese & Ballinger, 2001). Although communication scholars had nothing to do with constructing the Mathematical Theory of Communication, textbooks as well as research on human communication regard it as a core theory of communication. It is evidenced, for instance, in David Berlo's (1960) *The Process of Communication*, a tremendously influential introductory text organized around a humanized conception of Shannon's theory of communication (and the model - source, message, channel, receiver, effects, noise, feedback). These few reports imply the general idea, concerning the total incorporation of a mathematical theory into human communication studies, as well as other scholarly domains.

Shannon and Weaver represent "central" disciplinary "players" in terms of the proposed schematic model. Moreover, by claiming that their theory is "widely applicable over the whole question of human communication," they enacted a "cosmopolitan stance." This theory is not only widely cited and accepted as the theoretical basis of the Process School in human communication studies, but it has also implications for understanding "noise," "redundancy," "anthropy," "channel," medium" and other aspects of human communication, which were coined originally in terms drawn from the engineering domain. These aspects of human communication are frequently used for analyzing technical semantic issues, as

well as the effects of the communication process, thus reflecting the acceptance of Shannon's theory in the mainstream of communication study. Communication scholars based the Transmission Model of Communication on fundamental concepts used by Shannon and Weaver. Examining this theoretical achievement in terms of "center" and "periphery" illustrates the intense centripetal forces of "civilizing" Shannon's Mathematical Theory into communication study, including the theory's terminology and basic ideas. Concepts originating from mathematics were "pulled" from the "periphery" toward the "central zone" where authority of communication scholarship resides. Furthermore, the more persistent and dynamic the contact between the "central authority" and the newly constructed Transmission Model of Communication, the more it qualified as "disciplined," or more "civilized," in relation to the "center," and therefore independent of its original roots.

An interdisciplinary process tends sometimes to qualify more as a one-time effort, or an "episodic" experience of utilizing scientific knowledge that is endemic to a specific "peripheral" field. However, according to Shils (1975), "Those who . . . feel sufficiently closer to the center . . . also feel their position as outsiders" (p. 15). In order that scholarship of every venue can benefit, "good interdisciplinary" work should ultimately produce and reproduce knowledge, disciplinary or interdisciplinary, that is publishable and widely cited. Theoretical products of interdisciplinary scholarship, published in journals that are peer reviewed by members from a "central" as well as "peripheral" field of study, thus reflect the status of the product as knowledge in its respective fields.

Finally, Shils's original conceptual framework points not only at complementarities, but also at inherent tensions between a "center" (of knowledge) and its "periphery." Indeed, although (mistakenly) taken as a theoretical development achieved by communication scholarship, Shannon and Weaver's predominant mathematical orientation brings to the fore its mathematical origins--its original "peripheral" characteristic. Depending on one's viewpoint, this last characteristic can be thought of as evidence for disciplined interdisciplinarity. After all, mainstream communication scholars from all venues still refer to it as the "Mathematical Theory of Communication."

A narrative account of (episodic) interdisciplinarity is presented in what follows. Again, the analysis is based on the parameters of the proposed schematic view of the interdisciplinary process. The exemplar used here is Ehrlich's "Using 'Ritual' to Study Journalism" - revisited.

A Narrative account of (Episodic) Interdisciplinarity

Ehrlich's (1996) "Using 'Ritual' as a Heuristic Model" has caught my attention, as a scholar of mass communication. My interest in interdisciplinarity, as practiced by human communication scholars, was the main motivator for exploring this work. My proposed enriched schematic version of interdisciplinarity as expressed by Klein (1990) offers a tool for reexamining Ehrlich's effort in more pragmatic ways that have the advantage of capturing the dynamics of interdisciplinarity in a vivid manner. Ehrlich's proposed framework has its promises, and is undoubtedly acknowledged and appreciated by practitioners as well as scholars who are introduced to its persuasive arguments. The main reason is that many feel ill at ease about the "Power of the Fourth Estate." Still, Ehrlich's framework is not widely cited in either the literature on journalism or in cultural studies, such as anthropology and folklore. It was cited, for instance by Clyde Bentley (2001) who analyzed the habitual use of media by media audience. However, Bentley referred to Ehrlich as a scholar who "reviewed sociological and psychological literature to show that 'ritual' was an appropriate concept for the study of journalism" (p. 4), meaning a ritual of using media habitually. Journalist Allan R. Andrews (1996) cited Ehrlich's concepts as helping students take a more critical approach to journalism by viewing journalism-related films. Ehrlich (1997) himself referred to his model as belonging to cultural studies: "I will adopt an approach to film genre incorporating both ritual and ideological perspectives . . . . This recalls Carey's (1989, chap. 1) 'ritual view of communication' and places the genre firmly within cultural studies" (Ehrlich, 1997, p. 267). This random survey found that a proliferation of Ehrlich's effort is almost lacking in the literature. In adopting a cultural approach to news-work, Ehrlich contributed a valuable

