First Look at Communication Theory 10th edition Griffin Solutions Manual

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CHAPTER 2
TALK ABOUT THEORY

Outline

I. Introduction.
   A. Behavioral scientists are scholars who apply the scientific method to describe, predict, and explain recurring forms of human behavior.
   B. Rhetoricians are scholars who study the ways in which symbolic texts can be used to identify with people, or to persuade people towards a certain view. They interpret texts.

II. Two communication scholars view a heartwarming ad.
   A. Glenn: An objective approach.
      1. Social scientists wonder why the commercial produced such a positive sentiment and whether it resulted in action.
      2. They want to explain and predict human behavior.
      3. For scientists, it's not enough to identify a theory that seems to apply to the situation. We want an objective test to find out if a theory is faulty.
      4. In science, theory and research walk hand in hand.
   B. Marty: An interpretive approach.
      1. The entire ad is structured by an archetypal mythic pattern of birth-death-rebirth.
      2. The ad activates emotions by incorporating the form of the cycle within a mini-narrative.

III. Objective or interpretive: Sorting out the labels.
   A. The objective and interpretive approaches to communication study differ in starting point, method, and conclusion.
   B. Scholars who do objective study are scientists concerned with behavior and attitudes.
   C. Scholars who do interpretive study are concerned with meaning, and reflect a range of ideological and methodological positions. As a result, there is no single unifying or accepted label, although the authors uses the term "interpretive scholars" to apply to the entire groups and specific labels for subgroups as appropriate.

III. Ways of knowing: Discovering truth or creating multiple realities?
   A. Epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge.
   B. Scientists assume that truth is singular.
      1. Reality is accessible through our senses.
      2. No one person can know it all, so individual researchers pool their findings and build a collective body of knowledge about how the world works.
      3. Good theories are mirrors of nature, true as long as conditions remain the same.
   C. Interpretive scholars seek truth as well, but many interpreters regard that truth as socially constructed through communication.
      1. Truth is largely subjective and meaning is highly interpretive.

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2. Knowledge is always viewed from a particular standpoint.
3. The knower cannot be separated from the known.
4. Texts never interpret themselves.
5. Multiple meanings or multiple versions of truth are acceptable.
6. Successful interpretations are those that convince others.

IV. Human nature: Determinism or free will.
   A. Scientists stress the forces that shape human behavior; interpretive scholars focus on conscious choices made by individuals
   B. Determinists argue that heredity and environment determine behavior.
      1. Behavioral scientists usually describe human conduct as occurring "because of" forces outside the individual's awareness..
      2. Behavior is the response to a prior stimulus.
   C. In contrast, interpretive scholars tend to use explanatory phrases such as "so that" or "in order to" because they attribute a person's action to conscious intent.
      1. They focus on conscious choices of individuals, not on why choices are made.
      2. They believe that significant decisions are value laden.
   D. As individual freedom increases, predictability of behavior decreases.

V. The highest value: Objectivity or emancipation?
   A. When we talk about values, we are discussing priorities, questions of relative worth.
   B. Social scientists value objectivity; personal values should not distort human reality.
   C. Interpretive scholars seek to expand the range of free choice; knowledge is never neutral.
   D. Scientists seek effectiveness; interpreters focus on participation.

VI. The purpose of theory: Universal laws or guides for interpretation?
   A. Scientists seek universal laws; interpreters strive to interpret individual texts.
   B. Scientists test theories; interpreters explore the web of meaning constituting human existence.
   C. Scientists seek prediction; interpretive scholars strive for meaning.

VII. Objective or interpretive: Why is it important?
   A. You cannot fully understand a theory without knowing its assumptions about truth, human nature, the purpose of theory, and its values.
   B. It is helpful when thinking through theories to have a way of organizing them into objective and interpretive worldviews.
   C. Understanding objective and interpretive points can help you decide what direction to take your coursework.
   D. Theorists in both camps believe their area of work will improve relationships and society.

VIII. Plotting theories on an objective-interpretive scale: A metatheoretical way of comparing theories featured in the book. Objective and interpretive labels anchor the ends of a continuum, with many theories in between.

