Research, Principles, and Practices in
Visual Communication

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2.   The Interaction Model: Perception and Communication

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2.1   Introduction

2.11   As students of communication we are in an ambiguous professional position. It is easier to note differences of background, training, and specialized interests and activities among us than to decide what field of inquiry or body of knowledge brings us together. Often we hang a shapeless Mother Hubbard called "communication" over that body—whatever it is—and, after the proper offerings to some tribal deities called "verbal" or "non-verbal", "audio" and/or "visual" (depending on the season), we drift from one specific topic, gadget, technique, or bit of information to another, with occasional rituals in honor of the Great Spirits "science" and "research." At other times we act more as professionals (or even competent technicians) should. But even when we locate a common field of inquiry and find at least parts of a body of knowledge we can call communication, we still have difficulty deciding whether we are drinking from the fountainhead of all the humanities, arts, and sciences, or navigating turbulent cross-currents of established disciplines, looking for a chart and a charter.

2.12   No single occasion or group is going to settle that problem. But no group of professionals planning to take a close look at the theory, practice, and teaching of visual (or any other) communication can avoid developing some views and plan of activities bearing directly on that problem. Students, practitioners, researchers, teachers, administrators coming together for the discussion of special interests in communication have an opportunity to pose the question: how do our immediate concerns fit into the broadest possible view of communication as a field of study?

2.13   I would like to take advantage of that opportunity, to advance some suggestions concerning (1) communication as a professional, scientific, or scholarly discipline, (2) the analysis of communication as a process, (3) a conceptual model of communication, (4) some standards of

judgment in communication, and (5) a plan of practical activities grouped around key issues. I trust that these remarks will not be taken either as final pronouncements as as pure provocations to argument. My hope is that a discussion of broader perspectives and implications will make the achievement of specialized objectives more meaningful and memorable.

2.2   Communication as a Field

2.21   Preoccupation with the nature, quality, and functions of communication is probably as old as mankind. Indeed, we can view this concern as part of the evolutionary process which transformed some anthropoid creature into Homo Sapiens, and which makes members of that species into "our kind" of human beings.

2.22   Yet the study of communication by that name as a scientific and professional field is a newcomer in our vocabulary of disciplines. We cannot be sure yet whether it is only a new name standing for a variety of ill-fitting activities in the arts, sciences, and professions, or a genuinely new approach to certain types of human problems. My hunch is that if communication survives the well-intentioned efforts of its adherents it might develop into a respectable discipline.

2.23   The magic of a new term, invoked to support budget, to defend practices, to build academic or professional empires, fades quickly. Fashionable slogans elevated to the stature of theory but supported by unexamined rationalizations fall into disrepute. An approach to human problems can exist without magic and rationalizations but not without a *rationale*. A rationalization is concocted to justify the existence of some practice. A rationale cannot be concocted at all. It *is* the reason for the existence of the practice. It is either rooted in developments that demand reorganization of studies and approaches, or the field has no good reason to exist at all.

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2.24 I think the reasons for the existence of communication as a new field can be found in the trends and developments of the last century. Some of these are philosophical and scientific, others are educational, technological, social, and political.

2.25 The philosophical and scientific developments arose partially in revolt against Aristotelian logic and Newtonian mechanics, and partially out of apparent despair of making much sense out of shifting reality existing outside of the senses themselves. These trends ushered in what is sometimes called "the age of analysis" in philosophy, psychology, and the natural sciences. The primary object of analysis became the human subject himself; the study of his experience, both conscious and unconscious, became the "positive" basis for "objective" knowledge. But since appearances proved to be so subjective, the meaning of objectivity itself became confused with sole reliance on the pooling of subjective impressions. Whatever the weaknesses of these trends in social and scientific philosophy—and this is certainly not the place for a critique—they helped focus attention on the nature and varieties of appearances (phenomena), the process of interpreting experiences (observation, perception, learning), and the interpersonal and social context in which appearances and experiences were symbolized, transmitted, and shared.

2.26 These focal points of attention involved key aspects of communication. More and more philosophers, psychologists, physicists, and other scientists began to use the term and to claim that their approach could best be described as a "communication" approach.

2.3 Communication Revolution

2.31 This trend in scientific philosophy was not essentially new, and by itself it probably would never have provided impetus for the development of communication as a discipline. Such an impetus came, however, from that world of objective events whose real nature, the "positivists" claim, we can only communicate about more-or-less successfully but never definitely assess. The "Communication Revolution" of our time, it seems to others, consists of a series of concrete historical developments whose nature and relevance to human experience we can and must assess.

2.32 Communication products became mass-produced. The increasing tempo of technological-social-cultural developments in commu-

nication, beginning with rapid printing and gaining momentum with film, radio, and television, became the cultural characteristic of our age. The new media of communication impressed us with their ability to transmit messages and images across previous barriers of space, time, and individual ability or status. The media created new networks of influence, new audiences, new markets, and new institutional empires. They also gave us new means and forms through which to observe each other and the world, and new points of view from which to survey the inner and outer environment.

2.33 The term "propaganda" took on new meanings. We found that centralized means of communication could be used to blot out diversity from the synthetic images of life presented. On further reflection and study, "propaganda" was found to draw most of its strength from the everyday context of popular culture—consisting mostly of mass-produced communication products—rather than from single campaigns or messages.

2.34 Bigness, monopoly, costliness in cultural (as in other) industry brought centralization of control, standardization of product, streamlined efficiency of techniques, and increasing penetration of influence into many spheres of life. These developments brought new delights into lives that seem drab in retrospect; they also raised new concerns about the meaning of freedom in contemporary culture.

