

Communication Among Animate Creatures, Especially Us Humans

In its most basic sense, the verb “communicate” refers to something getting across or becoming shared. But this sense of the term is misleading about what our subject matter is. It includes cases where something is given off in all directions, as when a disease, a smell, or heat is communicated from its source to everything in the surrounding environment that can absorb it. However, we are not referring to such passive “giving off” and indiscriminate “absorbing” when it comes to communication **by** animate creatures, directed **to** others of their species. Moreover, this sense of the term does not capture that our interest is in if, how, when it matters – if, how, when it has communicative value – that something has been gotten across or shared.

Communication *by* “individuals” to others is *made* to happen in response (by other creatures) or re/action (by humans) to the

occurrence of an *exigence* – a deficit, threat, or opportunity.⁷ And communication is *directed* to just those others whose response or re/action may resolve or mitigate that exigence. This may be an exigent condition in the environment (including the communicator's internal environment) to which a communicative item calls their attention. Or it may be an exigent condition created by the communicative item itself. When this happens, it affects the state of the situation of those who detect and process it, and through their response or re/action to that effect on the state of the situation, it brings about a result.

1.1 Incentivizing Communication

On the principle that an object at rest stays at rest unless and until some force is exerted on it, animate beings at rest also remain at rest unless an exigent condition incentivizes them to spend effort.⁸ Therefore, because

⁷ An under-appreciated fact is that among us humans, “individual” communicators are not necessarily a single person, as the sociologist Erving Goffman (1981) detailed. He analyzed the doing of communication as organized around three tasks – tasks specific to operating the communication “tool.” These are usually done by a single person, but may instead be distributed among a team, or team of teams. And when the tasks are distributed, special effort to make the doing of communication work becomes unavoidable. The first task is done by the “principal,” the one(s) who is/are incentivized to produce a communicative item to bring about a specific targeted result. The next task is done by the “author,” the one(s) who compose(s) the communicative item on the principal's behalf – its substance, its expressive means, its communication medium. The third task is done by the “animator,” the one(s) who produce(s) the actual communicative item. A prototype of the distribution of these tasks is a large-scale ad agency, where the work of the communicator is distributed between the client and account executive (principal), the creative and research departments (author), and the production department (animator). But in different settings these tasks may be distributed in other ways. In a political campaign, the candidate is the animator, and beforehand may have a role as principal and author as well, but possibly a minor one, with the roles of principal and author shared with campaign staff and possibly dominated by them. And in some large business organizations, the role of principal in communication with the public, shareholders, and even employees may be dominated by the director of communication and not the CEO.

⁸ After entering the reptile house at the Brookfield Zoo in Chicago some years ago, visitors came to a sign under the first exhibit that asked, “Why don't they move?” A sign under the adjacent exhibit asked, “Why should they?”

communicating requires effort, engaging in it must be incentivized. Exigent conditions that incentivize communicating – the production of communicative items – may be *material* ones that occur either externally (the approach of a predator, a car's malfunctioning) or internally (hunger, thirst, a memory); or they may be *communicative* ones (a warning, an invitation, or offer). Such exigent conditions may be life-changing (a forest fire, an assault) or mundane (a youngster misbehaving, a missed appointment).

One agenda of research and theory in our discipline is to identify exigences that incentivize the doing of communication (by communicators) or attention to it (by re/actors), mainly human-made exigences, and find out how they affect the doing of communication, and/or re/acting to it. These exigent conditions range from the interpersonal and communal to the organizational and societal. They include a disagreement, a task group's mission, work-family imbalance, team building, coordination of effort, mistreatment or injustice, political contention, a threat to public health, competition for market share, a public relations crisis, civic disengagement, etc.

Generally, communicative items themselves create an exigence (either call attention to an extra-communicative one, or constitute one in themselves) to which self or others respond (other creatures) or re/act (humans). This may be a behavioral response or re/action (e.g. fleeing when warned of a danger). Or it may be a communicative one (e.g. an aggression display in *response* to an intruder, or confirmation in *re/action* to an assertion).

Often, at least among more highly evolved creatures, communicative items are not simply a stimulus that causes an extra-communicative, behavioral response. Some (most? all?) items may incentivize others to reciprocate them and produce a communicative item themselves. When this happens, communicative items occur in pairs or multiples. Sequences of linked items will be referred to as ***communicative episodes*** when *two or more* communicators reciprocally produce successive communicative items in re/action to preceding ones. Among us humans, this is almost always what happens, as in conversation, discussion, debate, deliberation, negotiation, quarrel, interrogation, press conference, etc.

When *the same* (human) communicator produces a succession of communicative items that each re/act to and build on prior ones, the result is usually referred to as a *monologue* (if spoken) or a *document* (if written) or a *production* (if broadcast), etc. In any such case, each of the component items in an episode, monologue, document, or production has the local, internal, result of bringing about next items. And it is the *combined* communicative items that collectively bring about some *end result* (e.g. the end result of a quarrel, a speech, a report, or a documentary).

In some species, producing communicative items is biologically made to happen and is involuntary (e.g. among insects). The item produced will be one that calls others' attention to, or is itself, an exigence to which others will expectably respond or re/act in a way that at least mitigates the exigence, if not resolves it. In many species, however, some proportion of communicative items is made to happen voluntarily, although generally these still have a biological basis.⁹ But even if a communicative item is not biologically determined, but rather it is voluntary, it is not random or open-ended what communicative item is produced in response (other creatures) or re/action (humans) to what exigence.

Unlike other creatures, we humans are not limited to re/acting to a fixed set of exigences with a fixed set of communicative items that bring about a fixed set of results.¹⁰

Hence, unlike studies of the communication of other creatures, our investigations of what incentivizes *human* communication and what it brings about cannot be exhaustive. There will always be new findings because our communication (as a species, if not individually) is open-ended in that way.

⁹ These have a biological basis in that the items produced come from the general repertoire of what all members of that species communicate, or communicate about, with what communicative items (e.g. every dog barks, whines, wags its tail, displays submission, etc. in the same ways, each such item incentivized by the same exigence). This does not preclude finding individual differences in threshold conditions, intensity, and duration of producing items, but all from that repertoire. In addition, among more highly evolved creatures, there may be deviations from what standardly *incentivizes* producing this or that specific item from that repertoire. For example, it seems baboons are individually capable of producing communicative items from that shared repertoire tactically and deceptively. In one instance, a young baboon was bullying another, creating a disturbance, which brought adults to the scene. The young baboon was observed to stop suddenly when the adults appeared and adopt a watchful stance. That stance has a fixed association among baboons with sighting a predator. But in this instance the human observers concluded there was no predator. They inferred that the young baboon's having taken that stance was a tactic to distract the adults from the disturbance his bullying had created (Byrne & Whiten 1985).