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Key Names and Terms

Behavioral scientist
: A scholar who applies the scientific method to describe, predict, and explain recurring forms of human behavior.

Rhetorician
: A scholar who studies the ways in which symbolic forms can be used to identify with people, or to persuade them toward a certain point of view.

Objective approach
: The assumption that truth is singular and is accessible through unbiased sensory observation; committed to uncovering cause-and-effect relationships.

Resonance principle of communication
: Tony Schwatz's idea that successful persuasion messages evoke past experiences that resonate with a person's thoughts or feelings.

Birth-death-rebirth cycle
: One of the archetypes or mini-dramas that Carl Jung claimed is deep within the mental makeup of all humans; the collective unconscious.

Humanistic scholarship
: Study of what it's like to be another person, in a specific time and place; assumes there are few important panhuman similarities.

Epistemology
: The study of the origin, nature, method, and limits of knowledge.

Determinism
: The assumption that behavior is caused by heredity and environment.

Empirical evidence
: Data collected through direct observation.

Stanley Deetz
: Communication scholar from the University of Colorado who believes that every general communication theory has two priorities—effectiveness and participation. His theory of organizational communication is featured in Chapter 21.

Emancipation
: Liberation from any form of political, economic, racial, religious, or sexual oppression; empowerment.

Metatheory
: Theory about theory; the stated or inherent assumptions made when creating a theory.

Principal Changes

This chapter has been edited for clarity and readability but the content is consistent with the previous edition of *A First Look.*

Kick-off Questions & Interaction Starters

- What sorts of classes have you tended to enjoy: those in the humanities, such as English or history, or those in the sciences, such as physics or math?

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- Are you hoping that your study of communication theory will give you insight into general laws of human nature, or insight into specific human situations?
- Take a look at your department's course offerings. Which courses most excite you? Do you think they're likely to have an interpretive or an objective bent to them?

Suggestions for Discussion

A dichotomy on a continuum

The principle challenge in presenting this material is to communicate the important characteristics of the objective/interpretive dichotomy without oversimplifying, exaggerating, or polarizing the discipline in absolute terms. Students need to understand that fundamental differences exist between the two theoretical positions, but if they are seen as entirely separate and mutually exclusive, then the nuances of the theories discussed throughout *A First Look* will be compromised. In discussion, therefore, remind students that the camps are themselves theoretical constructs designed to approximate, but not to straightjacket, reality. Make sure that students don't characterize interpretivists as completely subjective, solipsists utterly uninterested in shared truths, common understanding, and the world "out there." Nor should scientists be pictured as cold, impersonal beings that entirely forsake their values when they step into the lab. Remind your class that even the seemingly objective choices involved in pursuing a particular line of scientific inquiry or conducting one experiment and not another are inherently value laden. Stan Deetz' terms "effectiveness" and "participation," may be usefully considered the primary emphases of objective and interpretive theorists, respectively, but it would be simplistic to consider such a dichotomy as anything other than a general trend.

When discussing this chapter, be sure students understand that although the terms "scientific" and "objective" are used interchangeably in the text, interpretive scholars do not agree on a singular label. You may want to explain and discuss why some postmodern communication scholars, for example, reject humanists' emphasis on tradition, or why some interpretive scholars mistrust rhetoricians' emphasis on argument and conscious intentionality. When Andrew raises this point with his class, he points out that interpretivists like to argue about words because they very much believe that words are important, and the very diversity of labels they choose reveals this commitment to the power of words. This is also an excellent place to start a semester-long discussion on the power of language and of naming (an idea well-worth examining in symbolic interactionism and muted group theory among others). Why does it matter what we call a theorist? What's in a name; isn't a scientist a scientist even if we *call* them something else? Obviously, I believe the answer is "no"; part of using accepted terminology means that we also accept the preconceptions and assumptions implied by a given label.