2.35 Large and intricate systems of all kinds demanded new ways of handling the mass of information needed for decision-making. Theories and methods of data processing, information transmission, storage and retrieval of communication records had to be developed.

2.36 The study of communication processes and effects became a necessary part of policy-making in business, industry, and government. The implications of new media and methods of communication for human learning were vigorously debated, then soberly appraised. Studies and experience led to a general concern with the overall quality and context of communication in teaching. The "communication approach" spilled over into learning theory, the study and teaching of spoken and written language, and into such ancient disciplines as rhetoric, esthetics, logic. Investigation of the broader educational implications of the communication revolution was initiated, and study of cultural consequences has begun.

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2.4   Criteria for a Framework

2.41   Can such diverse developments provide the rationale for a coherent area of studies? Certainly a general concern about a variety of vaguely related processes and practices is not a sufficient basis for the existence of a discipline, even if it suffices for the establishment of university departments, research institutes, journals, national projects, and workshops. Such general concern is not sufficient because it does not provide a definition of tasks, an integrated approach to definite areas of problems, a conceptual framework for study and action.

2.42   It is equally obvious that any definitions, approaches and frameworks in communications should be hospitable to diverse interests, areas of specialization, and scientific points of view. They should accommodate the study of structure as well as of function; they should permit the analysis of inner and interpersonal processes as well as of social and institutional systems and relationships; they should allow for the existence of subjective appearances as well as of objective events; they should be suggestive of standards of judgment as well as of analytical distinctions. Finally, they should structure communication as a field and a process into manageable aspects, dimensions, and relationships.

2.43   Needless to say, no such paragon of a model of communication exists. Our next task, therefore, is to build one. (Or, more seriously, to suggest a way of conceptualizing and discussing communication that satisfies some of these requirements, and gives us something to point to when in doubt as to what we are talking about.)

2.5   The Interaction Model: The Statement

2.51   I would like to suggest a way of translating our generalized concerns about communication into a theoretical framework which can generate definitions, structure discussion, and lead to judgments. This will involve considerations relevant to the analysis of process, to the characteristics of communication as a process, to the diagrammatic representation of events, relationships, and dimensions involved, to the construction of a "model," and to standards and activities that might flow from these.

2.52   Communication[1] is communicat*ing*. It is a pattern of doings, a process. This means that it is a flow of events so interrelated that one act in the series derives part of its significance from all other acts, and can be fully grasped only in the light of the total pattern. Can we analyze such a fluid, dynamic, interrelated pattern of events? We can, if we remember that in reality it *is* fluid, dynamic, and interrelated and that categories of analysis are frozen images abstracted for purposes of discussion and understanding. The historian Allen Nevins once defined an event as "a force made momentarily visible." Let us use this concept to examine the pattern from different angles so that different aspects and relationships become "momentarily visible"; then let us capture this "vision" to see what it reveals of the forces behind it.

2.53   What *kind* of a process is communication? Any definition is bound to be arbitrary, so let us at least be practical. The existence of anything can be said to "communicate" its own existence, so we cannot use the term in such a broad sense without blurring the special significance it should have for a workable definition. We should find some ingredient, some special event embedded in this process we are to call communication that sets it apart from other processes. That special ingredient is the *message* or *statement*.

2.54   I look out the window and see a tree; that is not communication (at least by the definition I am proposing). But when I look at a picture of that tree or hear someone say "there is a tree outside the window" that is communication simply because the process included a message or statement as an essential ingredient. We need not be too concerned with hairline distinctions and borderline cases except perhaps as a form of intellectual exercise. But for those who take such exercise seriously, let me offer a more technical definition: *A message or statement is a specialized, formally coded or symbolic or representative social event which makes possible inferences about states, relationships, processes not directly observed.*[2]

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[1]The singular, communication, connotes the unitary concept of process. Communications tends to emphasize the pluralistic concept of a diversified field, or the multiple ingredients of the process with emphasis on media, channels, messages, etc. Generally, the singular form is used throughout this book.

[2]For a more detailed statement see G. Gerbner, "On Content Analysis and Critical Research in Mass Communication," *Audio-Visual Communication Review*, 6:85-198, Spring 1958.

2.55 The message is what distinguishes communication from other processes, but its existence alone is not sufficient for communication. Let us consider the words on this paper. They are a message or statement. Its code is the English language in one of its printed forms; its content is (as we shall argue later) the relationship of this form to the act of communicating. Yet these words on paper do not add up to communication. They are only one event in a pattern which involves my thinking and writing and your reading and thinking, among other things.

2.56 I just referred to two distinguishable dimensions in the process. My principal relationship to the statement is that of producer; your principal relationship to the statement is that of reader. Let us visualize what we have so far by drawing circles for events (broadly interpreted), lines for relationships, and using the vertical and horizontal for our two dimensions.
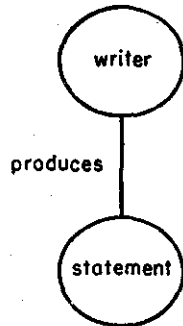Thus we have
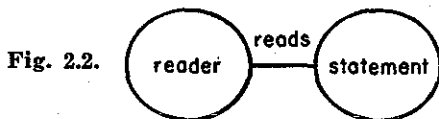
Fig. 2.1.

along the vertical dimension, and

Fig. 2.2.

along the horizontal dimension. Although the piece of paper on which I write and the paper and type you read are not identical, the "statement" links what I do and what you do into a pattern we call communication. The processes and consequences of this pattern are different from those of other relationships between people. Most of the differences rest in the nature of the message.