¹⁰ There is a caveat, however. Individuals, families, groups, communities, etc. tend to be *self*-limited in these ways by their life experiences, routinized practices, recurrent tasks and activities, education, and habits. But because we are not limited in those ways as a species, individuals and groups can overcome their own particular limits in the face of changed circumstances, though it seems that people differ in how capable or willing they are to do this.

The question of what incentivizes communication among us humans is relatively new, something we only began asking in the twentieth century CE even though our discipline originated in the 4th century BCE (contra the view of many colleagues outside the US that it began with the advent of mass media). When our discipline originated in ancient Greece, intellectual interest in communication was limited to its societal/civic functionality in a democracy, and so it was self-evident to rhetorical theorists at the time what incentivized it. There was no intellectual interest in communication in most of the other avenues of life, despite its being consequential interpersonally, communally, professionally, organizationally, commercially, and so forth. It was not until the blossoming of the social science side of our discipline in the 1950s and 1960s that we began taking notice of, and undertook to find out about, these other, open-endedly-many, exigent conditions that incentivize our communication.

Whether communication among us humans is ever made to happen in the absence of an exigence is more a matter of definition and interpretation than of observation. For example, communication in *rituals* (e.g. a wedding ceremony or funeral, a pep rally for a school's sports teams) is a candidate instance of communicating in the absence of an exigence. Within a ritual, communicators do not call the attention of others to any exigence with which they have to cope or result to bring about, other than being expected to participate. But it is not that simple. Communication in rituals does have a social benefit. Something collectively valued is affirmed or celebrated. Such affirmation and celebration can only be done in the absence of any practical incentive for communicating. We can then consider that rituals, and the communication they comprise, are incentivized by its having become exigent socially and cognitively to affirm or celebrate some specific thing that is collectively valued.¹¹

¹¹ While staging a ritual seems a distinctively human undertaking, it may not be entirely so. In a segment of the documentary *Gorongosa Park: Rebirth of Paradise* (also titled *Africa's Wild Kingdom Reborn*), several members of a herd of elephants successively took a turn at charging at and progressively chasing off the vehicle of a wildlife photographer. After the vehicle moved far enough away to satisfy them, the elephants of the herd seemed to celebrate it in a victory dance. They crowded together, entwining their trunks, trumpeting, and "dancing" from forefoot to forefoot. That the elephants displayed their excitement and collective triumph in that affiliative way in the apparent absence of an exigence gives what they did a ritual aspect, very like a pep rally, or a team's athletes' celebration of scoring a goal. It came as a great surprise to the naturalist who was also on the scene, who said she had never seen anything like it.

Another candidate instance of communicating in the absence of an exigence is a more anecdotal one. It involves the accusation sometimes leveled at a person that they are talking “just to hear the sound of their own voice.” This allegation implies that this person talks when there is no need for it, no incentivizing exigence. That this is said as a criticism presupposes that it is aberrant, and that if it happens at all, it is exceptional. Perhaps this is because in the absence of an exigence, there is nothing to limit and focus what is communicated, or communicated about, or what re/action to make to it. Communication in the absence of an exigence thus takes up re/actors’ time and attention without anything to be gained from it.

It seems – pending direct investigation – that even in social media, which afford people an opportunity to post images and text in the absence of an exigence just to “see” their own “voice” (such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram at this writing), it is unlikely that much gets posted without an incentivizing exigence. There are generally exigences that incentivize what is posted and incentivize re/actors to attend to the posts, whether personal and communal. And re/actors to communicative items in those media can readily distinguish between posts that are incentivized by an exigence, and posts that are not.

1.2 Benefits (and Harms) that Communication Brings about

Generally, among all creatures, communication functions as a means of bringing about a result that could not be brought about otherwise. Among other creatures, it seems predetermined by biological imperatives that communication brings about benefits,¹² at minimum the survival of individuals, preservation of communities (if the species forms communities), and propagation of the species. *But for us humans, it is not assured that what our communication brings about will be a*

¹² When communication among other creatures brings about what we humans might empathically regard as harms, they are benefits from a Darwinian perspective. When males confront each other during the mating season it benefits the species that the strongest prevails, even if the vanquished one is injured. When a pack of predators coordinate effort to bring down prey from a herd, it not only benefits the predators, it benefits the herd if the one killed is weak or sick, and benefits the ecosystem that the predators limit the size of the prey animals’ population.

benefit. Without limits on what we can bring about communicatively, and without biological imperatives to bring about a benefit, there is nothing to prevent our communication from bringing about harms as well (e.g. harm to the well-being of individuals and groups). And it is not unusual that it does so, at every level from the interpersonal and communal to the organizational and societal, although this seems to be an occurrence that is highly variable personally, interpersonally, situationally, and culturally.¹³

For all creatures, communication has *practical benefits*, whether in addressing an exigent condition or bringing a new condition about as a result. For more highly evolved creatures, especially us humans, there are also *cognitive* and *social benefits*. **Practical benefits** start with the survival and welfare of individuals and propagation of the species, often through communicatively achieved coordination of effort (e.g. for killer whales, to hunt prey; for us humans, to manufacture food). Some practical benefits are general across many species, including our own (e.g. mating and procreation); others are more species-specific (e.g. swarming bees settling on where to locate a new hive; a divorcing couple settling on a division of their assets). In addition, we humans may communicatively bring about **practical harms**, such as obstructing access to a benefit through discriminatory practices.

¹³ Human communication may bring about harms even if the communicator is not a bad actor who deliberately undertakes to bring about a harm. First, harms may result when communicative items produced independently by different communicators are aggregated by re/actors, where the sum of the parts brings about something different from what the parts produced by each communicator would separately bring about. For example, it has been argued that whatever the commercial benefits to a business are of ads that objectify/sexualize women, the *aggregation* of such advertisements has a different result – the creation of a *symbolic environment* that is harmful to women at work and in public, and sometimes at home and among friends. Second, communication may bring about a harm when it distracts communicators and re/actors from dangers posed by concurrent other exigences besides the one(s) that incentivized the communicative items they do produce. Third, it may also bring about a harm if the communicator produces communicative items in a way that does not adequately increase the probability of bringing about the targeted result, and ends up bringing about unanticipated, harmful, results. And fourth, it may also bring about harms through the (often inadvertent and unavoidable) bias of the specifics of the words used, and other expressive means, as elaborated in Chapter 4.

Among more highly evolved species, communication brings about **cognitive benefits** such as imparting social and practical knowledge; also for us humans, the acquisition of impractical knowledge (e.g. basic science, arts, humanities, history), and positive emotional states (e.g. self-confidence). But we humans may also communicatively bring about **cognitive harms**, such as anxiety and stress, harmful stereotypes, intimidation, political conspiracy theories, and so forth.