Theory and research

Be sure to emphasize the intimate relationship between theory and research. Although the official subject of the book is the former, I encourage you to draw students' attention to how the authors integrate theory development and refinement with research; you might want

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to remind them to look for the connection throughout the text. In many communication programs (both at the undergraduate and graduate levels), students will take separate theory and research methods courses. This is a good time to have a discussion about the overlap between those areas of study. I have sometimes described theory as the "thinking" class and methods as the "working" class, causing students who think *this* is work to laugh. What I mean is that theory courses tends to address a cognitive understanding, the "what" of a given phenomenon, while methods focuses on how to test, expand, and validate those understandings. Regardless of how your program is structured, it is often fodder for good discussion to ask students which they think should come first. Is it more helpful to have a deeper understanding of multiple theories before testing or applying them? Or is it better to have a comprehensive familiarity with research methods before examining and using specific theories?

Exercises and Activities

Analysis of an ad

A good exercise is to ask students to bring their own print or television advertisements to class the day you discuss the chapter. Depending on the size of your class, require each student to write or present orally a short explanation of how the piece they've chosen would be analyzed by an objective and an interpretive communication scholar. They'll appreciate the fine analyses produced by Sparks and Medhurst much more after they've tried their own, and you'll be able to gauge their level of comprehension. The problems they encounter with this assignment will help you to see what concepts require further explanation.

When Andrew teaches this chapter, he accomplishes this by first showing the Budweiser ad that was the subject of the Medhurst and Sparks analyses, At this early point in the semester, asking students "what does this ad have to do with communication theory?" is a good way to sense who (and how many) have read the chapter before coming to class! Then, he will draw out students' memory of each analysis and walk them through it. At the end of class, he'll show another ad—a Snickers ad featuring Betty White getting tackled while playing football is his favorite choice—and then assign half the class to do a "Sparks" objective analysis, and the other a "Medhurst" interpretive analysis. This helps vivify the interpretive/objective distinction before teasing it out further in subsequent chapters.

Lining up along the continuum

As you systematically work through the components of the objective and interpretive perspectives, make sure students understand each binary set: singular truth vs. multiple realities, determinism vs. free will, objectivity vs. emancipation, and so forth. With each pair, ask your students to indicate with which element they are more comfortable. For example, a student may choose a universal truth over multiple realities, or free will over determinism. When Andrew does this exercise, he forces students to make choices among seven binary pairs:

Math / writing
Is / ought
General / specific
Clarity / emancipation
Prediction / criticism
Unbiased / emotional

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Effectiveness / participation

The first word is the objective choice, and the second word is the interpretive choice. For each objective choice, students score a zero; for each interpretive choice, they score a one. This (admittedly, mathematical and philosophically objective) approach yields a score between zero (if all objective words were chosen) and seven (all interpretive words were chosen).

After students have obtained a score, create a continuum along one wall of your classroom, with strong objectivism at one extreme and strong interpretivism at the other. Ask students to array themselves along the continuum according to their score. If students tend to bunch up on one end or the other, try to plays the devil's advocate in an effort to spread them a bit, but ultimately the choice is theirs. This exercise compels students—quite literally—to take a stand about communication theory in the early goings of the class. You might ask why they think they appear on one end of the continuum or the other or, as will probably the case for most students, why they think they landed in the middle. As the course develops and their knowledge of the field develops, this initial stand serves as a useful reference point. In addition, you might ask students to suggest where other courses and instructors in the major would be placed along the continuum. This activity helps contextualize the overall discipline for students. It's also an opportunity for you to be candid about where you fall on the continuum, which serves as a reference point for students as they make sense of your approach to teaching communication theory.

A similar approach can effectively integrate interactive classroom response devices ("clickers"), particularly useful if you teach a larger lecture. After explaining the core concepts of epistemology, determinism, objectivity or emancipation, and universal application versus interpretive understanding, display a slide asking students to rank their position. You might pose the question "What's your view of human nature?" using a 6-point scale from "totally deterministic," "mostly deterministic," "leaning towards determinism," "leaning towards free will," "mostly free will," and "complete free will." For this exercise, I have found it helpful to use an even number of choices, which forces students to "get off the fence" and come down on one side or the other. It can be very illuminating, for students and professor alike, to see some early opinion poll data, especially if a class' early leanings is strongly in one direction.

Further Resources

This article further clarifies—and complicates—the "scientific" approach to communication theory:

Charles Pavitt, "The Third Way: Scientific Realism and Communication Theory," *Communication Theory*, Vol. 9, 1999, pp. 162-188.