Ehrlich's "Ritual" as a Heuristic Tool: as "EPISODIC" INTERDISCIPLINARITY

PERIPHERY
Cultural Studies

No dynamic contacts

Ritual as a heuristic tool

No dynamic contacts

central discipline
journalism
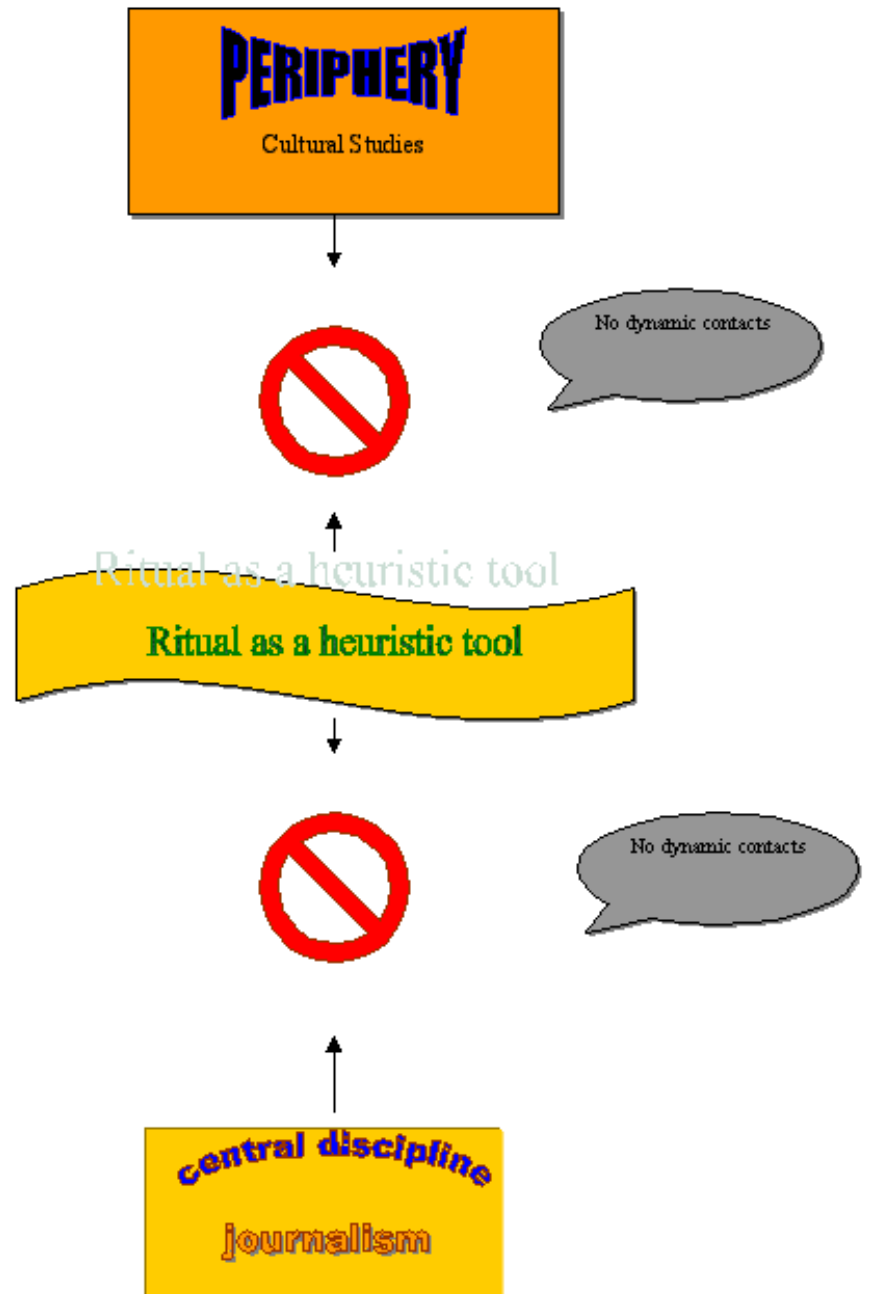
and timely dimension to
communication theory. We learn from
Ehrlich (1996) that previous research
on journalism arrived "at a narrow
definition of ritual . . . [which] is in
many ways counterproductive" (p. 3).