The **social benefits** that communication brings about are common across more highly evolved species. They include companionship and relationship, affiliation and inclusion, bonding, cooperation, socialization, entertainment and play. And perhaps only among us humans, empowerment, self-esteem and social identity. Correspondingly, we humans may bring about **social harms**, as when others are communicatively harassed, abused, objectified, bullied, or ostracized.

1.3 Incentivizing Re/actors' Attention to Communication

Attentiveness to others' communicative items generally carries with it an incentive to respond (other creatures) or re/act (humans) – to participate in some way in mitigating or resolving the incentivizing exigence or bringing about the targeted result. *While such attentiveness seems assured among other creatures, among us humans it is not.* We are selective about what communicative items we attend to because we have to be. Unlike other creatures, most of us are inundated with communicative items from many sources most of the time (with notable exceptions in some places), especially with the advent of mass media and then social media. When there are too many items from too many sources, re/actors have to choose among them – which sources, which items, and which media to attend to routinely, and on an ad hoc basis which other ones “now.”

Securing re/actors' attention is therefore a result that communicators sometimes target, and that communication actually does bring about (or fails to). If and when the attention of targeted re/actors is not assured, some communicative effort is needed to just secure their attention, over and above whatever effort is needed to produce a communicative item which may bring about the targeted

re/action.¹⁴ From the re/actor's perspective, inundated with communicative items as we are, it is a matter of seeking and singling out those communicative items whose substance is useful in mitigating or resolving an exigent condition that stands to harm us, or perhaps bring about a result that benefits us, or is gratifying or entertaining.

It is an unsettled matter in our research and theory what mix of personal and general factors influence what (types of) communicative items re/actors attend to or seek out, and how that varies situationally, demographically, relationally, and so forth. Whatever they are, communicators have to strive to adapt to them or overcome them (e.g. for advertisers to get consumers to attend, for adversaries their antagonists, for parents their children).

Most obviously, most generally, there are *practical incentives* for what communicative item(s) we (and other creatures) attend to. Re/actors attend to items that call attention to, or create, an exigent condition by which they stand to be benefitted or harmed (e.g. closure of a neighborhood school, a career opportunity).

There are also *cognitive incentives* to attend to specific sources, items, or media, especially for us humans. There are at least two. One is practical necessity – to become better informed, more expert, more understanding, more skilled. The second is gratification and entertainment, or simple curiosity. There is good evidence that communicative items in specific media provide gratifications, especially television, and in recent years, the internet streams and postings on computers and mobile devices. But this is not a recent, medium-specific, phenomenon. Communicative items have been attended to for centuries as sources of gratification or entertainment, as in religious teachings, theatrical productions, conversation and debate, gossiping, storytelling, and so on.

¹⁴ Communicators target results, but in many cases this includes or is the same as targeting re/actions. The two are intertwined, but sometimes operationally distinct. When people communicate within a communicative episode, they generally target an end result, but that end result may be contingent on re/actions of others within the episode. A communicator may thus target a local re/action within the episode and also target an end result of the episode. But in many cases they are the same thing: the targeted end result of an episode may be a certain re/action, and the targeted re/action may be the end result of an episode. In this book reference is sometimes made to a targeted re/action rather than a targeted result when the two may be distinct.

And so have communicative items in writing, most obviously stories, poetry, and novels, and some non-fiction.

There are also *social incentives* to attend to specific sources, items, or media. The main one is that attending to these may be a prerequisite for acceptance by individuals or groups. There is a variety of such groups, such as religious communities, professional communities, and sport or recreation communities. Being inattentive to such sources, items, or media can have the cost of being ostracized as hostile, alienated, deviant, anti-social, irresponsible or irreverent, and the like.

In addition to social *incentives* for attending to certain sources, items, or media, there may be social *imperatives* among us humans to attend, at least whenever someone communicates to us personally, directly. It can provoke interpersonal disaffection or conflict to ignore that person. It is noteworthy that some new media provide people with ways to shield themselves from such direct communication without overtly breaching that imperative to attend. Perhaps that is what has attracted so many users to them. For example, texting or emailing versus telephoning shields re/actors from having to re/act or sustain engagement “now” (and affords a handy excuse for not re/acting at all, that somehow the text or email was not received). And for those who receive voice calls, caller ID enables selectivity about what calls to answer without its being discernible to the caller if a call is deliberately being ignored.

1.4 The Inherent Uncertainty before the Fact of What Communication Will Bring about

For us humans, the necessity of studying communication, and of special efforts to make it work, arise from **THE INHERENT UNCERTAINTY FUNDAMENTAL** that was emphasized in the Preface:

It is probable at best before the fact, never a certainty, what result communication will bring about, whether the targeted one, or some other, or none.

This does not deny that among all creatures, including us humans, it is probably fully determinate *after* the fact what result a communicative item *did* bring about. Nor does it deny that from a human communicator’s subjective perspective, it often *seems* a certainty *before* the fact

what specific result it *will* bring about.¹⁵ But despite that, among more highly evolved creatures, and more so among us humans, it is never a certainty before the fact, only probable, what a communicative item will bring about – not just whether it will bring about the targeted result, but whether the actual result will even address the incentivizing exigence.¹⁶

The inherent uncertainty before the fact of what communicative items will bring about is of a different order among us humans than it is among other highly evolved creatures. Among other creatures, such uncertainty is binary. Either a particular communicative item *will*, or it *will not*, bring about the particular result that that item is produced to bring about among creatures of that species. It is a certainty that it will be one of those two (e.g. an aggression display either will or will not bring about an intruder's retreat).

Among us humans, however, this is not a binary matter. In addition to its being uncertain whether an item will or will not bring about the targeted result, it may instead or in addition be re/acted to in open-endedly-many other ways (even when a particular re/action is statistically the most likely). For example, an offer may, or may not, bring about an acceptance. It may (instead) bring about anger that the offered benefit is small; and/or may (in addition) bring about gratitude for the generosity of the offer. Bullying among adolescents may, or may not, bring about intimidation and ostracism of its victim. It may (instead) bring about

¹⁵ Some of this *subjectively felt* certainty probably has an egocentric basis, but many times it rests on having pre-existent repertoires of communication routines and practices that have fixed linkages to certain results, as elaborated in Chapter 5. These routines and practices evolve in most families, groups, communities and cultures, professions, and institutions. They make it highly probable, near certain, what result specific communicative items will bring about, and reduce the need for a special effort in the doing of communication to bring it about. Arguably, achieving such relative certainty is what drives the evolution of these routines and practices. We see this, for example, in service encounters that are scripted, and organizations and practices that are highly regimented, most notably in the military, but also airplane cockpits, surgical theaters, etc.

¹⁶ The inherent uncertainty before the fact of what a communicative item will bring about underlies or is presupposed by our many research programs whose goal is to find out what re/action is statistically most likely to a communicative item that has certain properties (its substance, specifics of its expressive means, and/or its communication medium), or what properties of a communicative item make a specific re/action statistically most likely.

adult intervention; and/or may (in addition) bring about the victim's violent retribution, or suicide.