If you would like to read more about Em Griffin's view of communication research, I'd recommend:

Em Griffin, "*Journal of Communication and Religion:* A State-of-the-Art Critical Review," *Journal of Communication and Religion*, Vol. 21, 1998, pp. 108-140.

For a discussion of the ways in which science is inherently interpretive or rhetorical, see:

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Alan G. Gross, Joseph E. Harmon, and Michael S. Reidy, *Communicating Science: The Scientific Article from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2009.

Free will and determinism

One of the finest discussions we know of the debate over free will and determinism is William James, "The Dilemma of Determinism," *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, 1897, pp. 145-183. Because the text is sufficiently old that it is in the public domain, you can find it in a variety of versions, likely including for free online. James's analogy of the chess game between the novice and the expert demonstrates a kind of resolution or middle ground between the free will argument and the determinist argument (181-182). The fact that James works religion into the discussion makes his position even more interesting.

Other ideas to inform your discussions

Nancy Baym, Scott W. Campbell, Heather Horst, Sri Kalyanaraman, Mary Beth Oliver, Eric Rothenbuhler, René Weber, and Katherine Miller, "Communication Theory and Research in the Age of New Media: A Conversation from the *CM Café*," *Communication Monographs*, Vol. 79, 2012, pp. 256-267.

Kathleen M. Galvin and Dawn O. Braithwaite, "Theory and Research From the Communication Field: Discourses That Constitute and Reflect Families," *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, Vol. 6, 2014, pp. 97-111.

Linje Manyozo, "Critical Reflections on the Theory Versus Practice Debate in Communication for Development," *Mediekultur: Journal of Media and Communication Research*, Vol. 32, 2016, pp. 116-134.

Erin A. Meyers, "Theory, Technology, and Creative Practice: Using Pixton Comics to Teach Communication Theory," *Communication Teacher*, Vol. 28, 2014, pp. 32-38.

Denis Mcquail, "Reflections on Paradigm Change in Communication Theory and Research," *International Journal of Communication*, Vol. 7, 2013, pp. 216-229.

Juliane Mora, (2016). "Socially Constructing Learning Space: Communication Theory and Pedagogy for Social Justice," *Review of Communication*, Vol. 16, 2016, pp. 176-191.

Georgette Wang, "Culture, Paradigm, and Communication Theory: A Matter of Boundary or Commensurability?," *Communication Theory*, Vol. 24, 2014, pp. 373-393.

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2

Talk About Theory

A First Look at Communication Theory

10th edition

Em Griffin
Andrew Ledbetter
Glenn Sparks

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Talk About Theory

- Two Communication Scholars View a Heartwarming Ad
- Objective or Interpretive: Sorting Out the Labels
- Ways of Knowing: Discovering Truth of Creating Multiple Realities?
- Human Nature: Determinism or Free Will?
- The Highest Value: Objectivity or Emancipation?
- Purpose of Theory: Universal Laws or Interpretive Guides?
- Objective or Interpretive: Why Is It Important?

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Talk About Theory

- Need to grasp crucial differences between the objective and interpretive approaches to communication
  - Glenn Sparks: behavioral scientist, conducts experiments
  - Marty Medhurst: rhetorician; interpret texts

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Talk About Theory

- Glenn Sparks is a **behavioral scientist** –applies the scientific method to describe, predict, and explain recurring forms of human behavior
- Marty Medhurst is a **rhetorician** – studies ways symbolic forms can be used to identify with people, or to persuade them to a certain point of view

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Two Communication Scholars View a Diehard Fan

- Budweiser's Super Bowl "Clydesdale" AD
  - We see scenes of the newborn foal, his trainer asleep in the sick colt's stall, horseplay between them as the animal gains stature, and the fully grown animal…. When it's time…, the trainer leads him into the company's horse van and gazes wistfully as it disappears down the road.
  - Three years later, the trainer drives to Chicago to reconnect with his horse during a parade. The final shots show the Clydesdale galloping down the street toward him, he then buries his face in the horse's mane.

