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# Robert Craig, Paradigms and Theories of Communication.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This work investigates the contributions of Robert Craig to the theory of communication. The American academic is practically unknown in the Latin American academy with few exceptions. On the one hand, the contributions of Latin American communicators in the main international communication magazines are still scarce, which increases their invisibility, and on the other, these magazines seem not to be too interested in Latin American production.

For long years, communication theories sought to find a shared definition for their object of study and a model that faithfully expressed the communicative process. However, as time went by, it was realized that this was a difficult, complex, unfinished, and fruitless task. With the progressive development of theories, each one of them proposed their own definitions and communication models and was placed on the epistemological map of the social sciences, producing a great conversation and subsequent debates, aimed at clarifying the meaning of the term "communication."

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Theories, Communication, Academy, Latinamerica

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This work investigates the contributions of Robert Craig to the theory of communication. The American academic is practically unknown in the Latin American academy with few exceptions. On the one hand, the contributions of Latin American communicators in the main international communication magazines are still scarce, which increases their invisibility, and on the other, these magazines seem not to be too interested in Latin American production.

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the progressive development of theories, each one of them proposed their own definitions and communication models and was placed on the epistemological map of the social sciences, producing a great conversation and subsequent debates, aimed at clarifying the meaning of the term "communication."

The pompous name of "communication and information sciences" has highlighted the interdisciplinary nature of this field of knowledge, its construction based on objects, which can be looked at and examined by a variety of disciplines. Communication studies are also allied to education and culture and cannot be separated since they are affiliated in theory and in practice (Glander, 2000). Communication as an object of study emerges in the 21st century as a set of problems, interweaves, themes, concerns that arise from social phenomena. Communication can be understood as an infinite network of meaningful exchanges carried out by people, a process that permeates our social life. Communication is also a social phenomenon, an object of study and an interdisciplinary field of knowledge. It has been seen successively as a channel, instrument, arrow, projectile, conflict, contract, orchestra, spiral or net. Each of these metaphors, Scolari (2009) points out, configures the researcher's perceptions, questions and methods and allows different questions to be established.

Throughout more than sixty years, different traditions and currents of thought have sought to explain the object of study of communication with multiple edges such as the social phenomena arising from the media, the transformations operated in the form of relationship between people through the irruption of communication technologies, communication productions derived from social changes, the social values imposed by the media and the different perceptions of reality that they grant, the media, the public, the speeches and the theoretical approaches- philosophical that developed through the different modes of human communication. Waisbord (2019) has recently proposed six possible conceptions of communication such as connection, dialogue, expression, information, persuasion and interaction, in an attempt to order academic conversations.

## **2. THE ARTICLE**

The clarity, logic and coherence of the article of Roberto Craig, a true classic of communication studies, titled in 1999 in "Communication Theory as a Field" published in *Communication Theory* (vol 9, num2, p. 199-161) resulted in more than twenty years a must for communicators. "Communication Theory as a Field" is one of the most important article in the modern history of communication research. Recently qualified as a "milestone" in the field of communication research (Cooren, 2012), translated into several languages and

awarded two of the most prestigious awards in communication research in the world. The International Communication Association's Best Article Award and the National Communication Association's Golden Anniversary Monograph Award (Scolari, 2019)

Craig's essay reconstructs communication theory as a dialectical dialogue field according to two principles: the constitutive model of communication as a metamodel and theory as a metadiscursive practice. Craig (1999) argues in the essay that all communication theories are mutually important when addressing a practical life world in which "communication" is already a very meaningful term.

The theory derives from and rhetorically appeals to certain platitudes and beliefs about communication while challenging other postulates. The complementarities and tensions between communication traditions generate a theory, a metadiscourse that intersects and potentially informs the practical metadiscourse underway in society. He proposed a tentative scheme of the field, rhetorical, semiotic, phenomenological, cybernetic, sociopsychological, and the sociocultural and critical traditions of communication.

In 1999, Robert Craig stated that “different traditions of communication theory offer different ways to conceptualize and discuss communication practices and problems. These paths derive from (and appeal to) certain platitudes and beliefs about communication, at the same time that they problematize others. It is in this dialogue between traditions that communication theory can be fully interconnected with discursive (or metadiscursive) practice on communication in society” (1999, p.120).

The theory is distinguished by the characteristic ways of defining communication and communication problems, metadiscursive vocabularies, and the metadiscursive platitudes they appeal to and challenge.

### 3. PARADIGMS

Communication theory as an identifiable field of study did not yet exist, Craig claimed in 1999. In his article he presented his meta-model, a scheme in which he reorganized communication theories based on seven paradigms:

Type of approach:	Communication theorized as:	Subject/object	Examples
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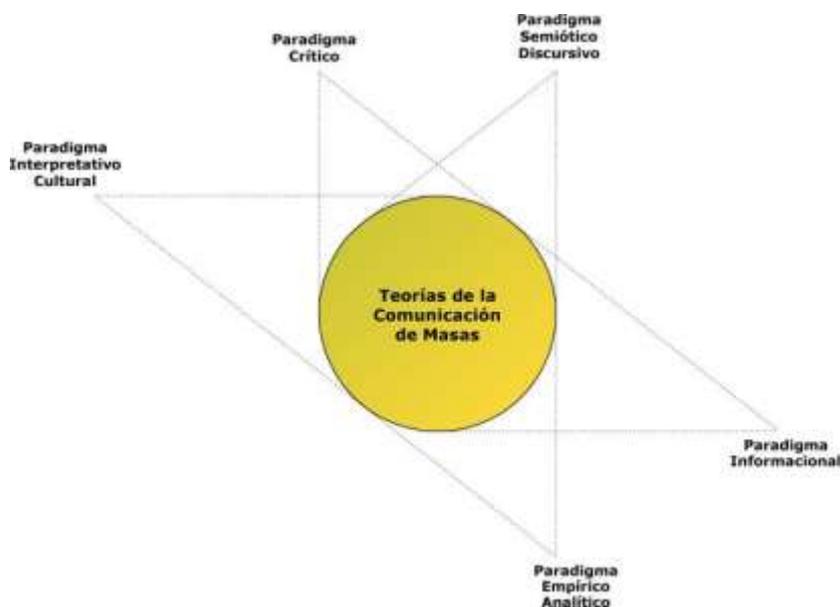
Rhetorical	The practical art of discourse	Subjective	Aristotle, Lloyd F. Bitzer, Kenneth Burke, Thomas B. Farrell, Sonja Foss & Cindy Griffin, Stephen W. Littlejohn, Plato
Semiotic	Intersubjective mediation by signs	Objective	Roland Barthes, Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz, John Locke, Charles Morris, Charles Sanders Peirce, John Durham Peters, Ferdinand de Saussure
Phenomenological	Experience of otherness; dialogue	Subjective	Martin Buber, Brian G. Chang, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Joseph J. Pilotta & Algis Mickunas, John Robert Stewart
Cybernetic	Information processing	Objective	Gregory Bateson, Annie Lang, Niklas Luhmann, Claude Shannon, Paul Watzlawick, Warren Weaver, Norbert Wiener
Sociopsychological	Expression, interaction, & influence behaviour in communication situations	Subjective	Albert Bandura, Charles R. Berger & Richard J. Calabrese, Carl Hovland, Marshall Scott Poole
Sociocultural	Symbolic process that reproduces shared sociocultural patterns	Objective	Peter L. Berger, Deborah Cameron, Thomas Luckmann, George Herbert Mead, Mark Poster, James R. Taylor
Critical	Discursive reflection	Subjective/ Objective	Theodor W. Adorno, Stanley A. Deetz, Jürgen Habermas, Max Horkheimer, Sue Curry Jansen

Craig's work, this work proposed in a novel way to order communication research based on the seven traditions of thought indicated, forming the Constitutive Metamodel of Communication (MCC) (Craig, 1999).

The proposal fulfilled an important epistemological function, since it ordered communicative knowledge and gave coherence to this field, which for the first time was presented as a discipline, after decades of suffering from excessive fragmentation.

In Carlos Scolari on his blog Hipermediaciones I further simplify Robert T. Craig's model by displaying a first geographical chart of the new emerging theoretical conversations about interactive digital media.

Scolari Synthesis Scheme (2019).



#### 4.CONTRIBUTIONS

Craig's article has been widely cited in Anglo-Saxon academic literature and has contributed to the pedagogy of communication theory through its use in textbooks to provide an overview of the field, but its influence on the research of the Communication theory so far has been quite fuzzy.

It is most often cited as a gesture towards the countryside as a whole or towards one or more of the famous "seven traditions." Even more diffusely, the vocabulary of theoretical traditions seems to have leaked somewhat into the language of communication theory.

Twenty-five years later, the development of the theory shows that the field of communication exhibits a substantial change, since the differences that were considered surmountable in 1990 have multiplied exponentially.

Craig's meta-model reduces philosophically incompatible traditions of thought to a series of relativized perspectives, all seen as useful ways of framing practical communication problems, generates a certain relativism, but at the same time has served to widen the boundaries, the edges of that field. and bring new problems.

What is the current status of communication theories? The core of concepts that affect and conclude in the field of communication theories has increased in recent years, but chaotic. We are facing a process of dispersion due to the creation of new views and theoretical conversations. In the article, Craig claims the usefulness demonstrated by his model in recent years either to represent the field, justify its existence or explain it to students, but ends up concluding that, as in 1999, communication theories are characterized by their “productive fragmentation”. The effort to fuel a conversation in the field - if the communication has one - seems to have sparked no more than a few babbles.

In the Latin American field, the creative richness of communication studies has promoted the broadening of the object of study of communication, which already exceeds two centuries, revealing collective realities and concerns about society and the media, processes that imply rethinking the link between thought, knowledge and academia. Complexity, fragmentation, atomization and utopian pragmatism distill authors such as Antonio Pascuali, Luiz Beltrão, José Marques de Melo and Jesús Martín-Barbero, who have built a theoretical and elastic mesh to think and rethink Latin American communicational thinking within the framework of complexity and the utopian pragmatism of a mestizo science under construction. Faced with the fragmentation of the communicational field, we perceive a deeply atomized terrain.

Communication studies should not lose sight of the transdisciplinary forest where great conversations flourish, but, when developing the field, produce investigations that allow the accumulation of new knowledge, limiting scientific relevance.

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