It goes hand in hand with this that people have developed standardized (usually culture-specific) ways in the doing of communication that increase the probability to a near certainty that their communication in each instance will bring about the targeted result and not some other (as elaborated in Chapter 5). These generally evolve within specific groupings of people, such as in families, communities, workplaces, professions and the like. However, while those standardized ways are widely applicable, they are finite and limited. In special or novel circumstances in which standardized ways do not apply or cannot be counted on, or the cost of a communication misfire would be high enough to justify it, people engage in a special effort to make their communication work (as also elaborated in Chapter 5). In addition, when our communicative items do not work in a specific instance, we humans alone can make the special effort to revise (not just repeat) and try again – contingent on having the opportunity, the will or need, and communicative proficiency to do so.¹⁷

There are two main reasons for its being an uncertainty before the fact what a communicative item will bring about. Both reasons stem from the dependence of the result that a communicative item brings about on the response (of other creatures) or re/action (of other humans). One reason is an *extra-communicative* one that applies to more highly evolved creatures, and to a greater extent, us humans: there are individual differences among others of the species such that different ones may respond (other creatures) or re/act (humans) differently to the same communicative item.

The other reason for the inherent uncertainty before the fact of what a communicative item will bring about is a distinctively human, entirely *communicative*, one. It stems from the human ability to produce alternative communicative items in re/action to the same exigence or in targeting the same result, whereas the same re/actor cannot be counted on to make the same re/action to each alternative. This is because alternatives may not change the situation in the same way. For example, you

¹⁷ It probably varies across such factors as a communicator's context and culture, proficiencies and experience, activity, and task, what the likelihood is of making repairs and trying again when the doing of communication does not work. Each of these factors may interact with other factors as well, especially how urgent the exigence at hand makes it for communication to work. The extent of such variation, what contingencies are involved, and if and how such factors interact, are matters that have yet to be fully investigated.

may seek to bring it about that others in a crowd move aside so you can pass through by saying one or another of these alternatives: either “Excuse me.” or “Coming through.” or “Get out of my way!” or “*Move!*” (accompanied by this or that vocal register and this or that bodily action). It is likely, or at least conceivable, that each of those alternatives will bring about a different result (e.g. moving out of your way, ignoring you, or resisting you), making it uncertain before the fact which alternative is most likely to bring about which result. This is because each alternative puts the re/actor(s) in somewhat different positions, and thus different situations. In this case, the alternatives range from tacitly respecting the re/actor’s right to give way or not (“Excuse me.”) to overtly disrespecting the re/actor’s right entirely (“*Move!*”).

In addition to such variations in expressive means, the substance of alternative communicative items may change the situation differently depending on which aspects of the incentivizing exigence and the situation they bring to the re/actor’s attention. Depending on research findings on this question, these may turn out to include:

- what the item makes known about the specifics of the incentivizing exigence;
- how urgent the item makes it seem that resolving it is;
- the item’s appropriateness or adequacy for the task that communicator and/or re/actor are currently engaged in, separately or together, and their relationship;
- whether the item is customary in that circumstance or is a normative breach;
- what authority the item presupposes the communicator has, to have targeted that re/action from that/those re/actor(s);
- what obligation the item presupposes the re/actor has to re/act in the targeted way.

Besides being capable of producing alternative items in re/action to the same exigence, we humans can produce alternative communicative items adapted to different situations, or even to individual differences among re/actors – or micro-groups of re/actors linked by social media profiles – and their knowledge and experience, interests, and dispositions. This capability is the key to the special efforts in which communicators sometimes engage to configure the elements of a communicative item (specifics of substance, expressive means, communication medium) in such a way as will increase the probability of bringing about the targeted result and not some other, even in the face of

extra-communicative differences among re/actors. Other creatures, lacking the capability to produce alternatives, have the luxury of being insulated from these issues.

1.5 How We Humans Make Our Communication Work, or Work Better

In general, to “make communication work” is a matter of making the *doing* of it *effective* in bringing about a *targeted result* that mitigates or resolves whatever exigence incentivized communicating. It has already been pointed out that the inherent uncertainty before the fact of what result our communicative items will bring about is the main reason that we humans study our communication, and when deemed necessary, actively engage in special efforts to make it work.

1.5.1 The Communicator’s Role in Making Communication Work

The known beginning of studies of how communication works, and dedicated efforts to make it work, was, again, in rhetorical studies in ancient Greece, in the fourth century BCE. This has been a subject of practical, artistic, and scientific importance in centuries of writings about it since then. A more recent example of such writing, in the early days of the emergence of the social science side of our discipline, is Wilbur Schramm’s (1954) essay, “How Communication Works.” In that essay, Schramm did not offer up an answer to the broad, central question his title seems to address (the way [human] communication *does* work). Although he did provide a thoughtful overview of thinking at the time about basic communication processes, he had a somewhat narrower, more applied concern: *how the doing of (mass) communication observably is, or can be, MADE to work to bring about a particular result.*

The particular communicative result on which Schramm focused was the *persuasion* of a/an (mass) audience. Based on research findings, he ended up with a quartet of prescriptions for creating an *effective* persuasive text. These are: (i) gain the audience’s attention; (ii) establish common ground; (iii) arouse in the audience a need to act and provide a means for them to do so; (iv) take into account the social environment of audience members that may constrain their re/action. Much subsequent research follows this prototype of finding out what elements of communicative items (their substance, specifics of expressive means,

communication medium) in what configuration are most likely to bring about a particular result.

In addition to numerous other academic and professional writings on the social science side of the discipline about what makes the doing of communication work, there are also the active efforts of communicators in specific instances to make their communicative items work, or work better. Communicators may be found to plan their communication, and even (depending on the medium) rehearse, record, review, revise, re-record it, and so on. They may also seek advice and feedback from friends, colleagues, or mentors – and in some situations from communication professionals or trainers – about substance, specifics of expressive means, and communication medium.

The extensiveness of such special efforts seems proportionate in each case to how costly the communicator anticipates it will be if his or her doing of communication were to not work. The extensiveness of such efforts is also contingent on practicalities such as how much time and opportunity there is to prepare, and what budget the communicator has for professional assistance.

Communicative items are also produced on the spot, not planned in advance, as in conversations, deliberations, interviews, and the like. Special effort in that case has to be covert – mental effort usually done in microseconds (a feat that points to the neurological reality of a communication “tool”). It involves “calculating” or knowing ways in which specifics of substance, expressive means, and communication medium can be fitted to the exigence that incentivized producing it, to the activity or task at hand, to prior communicative items, and to re/actors’ knowledge and experience, interests, and dispositions.