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Two Communication Scholars View a Diehard Fan

- Glenn: An Objective Approach
  - **Objective approach** – assumption that truth is singular and is accessible through unbiased sensory observation; committed to uncovering cause-and-effect relationships

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Two Communication Scholars View a Diehard Fan

- Glenn: An Objective Approach (continued)
  - Budweiser's marketing department believed that featuring its huge draft horse would sell huge amounts of draft beer
  - **Resonance**– Schwartz believed that successful persuasive messages evoke past experiences that create *resonance* between the message content and a person's thoughts or feelings

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Two Communication Scholars View a Diehard Fan

- Glenn: An Objective Approach (continued)
  - Theories need to be validated. For example, I'd want to discover if commercials that trigger warm emotional memories are better than other ads at selling products or generating good feelings toward the sponsor.
  - Testing audience response is a crucial scientific enterprise. Even though a theory might sound plausible, we can't be sure it's valid until it's been tested.

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Two Communication Scholars View a Diehard Fan

- Marty: An Interpretive Approach
  - **Interpretive approach** – linguistic work of assigning meaning or value to communicative texts; assumes that multiple meanings or truths are possible

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Two Communication Scholars View a Diehard Fan

- Marty: An Interpretive Approach (continued)
  - Budweiser uses archetypal myths (birth-death-rebirth) to connect with the audience
  - According to rhetorical theorist Michael Osborn, the use of such archetypes emotionally resonate at the core of our being

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Two Communication Scholars View a Diehard Fan

- Marty: An Interpretive Approach (continued)
  - The ad activates our emotions by incorporating the form of the birth-death-rebirth cycle within the mini-narrative of the commercial
    - Newborn colt matures under the watchful eye of his trainer
    - Death is symbolized by the separation of horse and trainer
    - Rebirth occurs as horse and trainer are reunited

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Objective or Interpretive: Sorting Out the Labels

- Objective approach and interpretive approach to communication study clearly differ in starting point, method, and conclusion
  - Glenn, social scientist who works hard to be objective
  - Marty, rhetorical critic who does interpretive study

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Objective or Interpretive: A Difference that Matters

- Most interpretive scholars are humanists, but a growing number of postmodern communication theorists reject that tradition
  - **Humanistic scholarship** – study of what it is like to be another person, in a specific time and place; assumes there are few important panhuman similarities

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Objective or Interpretive: A Difference that Matters

- Separate worldviews of interpretive scholars and scientists reflect contrasting assumptions about ways we arrive at knowledge, the core of human nature, questions of value, and the purpose and methods of research

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Ways of Knowing: Discovering Truth or Creating Multiple Realities?

- **Epistemology** – study of the origin, nature, method, and limits of knowledge
  - Scientists assume Truth is singular
  - Interpretive scholars regard truth as socially constructed through communication

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Human Nature: Determinism or Free Will?

- **Determinism** – assumption that behavior is caused by heredity and environment
  - Scientists stress forces that shape human behavior (biology and environment)
  - Interpretive scholars focus on conscious choices made by individuals

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The Highest Value: Objectivity or Emancipation?

- Most social scientists place high value on objectivity that is not biased by ideological commitments
- Interpretive scholars believe that ability to choose separates humanity from the rest of creation, and value scholarship that expands free choice (emancipation)

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The Highest Value: Objectivity or Emancipation?

- **Emancipation** – liberation from political, economic, racial, religious, or sexual oppression; empowerment
- Deetz frames the issue somewhat differently. He claims that every general communication theory has two priorities – *effectiveness* and *participation*

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Purpose of Theory: Universal Laws or Interpretive Guides?

- As a behavioral scientist, Glenn works to pin down universal laws of human behavior that cover a variety of situations
  - Theory testing is basic activity

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First Look at Communication Theory 10th edition Griffin Solutions Manual

Purpose of Theory: Universal Laws or Interpretive Guides?

- As rhetorical critic, Marty strives to interpret a particular communication text in a specific context
  - Explores web of meaning that constitutes human existence

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Objective or Interpretive: Why Is It Important?