2.57 Messages have *form* (which may be a code, symbol, or representation) as do all other objects and events; but they have a *content* unlike that of most other events. This content (which, of course, is an attribute of a specialized form as used in a certain context and situation) can only be defined in relation to other things not in the message but inferrable from the message. These "other things" include the way the message

was produced (the vertical dimension of the diagram). Sometimes we can infer some things about the source of the message (the circle at the top of the vertical dimension). But usually we also want to make inferences about other events and subjects; we want to know what the message is "about."

2.58 For example, if what I write here is "really" only a reflection of my personality, mood and skill (or lack of skill) but has no demonstrable relevance to the communication process as it exists independently of my wishes, then for all practical purposes it is a useless statement (unless you happen to be interested in my personality, skill or wishes, all of which are irrelevant to our present purposes). If this statement is "really" only about me and my use of words, you could only evaluate its expressiveness, its grammar, its pleasing sensory qualities, its efficiency in conveying my thoughts. You could *not* assess its adequacy or accuracy in the light of independently existing observations and criteria about the process I am trying to describe. If you asked "Why is this so" and I answered "Because I think so" you would have no recourse. A more objective appraisal would be possible only if we specified at the outset that the nature of what we are talking about, outside of thoughts and wishes, is germane to the pattern of communication.

2.59 While this might seem an obvious contention, it marks an important distinction in one's approach to the study of communication. It is at this point that the "positivistic" conceptions and models of communication, useful as they are for specialized analytical purposes, fail to meet our criteria for a framework in which to study communication. These models (unlike, for example, the Westley-MacLean model[3]) lack reference to an event, subject matter, etc., to a segment of reality outside the communicating agents themselves, to the event the communication is "about."

2.6 The Interaction Model: The Event

2.61 If we omit from our scheme that element of the process which is purportedly encoded, symbolized, represented, or "talked about" — no matter how remote it may seem at times — we have limited the range of uses and consequences we can attribute to communication or to its study. Specifically, we have excluded any

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[3]See discussion of Westley-MacLean model, 3.5.32.

analysis of statements or of the process in terms other than form, design, structure, subjective associations and the like. We have no way of relating the message, its production, and its uses, to anything existing outside of the mind, the nervous system, the machine, or the institution that comprises the communicating agent or agency. Thus we have no way of explaining, evaluating, or even understanding the message and its functions in the light of independently existing events and points of view; we cannot ask questions about its truth or validity; and we cannot inquire into consequences other than its success in achieving aims and gratifying desires of the communicating parties.

2.62　　　　We shall come back later to the significance of being able to establish such relationships and ask such questions. Now let us apply the argument of the preceding discourse to our diagram of the communication process. We tried to establish the point that as your attention is directed to the words you are reading, and in them to the events and concepts these words are "about," my attention in writing these words is directed to the events I am trying to describe. That is, the producer of a statement "reads" (i.e. inquires into) events as the receiver of the statement reads the message. So we have two somewhat similar relationships along the horizontal dimension joined in a pattern through the common element, the statement (see Fig. 2.3).
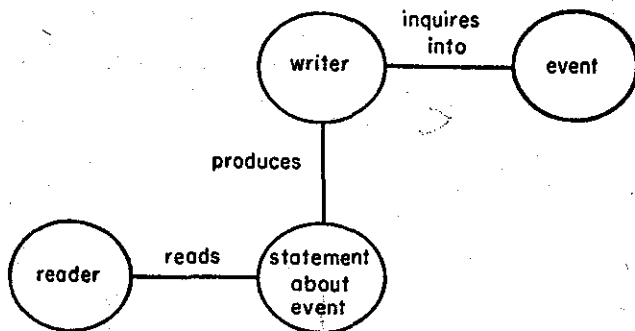
Fig. 2.3.

2.7　　The Interaction Model: Perception

2.71　　　　This does not mean that you, the reader, cannot inquire directly into the nature of the events I am describing (although most of our communication involves things *not* directly observed or observable by most parties in the process). What it does mean is that as you read my statement you observe *my way of inquiring into and describing* the event. Nor does my statement

get directly transferred to your mind; you are observing *in your own particular way* my way of seeing and describing things. I perceive an event in my own way and produce a statement about it; you preceive my statement about the event in your own way—and react accordingly. Thus we need one more element in our diagram (Fig. 2.4) that stands for the particular way in which communicating agents inquire into, perceive, interpret events and statements. Let a smaller circle inside communicating agents stand for events and statements "as perceived."
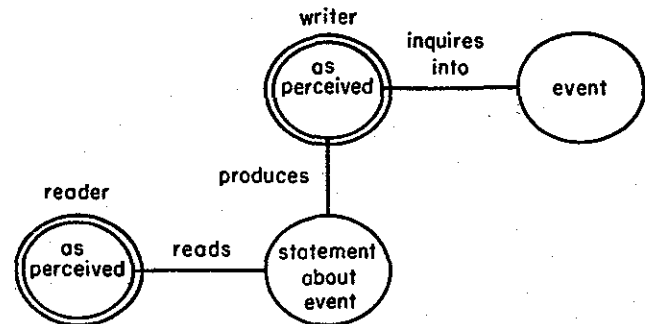
Fig. 2.4.