It seems that these covert efforts are often not conscious ones, yet the communicative items produced usually bring about the targeted result (just as composing sentences is often not a conscious process, but they are usually grammatical). Moreover, if a communicative item produced on the spot does not work, there may be overt effort afterwards to still make it work. These efforts involve *revising* specifics of the original item’s substance, expressive means, and/or communication medium. Such efforts are possible because, again, alternative communicative items we humans can produce in re/acting to the same exigence may not bring about the same result.

Study and effort undertaken by communicators to make the doing of communication work, or work better, is generally biased towards making something *good* come of it, whether something good for the re/actor, the communicator, or (ideally) both. But not always. As was already pointed

out, *human* communication is also effective at bringing about results that are harmful. The most notorious example, the strategy of the “big lie” in Hitler’s and Goebbels’ propaganda, seems quaint compared to contemporary uses of social media to promulgate harmful disinformation. That our communication may bring about harms is recognized within our discipline and outside it, a matter of concern among critics, ethicists, religious leaders, reporters, governments, political and social activists, and the public at large.

1.5.2 The Re/actor’s Role in Making Communication Work

In the prior part of this book, also in other parts, and widely through the discipline, the focus is on what *communicators* do to make *their* communication work. But this oversimplifies and misrepresents the matter. What communication brings about is something that cannot be attributed to “individual” communicators¹⁸ nor individual communicative items.

For us humans, what a communicative item brings about is usually a matter of the item’s *contribution* to bringing about the *end result* of a *communicative episode* in which communicators (who are also re/actors) and re/actors (who are also communicators) are mutually engaged, and to which each *communicator≈re/actor*¹⁹ contributes.

In that case, what communication brings about is not through communicators’ communicative items acting *on* re/actors, but *communicators≈re/actors*’

¹⁸ As already noted, “individual” human communicators are not necessarily a single person. Goffman (1981) detailed that the doing of (human) communication comprises three tasks that are often done by a single person, but may instead be distributed among a team, or team of teams – the tasks of re/acting to an exigence by targeting a communicative result, composing a communicative item to bring it about, and producing the item.

¹⁹ The mathematical symbol “≈” notates “approximately equal to.” In the non-mathematical use here, it notates that to be a communicator is “approximately the same as” or “approximately equivalent to” being a re/actor, and vice-versa. Similarly, a communicative item and a re/action are also approximately equivalent. The doing of communication is always incentivized, so there are no communicative items that are not also re/actions, or re/actions that are not also communicative items. Although attention may be focused on one function or the other, this notation is used in this book whenever the dual role is relevant, when each person is a *communicator≈re/actor*.

successive communicative items *interacting with* each other (as elaborated in Chapter 6 on the Collaborative Model). This is obviously so in a negotiation, but much else as well. Arguably, it is so even when there seems to be just a single communicative item (e.g. a press release) and a single re/action to it (e.g. a news report). Such pairs (the item and the re/action) are generally components of a stream of linked communicative items that began before the “first” item (e.g. the press release) and continue after the “second” (the news report) to bring about an end result, even if researchers and participants focus on just the pair.

On the other hand, we cannot ignore that at each turn within a stream of linked communicative items, each communicator≈re/actor is incentivized by a local exigence to produce a communicative item that targets a local result that will mitigate or resolve that incentivizing exigence. For example, a factual claim made during a negotiation may be re/acted to just then with a challenge to its accuracy or relevance, because if left unchallenged, the negotiation could progress towards an unwanted end result. However, work in our discipline, as well as special efforts by practitioners, often focuses on what each communicator’s≈re/actor’s separate communicative items bring about at each step *within* a communicative episode (as in a conversation, an advertisement, a political campaign, and the like), without due consideration of those being *intra*-episode results that may influence the end result of the episode but rarely determine it.

1.6 Human Communication as a Subject Matter within the Social Sciences

Given the various ways in which human communication is distinctively human, and the research questions that that poses, human communication is a unique subject matter among the subject matters of the other social sciences. And yet there are notable overlaps. Scattered efforts have been made to grapple with the distinction and the overlaps, but where we fit among the other social sciences has still not been cleanly worked out. And it is not just an intellectual concern, but a practical one: it affects funding for our research and for our departments, faculties, and graduate students. This issue of where our discipline fits in among the social sciences gets preliminary treatment here, and is addressed at greater length in Chapter 8.

The doing of communication and its results are unavoidably intertwined with extra-communicative phenomena studied in other social sciences – psychological phenomena (e.g. attitudes, attraction), sociological and cultural phenomena (e.g. conformity, conflict, role, values, identity and membership), economic phenomena (commerce, labor, service, manufacturing) and political/civic phenomena (e.g. political power, social capital, civic engagement). These phenomena are clearly relevant to our own. They are influenced by communication; they influence the doing of communication by communicators≈re/actors; and they mediate the influence of communicative items on communicators≈re/actors.

Accordingly, it is not surprising that much research in our discipline takes extra-communicative phenomena into account.²⁰ It would be difficult and unproductive not to. But unless we navigate the overlap, our work may be considered to be driven by, derivative from, and ancillary to work in other disciplines – as some actually do view it (see Chapter 8). We can navigate the overlap by distinguishing between: (i) research that advances our knowledge about the workings of the *communication part* of what takes place between people (done mainly in our discipline; cf. Powers 1995); versus (ii) research that advances our knowledge about the workings of the *extra-communicative* parts of what takes place (done mainly in other disciplines) – the psychological, sociological, cultural, economic, political/civic parts.²¹

For those who focus on the doing of communication, finding out about the communication part is a matter of investigating what configurations of the elements of communicative items – their substance, expressive means, and communication medium – are likely to be

²⁰ This is not a one-way street. Because of our overlapping interests, attention has been given to communicative phenomena – to what incentivizes them, and/or what they bring about – by some psychologists, by some sociologists, by some ethnographers, by some economists, by some political scientists, by some linguists and semioticians, among others. Often, their work adds as much or more to our discipline as it does to their own.