- When you understand what each type of theorist is about, your comfort zone will expand and your confusion will diminish
  - **Metatheory**: theory about theory; stated or inherent assumptions made when creating
  - Both seek to improve society

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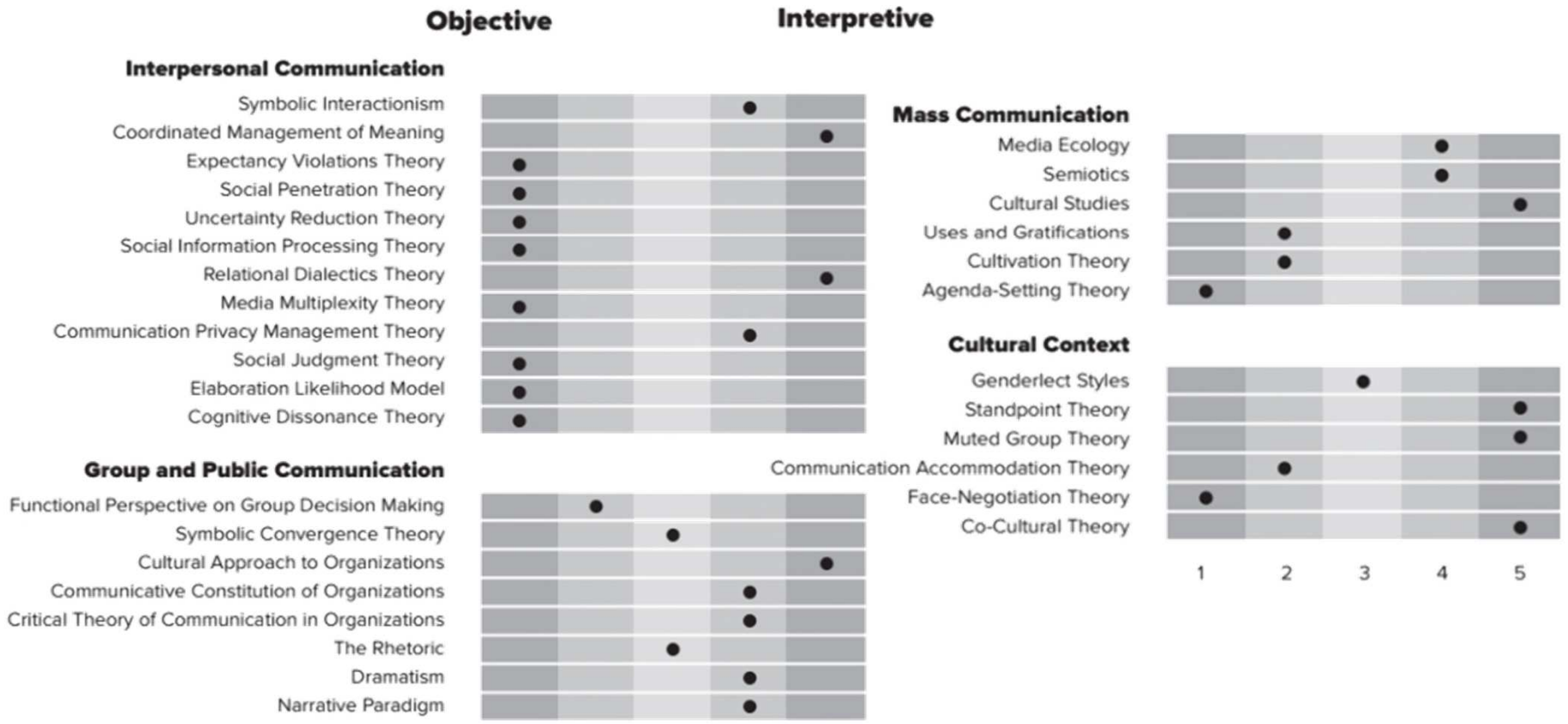
Plotting theories on an Objective-Interpretive Scale

- Theories can be plotted on a continuum of Objective to Interpretive; however, not all theorists fit neatly into one category or the other.
- Figure 2-1 on the next slide is from page 22 of the text and reflects the authors' evaluation of where each featured theory fits on the continuum.

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Figure 2-1: Classification of Communication Theories According to Objective/Interpretive Worldview



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