Still, Ehrlich's work represents an example for interdisciplinarity that is rather "episodic," at least to date. Unlike the Mathematical Theory of Communication, we find in Ehrlich's (1996) effort a concluding remark that hinders his work's applications: "'ritual'" as a heuristic tool . . . demonstrates the power of ritual not only as a cultural force, but also as a scholarly tool for studying journalism" (p. 14). Ehrlich's role is certainly not that of a "cosmopolitan." His contacts are mainly with researchers of journalism, the "local" players or "closed cliques." Even then, his restructured concept of ritual has almost no circulation within the paradigm of journalism. There are almost no agreements or arguments about its usefulness for journalism.

Paradoxically, Ehrlich's (1996) effort implies, in a way, some general characteristics of disciplined interdisciplinarity, in that he mentions the "shortcoming of sociological studies of journalism" (p. 14) By this critical comment, he creates a potential source for "tensions" in the tradition of journalism that espoused organizational sociology perspective in order to explain journalism. This has the potential to establish, or continue developing into a phase of disciplined interdisciplinarity vis-à-vis cross-disciplinarity between sociology and communication.

Conclusion

In this essay I addressed theoretical as well as practical issues, concerning interdisciplinary scholarship. I focused mainly on interdisciplinary scholarship between the field of communication, as the "central zone," or the locus of authority, and concepts borrowed from disciplines as diverse as sociology, anthropology and mathematics. This essay's main goal was to draw on exemplars from communication literature that represent interdisciplinary scholarship, and develop an analytical schematic perspective to evaluate their effectiveness and to facilitate practices of disciplined interdisciplinarity in communication. The main presupposition was that interdisciplinarity is a complicated dynamic process, which can be handled so as to avoid the pitfall of "eclecticism." The schematic model, which I developed for this purpose, is based on insights drawn from Klein (1990), Craig (1999) and Shils (1975). It illustrates the dynamics of interdisciplinarity as a process. It shows that "good interdisciplinarity" stems from scholarship that is sensitive enough to complementarities as well as tensions along the process. Moreover, the model reveals that this is a long-term process; even when interdisciplinary models or theories are "civilized" into a "central zone" by becoming mainstreamed, the restructuring of "local" disciplinary knowledge is never total.

The implications of disciplined interdisciplinarity as understood here, based on Shils's sociological conception of "center" and "periphery," are threefold. First, the schematic model suggests a vital step toward productive interdisciplinary scholarship. That is, disciplined interdisciplinarity holds a promise for both participating fields, and is characterized by indefinite "centripetal" and "centrifugal" forces between the central disciplinary scholarship and its peripheral disciplines. The ultimate position is accomplished when "peripheral" concepts become "civilized," or "disciplined" within the "central zone," the discipline that initiated the interdisciplinary scholarship. Second, the potential of any field of study to develop tools that address its unique problems stems from the way scholars manage cross disciplinary borrowing and its products in the long run. Communication scholars should be motivated to make a conscious use of networking in order to better circulate their accomplishments, whether these are a result of disciplinary or interdisciplinary efforts. Communication scholars working across disciplines should formulate their accomplishments so that these may have applicability within wide ranges of social phenomena. Finally, interdisciplinary scholarship should acknowledge and even encourage both centripetal and centrifugal forces,or the complementarities and tensions between their locally developed and "peripheral" ideas.

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Notes

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[2] For a sample of recent books presenting original work explicitly on general communication theory, excluding work on more specific topics like media effects or interpersonal relationship, see: Carey (1989), Deetz (1992), Greene (1997), Harris (1996), Hauser (1996), Leeds-Hurwitz (1995), Mantovani (1996), Mortensen (1994), Mortensen and Ayres (1997), Norton and Brenders (1995), Pearce (1989), Pilotta and Mickunas (1990), Sigman (1995).

[3] As described by Geoffrey Squires, Helen Simons, Malcolm Parlett, and Tony Becher (Klein, 1990, p. 63).

[4] A term used by network analysts in order to denote those individuals who interact mainly with the environment surrounding their organization.

[5] Shanon and Weaver's original model is available at:
www.gsu.edu/~mstswh/courses/it7000/papers/communic.htm