²¹ For example, the psychologist Albert Bandura (2001) found that the medium of television is a key source of social learning, in that television programming presents models of specific behaviors and their consequences that Bandura theorizes are the basis of social learning. But Bandura's study could be flipped on its head, and give rise to studies of a feature of the *communication part* of the television medium that falls within the mission and identity of the Communication discipline – the workings of the medium as a surrogate for direct social experience.

adopted, or are consequential, under specific exigent conditions. These exigent conditions may have an extra-communicative basis (psychological, sociological, cultural, economic, or political/civic), but often they have a communicative one. For those who focus on the actual results of communication, finding out about the communication part is a matter of investigating: (i) which configurations of the elements of communicative items (their substance, expressive means, and communication medium); (ii) have what influence on specific extra-communicative results (psychological, sociological, cultural, economic, or political/civic ones), and also, often more importantly, on communicative results.²²

1.6.1 The Distinct *Communication Part* that Our Discipline Studies

The view that the social science side of our discipline is derivative from and ancillary to other social sciences overlooks that for centuries, the doing of communication has itself been a topic of study. Hence, there must be something for us to learn about human communication itself that is not revealed by examining the extra-communicative influences on it or its extra-communicative effects. And there is. This is the *communication part* of what takes place between people, the bridge between an incentivizing exigence and a (targeted) result that addresses it.²³

²² In a 2002 brochure about the substantive interests of the Communication discipline published by the National Communication Association, communicatively produced exigences were said to supersede extra-communicative ones, with the results brought about by ensuing communicative items predominantly communicative ones: “While communication outcomes are influenced by a host of psychological and sociological factors that set the stage for interaction (e.g. personality, goals, social skills, contextual, and relational norms), the influences of these factors frequently pale in comparison to actual communication dynamics, once people commence interaction”.

²³ This is introduced here as an empirical matter, not an entry into a metaphysical morass about whether a person can ever make communication happen, and adopt ways to make it work, without its being predetermined by their psychology, society, culture, and politics. Empirically, people occasionally (in some cases, often) undertake special efforts to make communication work, including revising and retrying when it does not work. Moreover, these are contingent on the *communicative* experience and proficiencies of communicators.

The communication part revolves around the configurable elements of the communication “tool,” and the experience and proficiencies of communicators in operating it. It has at its center the human capability to produce alternative communicative items in re/-action to the same exigence, or in undertaking to bring about a specific result. This makes it possible that the specifics of each communicative item that a communicators≈re/actor produces – specifics of its substance, expressive means, and communication medium – may not be fitted to the situation and the re/actors in it in such a way as makes it maximally probable that the targeted result will be brought about.

Communicators≈re/actors may therefore go awry in their communicating, regardless of whatever extra-communicative influences bring about their communicating or its result. For example, even if a public figure is under substantial sociological, cultural, and political pressure to be gender neutral, he or she may go awry by producing a communicative item whose substance, specifics of its expressive means, and/or communication medium are gender biased.²⁴

1.6.2 The Boundary between Communicating and Other Conduct

For us humans, *making communication happen* and *making communication work* are first and foremost done *at the will of individuals as a means to an end*, especially in each present moment. **Communicating is thus an inherently practical matter** (Craig 1989). In contrast, the other social sciences focus on dimensions of our human-made environment^ that emanate from people, but *supersede the will of individuals*

²⁴ An example occurred in the second debate in 2012 between US presidential candidates Obama and Romney. As reported in the *Washington Post* and the *Atlantic*: “When asked about pay equity for women at the debate, Romney said, ‘[As governor of Massachusetts] I had the chance to pull together a cabinet, and all the applicants seemed to be men. [...] I went to a number of women’s groups and said, “Can you help us find folks?” And they brought us whole binders full of women.’ Even while the debate was ongoing, comedic commentary about the phrase [“binders full of women”] had begun to be published online”.

that they occur as they do, or exist as they do.²⁵ These are dimensions mainly of the human-made environment^ that either inhere in us individually (psychological ones), or we are bound up in them collectively (e.g. sociological, cultural, economic, and political/civic ones). Accordingly, if we regard *communication as the engine of the human-made environment*^ (as elaborated in Chapters 7 and 8), as opposed to another one of its dimensions, there is reason to regard the subject matter of interest in the Communication discipline as categorically different from the subject matters of interest in the other social sciences, and therefore to regard the knowledge we contribute to be distinct from what other social sciences contribute. This is illustrated by the following compilation of research recently published in two of the US discipline's lead journals.

1.7 A Sampling of Research on the “Communication Part”

Much of our published research focuses on the basic research question of how communication *does* work, more than on the applied matter of how it is *made* to work. The research consistently gives attention to the communication part of the phenomena we examine – to the specifics of communicative items (their substance, specific expressive means, and/

²⁵ One reason some social scientists adopt protocols and methods, goals, and terminology that emulate the physical sciences may be that the physical sciences also study phenomena that occur as they do according to principles that supersede the will of individuals. But the soundness of this is contested. Other social scientists consider that there is a fundamental difference between the subject matters of the social sciences vs physical sciences, such that the former cannot emulate the latter. The difference lies in a key premise that is unique to the social sciences: that in emanating from us, these environments are as they are, and evolve as they do, so as to benefit us as individuals and as a species. When they stop doing so, they become unstable and unsustainable. Hence, even though the dimensions of the human-made environment^ of interest in many social sciences do supersede the will of individuals, it is objected that their occurrence and their specifics are not tied to their *physical* interconnections as in the physical sciences (with the exception of neuro-psychology), but to *functional* interconnections that benefit us, ones we humans have collectively “engineered” over time. This warrants the adoption of a teleological lens in the social sciences, something not very widely embraced in the physical sciences, and a contentious matter among social scientists. These two positions on whether we can or should emulate the physical sciences, including whether we can or should avoid a teleological lens, differ as to what is accepted as data, research protocols and methods, theory, and meta-theory.

or communication medium) that are typical or most likely in re/acting to some extra-communicative exigence or bringing about some extra-communicative result. As elaborated in Chapter 8, our focus on the communication part is the key to the distinctive contribution to knowledge that our research makes among the other social sciences.

Again, it is inherently uncertain and open-ended what exigent conditions incentivize communication, what communicative items with what properties will be produced, and what results will be brought about. As a result, the topics of research under each of our three main agendas are varied and inexhaustible. But this is not troubling. Ours is a young science, and as such we are engaged in the initial work of any science – to collect data. As elaborated in Chapter 9 on the doing of scientific inquiry in general, we need an adequate data base. With that, we can begin discerning the systematicity and orderliness of human communication, and wherein it lies.

Research articles in the Communication discipline appear in a wide variety of publications, mainly academic journals and also as chapters in edited books focused on a specific issue. Some of these professional journals are underwritten by our professional associations; some are journals associated with other social sciences; and others are cross-disciplinary.

For illustrative purposes, recently published articles have been grouped in the following three tables according to their tie to one or another of our discipline's three agendas:

- to find out *what exigences incentivize communication with what specifics of communicative items*;
- to find out *what results communication actually brings about with what specifics of communicative items*;
- to find out *what specifics of communicative items* – their substance, expressive means, and communication media – *are utilized in what contexts*.

The listed articles were published in the two most prominent journals in the US on the social science of the discipline, *Communication Monographs* (CM), and *Human Communication Research* (HCR). They were published in 2017–2018 (Tables 1.1 and 1.3) or just 2018 (Table 1.2). These two journals are of greater relevance here for illustrative purposes than many other prominent journals and edited books because they are venues for empirical research that adopts research protocols common in the social sciences, and often refers to extra-communicative phenomena. And yet the listed articles mainly advance our knowledge about the communication part, and only secondarily if at all, extra-communicative parts.