2.8　　The Interaction Model: Aspects of the Process

2.81　　　　We can, of course, extend the diagram indefinitely.[4] We can put in any number of communication sources and receivers, indicate multiple statements, or events, etc. But the basic elements and relationships remain the same. So instead of complicating things at this point, let us reduce our diagram to the minimum necessary to a communication act, and give each part a generalized name. Then let us indicate a few other important aspects that play a part in the process but are not easily visualized.

2.82　　　　We have identified two basic relationships in our scheme. The horizontal line stands for our relationship with the world of events and statements. No single term can do justice to the complexity of this relationship; it involves ways of observation, conception, inquiry; it implies selection in a certain context. Let us call it the *perceptual dimension.*

2.83　　　　The vertical line represents another type of response to our environment: a reaction that produces a change in the state of

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[4]Such extensions and a variety of applications can be found in G. Gerbner, "Toward a General Model of Communication," *Audio-Visual Communication Review*, 4:171-199, Summer 1956.

affairs outside of ourselves.[5] If the product of this change is a communication event (message, statement), we have the ingredient which distinguishes communication from other processes. Communication events are created when someone uses some means (channels, media, facilities) in some controlled (i.e., non-random) fashion to produce a signal. Let us then call this vertical production "response" the *means and controls dimension.*

2.84   We also have three kinds of "events" represented by circles in our diagram: non-communication events, communication events and communication agents or agencies. Let us define each of these in general terms.

2.85   **Non-communication events** germane to a communication act can be perceived by communication sources or produced by communication receivers. Let these be single circles marked E in our generalized program. Thus an event perceived would be:

Fig. 2.5.

And an event produced would be:

Fig. 2.6.

2.86   **Communication events** are messages or statements about events. Let us represent them by divided circles marked SE for "statement about event." In Fig. 2.7, we have diagrammed (a) a message perceived, and (b) message produced:

Fig. 2.7

2.87   **Communication agents or agencies** are represented by two concentric circles. These stand for sources, receivers, and their terms of perception. Let us mark communicating agents M for man or machine (although they can also represent institutions), and indicate the terms of perception by attaching a prime (') sign to whatever is perceived or attended to as the object of the communication. Thus we can diagram a communication act in which someone perceives an event and makes a statement about it which is perceived by someone else (Fig. 2.8):

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[5]Sometimes perception can be achieved only at the cost of changing the event being observed.

Fig. 2.8

2.88   Four other aspects remain to be noted. Each of these has an important bearing upon the process and study of communication: (a) The *situation* in which events and messages are produced and are perceived; (b) the perceptual *context* in space and time in which messages are produced and perceived; (c) administrative, legal, political, etc., arrangements controlling the *availability* of messages; and (d) the *consequences* of communication acts aside from immediate reactions or from desired effects.

2.89   Awkward as it is, the following verbal "model" of communication has the virtue of noting in a single sentence ten basic elements of the process identified in our discussion:

SOMEONE/PERCEIVES AN EVENT (OR

1   2

STATEMENT)/AND REACTS/IN A SITUA-

3   4

TION/AND THROUGH SOME MEANS/TO

5

MAKE AVAILABLE MATERIALS/IN SOME

6   7

FORM/AND CONTEXT/CONVEYING CON-

8   9

TENT/WITH SOME CONSEQUENCE.

10

In the following sections we shall review and describe each of these elements in a more systematic fashion.

2.9   Steps in the Process

2.91   We shall use a dramatized diagram (Fig. 2.9) of a communication act to retrace the ten steps of our verbal model. Then we shall review each of the elements in the process, and cite examples of questions that direct attention to each as a major variable for study. We shall also develop a truncated form of the basic diagram to indicate the place of most characteristics of the communication process within its scope.

2.92   Assume that someone notices a house burning across the street and shouts "Fire!" to someone else. This act of communication is illustrated below with each aspect of the process indicated on the diagram.[6]

2.93   Step 1 of our model is illustrated on the diagram as a human head representing *someone*. This is the M of the generalized diagram, here a communication source. Next comes the *event and its perception*. The event, here a burning house, is shown as circle E. Its perception is indicated as Step 2, a line leading horizontally from circle E, the event, to a circle inside M; the inside circle is labeled E' — event E as perceived by M. In Step 3 of our model, M *reacts* to having perceived the event. (If this reaction involves use of some means to produce a message, it will be represented under Step 5.)

2.94   Step 4 makes note of the fact that all perceptions and reactions occur in a *situation*. M is shown observing E from behind a window,

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[6]This illustration is drawn from the earlier article "Toward a General Model of Communication," *op. cit.*

1. Someone
2. Perceives an event

3. And reacts
4. In a situation

5. Through some means
6. To make available materials

7. In some form
8. And context
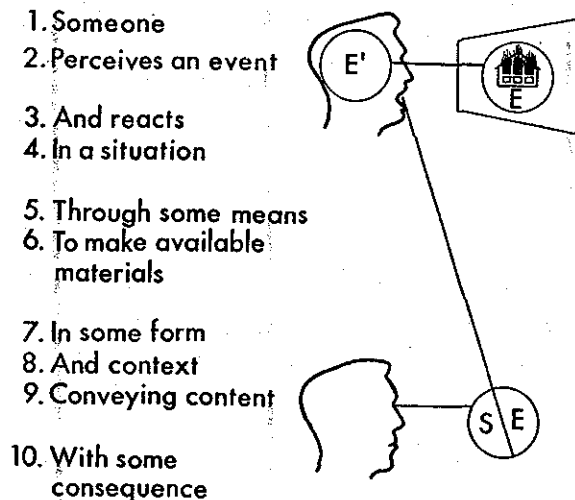9. Conveying content

10. With some consequence

Fig. 2.9.   A dramatized version of the Interaction Model.

indicating one feature of the situation. It is usually impractical to schematize a situation on a generalized model. Step 5 marks the communicative nature of the reaction. It designates the *means*, the mediating channels and controls transmitting a signal (here "voice"), as a line leading downward from the communicating agent, M, to the comunication product, SE.