1.7.1 Research on Communicative Items Produced in
Re/action to Exigent Conditions

Even though it is inherently uncertain before the fact what communicative item(s) a communicator~re/actor will produce when faced with some exigent condition, it is rarely (never?) arbitrary what communicative item, with what properties, will be produced. If it were, orderliness and coordination of effort in re/action to an exigence would be impossible. Research that focuses on communication under specific exigent conditions is listed in Table 1.1. The goal is to find regularities in *the production of or attention to communicative items with certain properties* (the communication part) in re/action to *certain exigent conditions* (which are either communicative or extra-communicative ones).

Table 1.1 Research on Communicative Items Produced in Re/action to Exigent Conditions.

[in each title, the communication part is in Boldface; the exigent condition is in italics]

Compassion in <i>The Face of Terror: A Case Study of Recognizing Suffering, Co-Creating Hope, and Developing Trust in a Would-Be School Shooting</i> . Sarah J. Tracy & Timothy P. Huffman	CM 84 (1) 2017
Latino Children's Ability To Interpret in <i>Health Settings: A Parent-Child Dyadic Perspective on Child Health Literacy</i> . Lisa M. Guntzviller, Jakob D. Jensen & Luz Maria Carreno	CM 84 (2) 2017
The Influence of <i>Unrestricted Information Exchange</i> on Willingness to Share Information with Outsiders. Wang Liao; Katherine A. McComas; Y. Connie Yuan	HCR 43(2) 2017
When News Meets the Audience: How <i>Audience Feedback Online</i> Affects News Production and Consumption . Eun-Ju Lee; Edson C. Tandoc, Jr.	HCR 43(4) 2017
Investigating Married Adults' Communal Coping with <i>Genetic Health Risk and Perceived Discrimination</i> . Rachel A. Smith, Alan Sillars, Ryan P. Chesnut & Xun Zhu	CM 85 (2) 2018
"It's My Job Now, I Guess": Biographical Disruption and Communication Work in Supporters Of <i>Young Adult Cancer Survivors</i> . Nicholas T. Iannarino	CM 85 (4) 2018
Social Compensation and Enhancement via Mediated Communication in the <i>Transition to College</i> . Erin K Ruppel; Tricia J Burke; Maura R Cherney; Dana R Dinsmore	HCR 44 (1) 2018

1.7.2 Research on Communicative Items and the Actual Results They Bring about

Investigating what the actual results of communication are, and the properties of the communicative items that bring them about, is warranted by its being uncertain before the fact what our communicative items will bring about.²⁶ More than that, communicative items may bring about results that the communicator could not have anticipated or averted. This may happen in any of the contexts in which we communicate, from the interpersonal and communal to the organizational to the societal. However, it is especially likely when we communicate through media that preserve and distribute communicative items and enable re/actors to aggregate them (Becker 1971). Aggregated items may form into what Becker termed a “mosaic” – a composite communicative item with its own emergent substance, creating its own emergent exigence. Or when aggregated, they may form a stable, subjectively real, environment – what Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1986) termed a “symbolic environment.”²⁷ Accordingly, the research under this heading disregards what may have incentivized the production of relevant communicative items. It focuses instead on regularities in what the results are of communicative items with certain properties (the communication part).

²⁶ What has become a common way this happens was illustrated in a New York Times story about a tweet that consisted of bad “information” (“How Fake News Goes Viral: A Case Study,” 21 November 2016). The tweet was posted by someone who observed a fleet of charter buses in the vicinity of protests of the election of Donald Trump as US President. The communicator inferred and tweeted as “fact” that those buses had been chartered to transport outside agitators who staged this protest. This report went viral almost immediately in several social media, treated as hard evidence of fake unrest and political conspiracy surrounding Trump’s election. But it turns out that these buses had been chartered by a company holding a conference that day that drew 13,000 attendees, and had no connection to the protests. Later that day, the man who posted the original tweet posted a follow-up tweet with a large red “False” stamped on his original one, but this made no difference to the result his original tweet had already brought about.

²⁷ From a *New York Times* Op-Ed by Charles J. Sykes (“Why Nobody Cares the President is Lying” 4 February 2017): “For years, as a conservative radio talk show host, I played a role in that conditioning [of the political base for right wing populism in the United States] ... to reject reporting from news sites outside of the conservative media ecosystem ... by hammering the mainstream media for its bias and double standards. But the price turned out to be far higher than I imagined. The *cumulative effect* [emphasis added] of the attacks was to delegitimize those outlets and essentially destroy much of the right’s immunity to false information. We thought we were creating a savvier, more skeptical audience. Instead, we [created] an audience that could be easily misled”.

Table 1.2 Research on Communicative Items and the Actual Results They Bring about.

[In each title, the communication part is boldface; the actual result is in italics]

Persuasive Impact of Loss and Gain Frames on <i>Intentions to Exercise: A Test of Six Moderators</i> . Jakob D. Jensen, Chelsea L. Ratcliff, Robert N. Yale, Melinda Krakow, Courtney L. Scherr & Sara K. Yeo	CM 85 (2) 2018
A New Normal? Competing National Cultural Discourses and <i>Workers' Constructions of Identity And Meaningful Work in Norway</i> . Ashley K. Barrett & Stephanie Dailey	CM 85 (2) 2018
Using a Theoretical Model of Communal Coping to Understand Changes in Language Brokers' Coping Patterns : Implications for Latina/O Early Adolescents' <i>Brokering Stress and Efficacy</i> . Jennifer A. Kam, Rachyl Pines & Quinten Bernhold	CM 85 (2) 2018
"Say Something Instead of Nothing": <i>Adolescents' Perceptions of Memorable Conversations about Sex-Related Topics with Their Parents</i> . Amanda Holman & Jody Koenig Kellas	CM 85 (3) 2018
Hope Communication as a Predictor Of <i>Documented and Undocumented Latina/O High School Students' College Intentions Across an Academic Year</i> . Jennifer A. Kam & Andy J. Merolla	CM 85 (3) 2018
Apprehension or Motivation to Defend Attitudes? Exploring the Underlying Threat Mechanism in Inoculation-Induced Resistance to Persuasion . John A. Banas & Adam S. Richards	CM 84 (2) 2017
The Promises and Pitfalls of Personalization in Narratives to <i>Promote Social Change</i> . Shuo Zhou & Jeff Niederdeppe	CM 84 (3) 2017
How to <i>Unring the Bell</i> : A Meta-Analytic Approach to Correction of Misinformation . Nathan Walter & Sheila T. Murphy	CM 85 (3) 2018
To Walk a Mile in Someone Else's Shoes: How Narratives Can Change Causal Attribution Through Story Exploration and Character Customization . Nathan Walter; Sheila T. Murphy; Traci K Gillig	HCR 44 (1) 2018

(Continued)

Table 1.2 Cont.