2.95   The means serve to make available materials to X designations. Availability for perception is shown as Step 6, a line leading horizontally from the communication product to another person, M_x. Use of some means becomes a signal only if it is not random; that is, if it is *in some form*. Step 7 indicates the formal characteristics of the use of the means. It is represented as a half-circle attached to means, labeled S for signal or statement. (Here *form* might be denoted as a certain language sequence.) Every signal exists in a *context* of other signals and statements. The three circles of Step 8 along the horizontal, perceptual, dimension denote context. Again, it is often impractical to schematize context except by considering it an ever-present feature of the perceptual aspect.

2.96   The *content* qualities inherent in M's use of means in S form are marked E to denote those qualities of SE, the communication product, which reflect, represent, symbolize, or refer to the event. Thus the total communication product, SE, means signal or statement S, about event E, in this case: "Fire!" The *consequences* of this communication event can be appraised only in terms of all other aspects plus time; Step 10, therefore, cannot be adequately visualized.

2.10   Analysis of the Model

2.10.1   Now we are ready to characterize each aspect more fully, and to crystallize the basic diagram.

            1. **"Someone"** — the communicating agent (source or receiver) may be a person, organization, etc., in any communication transaction. The M of our diagram stands for the general physical and social characteristics of the parties involved in the communication process — senders or destination of messages, communicators and their audiences. When we say "She looked so sincere that they believed her story," or "He is too young to understand that picture" we are pointing to this variable as an important element in the process. When we discuss the structure, history, or method of operation of a communication industry or enterprise, or the nature of its audiences, we are dealing with M.

2.10.2 2. ". . . Perceives an event (or statement)" — the perceptual — cognitive (horizontal) dimension of our diagram involves the relationship between events (and statements) and the way these might be recognized, perceived, approached. Perception is selective; we must select from what is available, and do so in a certain context of other things also available for perception. Thus, selection, context, availability are important variables for study. So are the psycho-physical characteristics of the perceptual process, and its social and experiential aspects. Perceptual as well as conceptual approach, point of view, predispositions, and need-value systems are among the significant aspects of this process. In its most general sense, this dimension represents man's orientation to his environment, as well as the nature and structure of the environment available for orientation and selected for attention or inquiry.

2.10.3 3. ". . . And reacts." Overt reaction to the perception of an event or statement has been assigned to the vertical dimension of our diagram. If this reaction leads to the production of a message, we have SE at the bottom end of the "means and controls" dimension; if it is some other kind of reaction, we can represent its outcome by a non-communication event, E.

2.10.4 When we are dealing with the communicative reaction of a communication source, we have, of course, the production of a statement. But when we examine the reaction of a communication receiver, we are dealing with communication *effects*. We usually measure these against the aims of the communicators, or satisfactions of the receivers. (When measured by other criteria, we shall call them "consequences.")

2.10.5 4. ". . . In a situation"—All perception and reaction takes place in a situation. Certain aspects of the situation are often overlooked in the analysis or planning of communication. Some of these elements are physical: room size, location, light, heat, sound, condition of equipment, etc. Others are social: group size, composition, the structure of human relationships involved. Still others are procedural: method of utilization and presentation of communication materials, sequence of activities, etc.

2.10.6 5. ". . . Through some means," —the means and controls (vertical) dimension of our diagram. Here we deal with choice of channels and media, and with techniques (as well as institutional arrangements) of producing (or mass-producing) messages. New media and new techniques stimulate much discussion and research about relative values. There is no evidence to support claims for the general superiority of any one medium, channel, or mode of perception over all others. But there is evidence to indicate that the choice of means has implications for the meanings of messages, as well as for their perceptual qualities, distribution, and availability.

2.10.7 6. ". . . . To make available materials." Availability is one outcome of the use of means and controls to produce messages. We have assigned it to the perceptual dimension to emphasize that the technical, legal, administrative, political, etc., functions in communication need to be viewed in the light of what they make available for selection. While the "means and controls" dimension calls attention to production and distribution systems, the "availability" aspect emphasizes administrative and other arrangements determining freedom of access to materials.

2.10.8 7. ". . . In some form." The form of the communication event is represented on the diagram by the S (for signal or statement) portion of SE, the message. Analysis of form may be structural, logical or psychological. Structural and logical analysis of form have to do with such internal relationships as design, style, organization, syntax, sequence, code, statistical properties, etc. Psychological analysis has to do with such external relationships as conventional usage, connotations, associations, feelings or attitudes evoked in users.

2.10.9 8. ". . . And context." Context is another aspect of the perceptual dimension. It is the composition of the perceptual field in which a particular event or statement is selected for perception. In other words, it is what comes before and after the message, or what surrounds the message in a particular communication situation. The study of context focuses attention not on the general physical and social aspects of the communication situation, nor on the general sequence of activities followed in a presentation, but specifically on the effect of other messages upon the perception of the message selected.

2.10.10 9. ". . . Conveying content." If we take SE as standing for "statement about event E," then we can interpret the E aspect of message SE as those external relationships of the statement which have reference to what the message is "about" (i.e. subject matter) or to other events and functions inferrable from messages taken as objective records of specific communication acts.

2.10.11 This latter view of content is an unusual one, especially for those accustomed to looking at messages only in terms of the struc-

tural, logical and psychological aspects of form. I am not suggesting any mysterious "potential" or "latent" characteristics outside of message forms. I am suggesting that there is another important way of looking at messages besides the analysis of forms and of subjective associations. Whether we intend it or not, or are aware of it or not, a specific message is not only a vehicle for signs and symbols but also an objective social event. It is not only a report but also a *record*. As such, its content includes the imprint of circumstances and points of view which may be unintended and unrecognized but which are nevertheless functional qualities of the communication transaction. Messages viewed as objective social events may be a source of inference revealing (at least to the analyst) some things about the process that produced them and about a range of consequences quite apart from what sources and receivers intend or "mean" by them.

2.10.12 We may analyze a photograph not only to study subjective responses to the conventional forms reported in it but also to determine possible consequences of the objective "points of view" recorded in it (e.g. by means of camera angle or ways of lighting), whether or not the subjects responding to the photograph are aware of these "points of view." We may study a series of whiskey ads not to appraise their design qualities, measure their effects on sales or on ideas about whiskey, but to make inferences about some more subtle social relationships recorded and reflected in them (such as frequency with which their image of the "good life" involves the services of Negro waiters or Filipino houseboys). We might want to study an exhibit not only to analyze the quality of graphics and the arrangement of objects but to find out how adequately it reflects current knowledge about a subject, and how honestly it expresses the state, purposes, and functions of the organization arranging it. Or we might analyze magazine policies or television programming to see how it reflects — regardless of intentions, likes or dislikes — the state of the industry and the approach of the business to the world of events it communicates about.

2.10.13 Content as a record of objective relationships is not primarily a matter of skill, talent, craftsmanship or showmanship. It is primarily a matter of where we actually stand in relation to the events, subjects, ideas we communicate about, and what we actually do in specific communication transactions. The questions we ask about content as we defined it are primarily questions of truth and validity. These questions will lead us to the consideration of a theory of *judgment* in communication.

2.10.14 10. ". . . With some consequences." The intention of the previous category was to broaden the scope of inquiry about communication content. The intention here is to call attention to an area of "effects" outside the scope of those desired, anticipated, or recognized at any one time. The need for this category arises in part from our view of content as an objective social event. Once such an event is brought into being it makes some contribution to certain irreversible processes. The full "meaning" of this contribution rests in the actual consequences inherent in the sum total of changes brought about.

2.10.15 Frequently we are only interested in finding out how changes in behavior, ideas, attitudes, etc., consequent to the perception of message relate to purposes of communicators, objectives stated in messages, or to needs and desires of receivers. We have classified this type of effect analysis under study of "reaction." Study of the full range of consequences in communication includes the consideration of often unintended or unrecognized effects. We should ask not only "Was I successful?" but also "What else has changed, or is likely to change?" as the result of the communication. There are no communication "failures" except in terms of specific objectives. Every communication act has consequences; these are never limited to specific objectives; and the parties involved in a communication transaction are often unaware of the full range of significant consequences.

2.10.16 If we analyze a communication "failure" in this light, we might find that we have "succeeded" in communicating an actual relationship to our subject which conflicted with our stated purpose. Some wartime films which, in order to emphasize the danger, unwittingly glorified the Nazis had such "boomerang" effects. The same can be true of communication "successes." Some can deliver a 4th of July speech about democracy in such an authoritarian manner that when the eloquent words are forgotten only a relationship of threat and fear remains. There are teachers who feel that their communication was effective if students pass a rigid examination yet develop a dislike of the subject or even of learning. Absorbing an avalanche of information may narcotize rather than energize people.

2.10.17 Here we are concerned not only with effectiveness but also with the total price to be paid for certain effects. Long range effects are often different from short range; behavior is sometimes in conflict with ideology, or not rationalized at all; unapparent effects may have

serious consequences; desired effects, such as making people do the "right things" by tendentious propaganda, may impoverish the bases of self-direction—a consequence too costly in the long run.

2.11   Summary Diagram

2.11.1   Our summary diagram of communication appears in Fig. 2.10. It includes all but those elements of the process which could not be assigned to any one aspect or dimension.
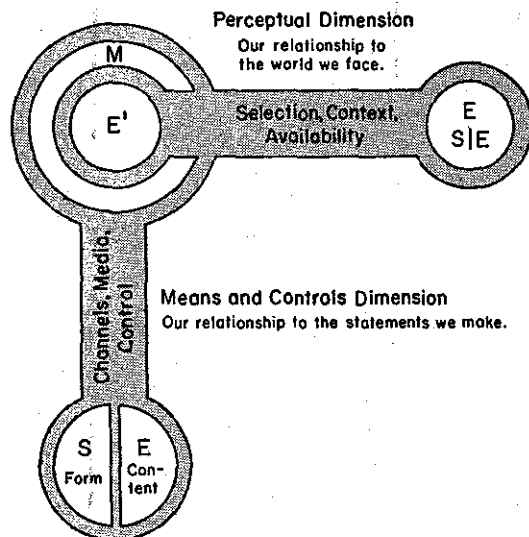

Fig. 2.10.   Summary diagram of communication.

2.12   Judgment

2.12.1   The construction of a framework for the study of communication involved critical choices. We have contended, among other things, that the acts of abstraction, recognition, and representation carry within them — often unwittingly — the seeds of judgment. If I only look up from my chair and gazing upon an object remark "I see a chair," I have done more than simple "sensing." I have abstracted certain characteristics of the object, recognized and named them, recorded a relationship and a vantage point, and thus assigned to that object an approximate role, function, and value in the context of our culture.

2.12.2   Our task would be incomplete without an effort to germinate the seeds of judgment inherent in the much more complex task of building a conceptual framework for the study of communication. In this necessarily brief form, the effort is likely to appear more conclusive and dogmatic than it means to be. But such are the

occupational hazards of a special obligation of professionals (including professors) to *profess* — i.e., (according to Webster's) "to avow publicly." I think those risks are worth taking if they help us examine our notions of the relevance of what we do to the priorities of value we hold.

2.13   Freedom, Responsibility

2.13.1   We begin with the basic assumption that communication is a "humanizing" process. "Humanizing" *Homo sapiens* involves changing reality in the light of changing conceptions of the requirements of survival and welfare.

2.13.2   We can derive certain standards from these premises if we can establish the ideal "humanizing" qualities of communication in social life. And we can arrive at some judgments by applying these standards to communication functions, institutions, and practices.

2.13.3   The perceptual dimension of our model represents the process of inquiry, the selection and perception of events and statements in some context of availability. The ideal state of affairs of this dimension of communication is, I think, *freedom*. What we usually ask for along this dimension is the *availability of a diversity of events, statements, and points of view, so that we might select freely in a representative context of pertinent evidence.*

2.13.4   But the quality of freedom along the perceptual dimension is neither an absolute quality nor an end in itself. It is physically, socially, and psychologically *structured* and *determined*. Its purpose is not merely to provide exercise in choosing, but primarily to provide the setting most favorable for the making of *correct* choices. Let us then consider how the structure of freedom is determined and what the "rightness" of choices might mean.

2.13.5   The purpose of freedom in communication is to assure public availability of statements and points of view pertinent to decision-making and self-government. The popular definition of this freedom as "the right to say what I please" can lead to its negation if I have access to a loudspeaker but others don't. Freedom to *talk* might abolish the freedom to be *heard*. That is why we have assigned freedom to the horizontal dimension of inquiry and perception, and not to the vertical dimension of the use of means, channels, facilities for the production of statements.

2.13.6   The structure of freedom is organized diversity whether it pleases or not. It is

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determined through the systematic use of means, channels, media, and other facilities for the production (and mass-production) of statements. If these means and facilities are to produce a structure of freedom, they must be organized and used *to that end*. Freedom of use of facilities (the vertical "production" dimension of our diagram) on behalf of any other end, private or public, serves other ends. If the ideal structure of inquiry and perception along the horizontal dimension is to be *freedom*, the essential quality along the vertical production dimension has to be *control*. Control of means and facilities to promote diversity of availability and freedom of selection is a major administrative and governmental responsibility in communications.

The determination of the structure of freedom in industrial culture as an administrative and governmental function is illustrated in Fig. 2.11 as the social relationship between the production and the perceptual dimensions of our communication model .
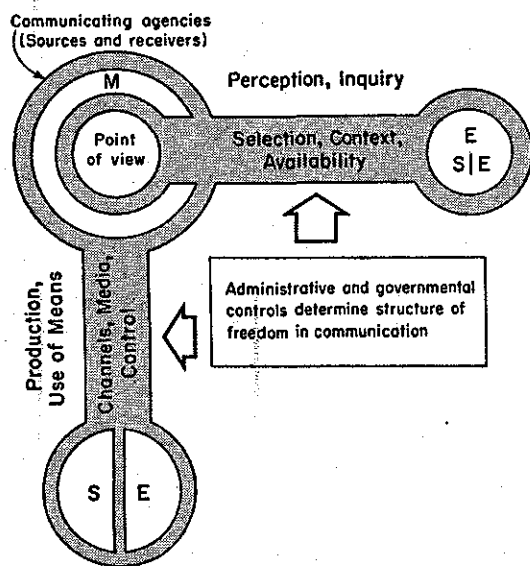

Communicating agencies (Sources and receivers)

Perception, Inquiry

M

Point of view

Selection, Context, Availability

E S|E

Production, Use of Means

Channels, Media, Control

Administrative and governmental controls determine structure of freedom in communication

S | E

Fig. 2.11.

The social responsibility to promote freedom in communications through the organization of means and facilities to that end does not imply that the structure of freedom is an absolute quality, or that it is diversity for its own sake. Freedom of public communication in any society can be considered an index of the extent to which the state of affairs in communication permits public insight to penetrate relevant realities of existence. It is an index of the complexity and diversity of a communications structure organized to enhance opportunities for learning, judg-

ment, and decision-making serving the "humanizing" ends of survival and welfare.

Let me advance a proposition: Communication can help human insight to deal with realities of existence to the extent that its products are true, valid, and believable. Now let us develop the meanings and implications of this proposition.

2.14 Truth

2.14.1 *Truth* in communication is a *quality of content*. It is not a "thing" that exists independently of statements. The truth of statement is a measure of qualities of correspondence, adequacy and coherence of its relationship to the event the statement is "about" — a relationship asserted or recorded in what we defined as its content. To judge the truth or falsity of a statement (or the proposition for which it stands) we need to examine its *correspondence* to the event (in the conventional forms of a culture), its *adequacy* in emphasis, intensity, etc., and its *coherence* with other statements about the event known to be true or false. The truth quality of a single specific proposition is dichotomous. Such a proposition can only be true or false, in the sense that the proposition 2 plus 2 equals 5 cannot be considered partially true or almost true, but only false. The truth quality of complex statement or of a body of statements can be expressed in terms of the qualities of single specific propositions contained in them. Truth quality is provisional only in the sense that we might be unable to assess it or might assess it erroneously at any one time. Otherwise it can only be an absolute quality because both events and making statements about events are unique and irreversible occasions whose relationships to one another — with all their qualities — are likewise unique and irreversible.[7]

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[7]It might be well to deal here briefly with some misconceptions which often arise at this point and lead to such questions as: "Is this an argument for 'absolutism'?" and "Who is to determine this 'truth quality'?". I think this position is the only ideological defense *against* 'absolutism'. For if truth is itself a subjective judgment rather than an objective quality of statements to be appraised more or less successfully, then absolute power over such judgments— i.e., "thought control" could actually remake reality rather than only our consciousness of reality. Thus it is the relativistic position that becomes an argument for "absolutism" as a viable social order. Our conception of the truth quality of statements as an objective (and only in that sense "absolute") relationship to changing realities of existence makes the structure of freedom a necessary condition for its assessment. Assessment by whom? By anyone who satisfies accepted criteria for the verification of statements.

2.14.2 We can illustrate this conception or truth as an objective relationship between statements and events on our diagram (Fig. 2.12):
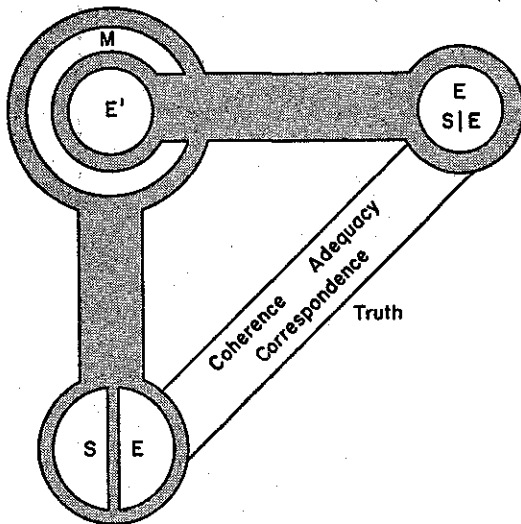

Fig. 2.12.

2.14.3 The content of statements, as we defined it, records not only a relationship but also a vantage point from which events are viewed. The judgment of that aspect of content is concerned with *validity*. The question of validity focuses attention not on the fidelity or accuracy of a statement but on the value attributes imparted through the particular approach or "point of view" apparent in the message. One can photograph the same face in ways that make equally "true" likenesses appear "good" or "evil" (e.g., by making a light cast shadows down or up); one can make two equally factual accounts of murder give the impression of either crime or heroism; one can omit reference to events or claim no factual basis (as in purely persuasive or fictional statements) and still imply an approach to events. Judgment in such cases centers on the question of validity.

2.14.4 The development of standards for the assessment of validity, as of truth, is a social process. The appraisal of the validity of approaches and the truth quality of statements in the light of current standards of reason and evidence is the activity we call *science*. The "humanizing" function of science in communications is the formulation of true statements and valid approaches to inquiry.

2.14.5 Who communicates the human relevance of scientific beliefs to the layman? Who transforms true and valid perceptions of the human condition into imaginative representations, in forms most people can understand, believe, and even enjoy? That, I think, is the social communication function of *art*. The "humanizing" role of art in communications is to sensitize us to the perception of relationships and points of view whose appraisal science makes possible.

2.14.6 The summary diagram (Fig. 2.13) illustrates ideal qualities and functions in social communications.

2.14.7 Along the horizontal dimension we see the ideal process as *valid perceptions freely selected in a representative context of pertinent evidence*. Adding "beliefs" as a controlling factor in human actions, we find the ideal quality along the vertical dimension as *clear expression of beliefs through effective means and forms*. Combining these with the hypothenuse of our triangle representing truth, we formulate the ideal qualities in communication as *true beliefs reflecting valid points of view freely selected in a representative context of pertinent evidence and clearly presented through effective means and forms*. Condensed into a briefer proposition: *true beliefs freely acquired and believably presented.*
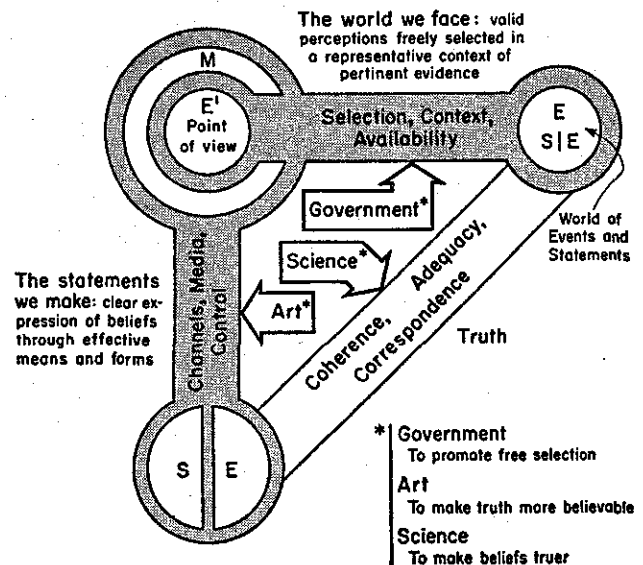

Fig. 2.13.