Mediated Wisdom of Experience Revisited: <i>Delay Discounting, Acceptance of Death, and Closeness to Future Self</i> . Michael D Slater; Mary Beth Oliver; Markus Appel; John M Tchernev; Nathan A Silver	HCR 44 (1) 2018
<i>Relational Change Following</i> Hurtful Conflict : An Extension of Identity Implications Theory. Quentin S Bernhold; Norah E Dunbar; Andy J Merolla; Howard Giles	HCR 44 (2) 2018
Exemplar Effects on Public Opinion Perception and Attitudes: The Moderating Role of Exemplar Involvement. Thomas Zerback; Christina Peter	HCR 44 (2) 2018
When Visual Cues Activate <i>Moral Foundations</i> : Unintended Effects of Visual Portrayals of Vaping within Electronic Cigarette Video Advertisements. Sijia Yang; Erin K Maloney; Andy S L Tan; Joseph N Cappella	HCR 44 (3) 2018
Social Identity, Selective Exposure, and Affective Polarization: How Priming National Identity Shapes <i>Attitudes Toward Immigrants</i> Via News Selection. Magdalena Wojcieszak; R Kelly Garrett	HCR 44 (3) 2018
Feeling Fine about Being Wrong: The Influence of Self-Affirmation on the <i>Effectiveness of Corrective Information</i> . Dustin Carnahan; Qi Hao; Xiaoya Jiang; Heysung Lee	HCR 44 (3) 2018
Comparing Mediational Pathways for Narrative- and Argument-Based Messages : <i>Believability, Counterarguing, and Emotional Reaction</i> . Melinda M Krakow; Robert N Yale; Jakob D Jensen; Nick Carcioppolo; Chelsea L Ratcliff	HCR 44 (3) 2018
<i>Vicariously Experiencing Parasocial Intimacy with Public Figures Through</i> Observations of Interactions on Social Media . Yue Dai; Joseph B Walther	HCR 44 (3) 2018
A Priest, a Rabbi, and a Minister Walk into a Bar: A Meta-Analysis of Humor Effects on <i>Persuasion</i> . Nathan Walter; Michael J Cody; Larry Zhiming Xu; Sheila T Murphy	HCR 44 (4) 2018
<i>Remembering Political Messages in</i> Dynamic Information Environments : Insights from Eye Movements. Jason C. Coronel; Matthew D. Sweitzer	HCR 44 (4) 2018

Table 1.2 Cont.

Deliberation Across a Space of Reasons: Assessing <i>Epistemic Changes</i> in Group Discussions . Rousiley C M Maia; Danila Cal; Vanessa V Oliveira; Ana Carolina Vimierio; Gabriella Hauber; Patrícia G C Rossini	HCR 44 (4) 2018
When the Sun Sings Science, Are Children Left in the Dark? Representations of Science in Children's Television and Their <i>Effects on Children's Learning</i> . James Alex Bonus; Marie-Louise Mares	HCR 44 (4) 2018
Latino Adolescent Pursuit and Mother Inference of Language Brokering Interaction Goals with <i>Adolescent Self-esteem Outcomes</i> . Lisa M Guntzviller; Ningxin Wang	HCR 44 (4) 2018

1.7.3 Research on the Doing of Communication

A third avenue of basic research arises from the fact that people have neither the time nor the energy to make a special effort in every instance to increase the probability that their communicative items will bring about the targeted result. But in most instances, they do not need to, because we humans have created ways around it. Communicators utilize as much as possible pre-existent ways of increasing that probability, as elaborated in Chapter 5. These comprise communicative structures, routines, procedures, and formulas, norms, roles, and the like of an organization, a community/culture, group, or family, which come readily to hand in many of the circumstances in which they communicate.

This is reflected in a line of research that focuses on the naturally occurring communication practices of people in particular (types of) situations and contexts, in the recurrent circumstances of everyday life. This research focuses mainly on the communication part – the properties and functionalities of expressive means and communication media that are utilized in such practices. It sometimes includes attention to the situations and contexts in which they are produced (some of which are communicative, some extra-communicative).

Table 1.3 Research on the Doing of Communication.

[in each title, the communication part is in Boldface; context/situation if any is in italics]

Religious Rhetoric Meets the Target Audience: Narrowcasting Faith in <i>Presidential Elections</i> . Kevin Coe & Christopher B. Chapp	CM 84 (1) 2017
Communicating Openness in <i>Deliberation</i> . Leah Sprain & Sonia Ivancic	CM 84 (2) 2017
Repertoires of Collective Action in an "IT City": <i>Urban Civil Society</i> Negotiations of Offline and Online Spaces in Bangalore. Anuradha Rao & Mohan J. Dutta	CM 84 (2) 2017
Performative Face Theory: A Critical Perspective on <i>Interpersonal Identity Work</i> . Julia Moore	CM 84 (2) 2017
Distinguishing Technologies for Social Interaction : The Perceived Social Affordances of Communication Channels Scale. Jesse Fox & Bree McEwan	CM 84 (3) 2017
Questioning as Regulatory Work Practice : The Communicative Accomplishment of Reliability and Safety in the <i>Oversight of Nuclear Power Plants</i> . Joshua B. Barbour & Rebecca Gill	CM 84 (4) 2017
A Different Type of Dirty Work: Hidden Taint, Intersectionality, and Emotion Management in <i>Bureaucratic Organizations</i> . Shawna Malvini Redden & Jennifer A. Scarduzio	CM 85 (2) 2018
"Anyone Free to Chat?" Using Technological Features to Elicit Quality Support <i>Online</i> . Lucas J. Youngvorst & Andrew C. High	CM 85 (2) 2018
Expanding the Conceptual and Empirical Boundaries of Family Communication Patterns : The Development and Validation of an Expanded Conformity Orientation Scale. Haley Kranstuber Horstman, Paul Schrodtt, Benjamin Warner, Ascan Koerner, Ryan Maliski, Alexie Hays & Colleen Warner Colaner	CM 85 (2) 2018
Four Flows Theory and Materiality: ISIL's Use of Material Resources in <i>Its Communicative Constitution</i> . Jacqueline S. Bruscella & Ryan S. Bisel	CM 85 (3) 2018

Table 1.3 Cont.

Mapping the Terrain of Person-Centered Supportive Conversations . Susanne M. Jones, Graham D. Bodie, Lucas Youngvorst, Michael Navarro & Carly Danielson	CM 85 (4) 2018
Genre as Textual Agency: Using Communicative Relationality to Theorize the <i>Agential-Performative Relationship Between Human and Generic Text</i> . Jody L. S. Jahn	CM 85 (4) 2018
Comprehension Models of Audiovisual Discourse Processing. Courtney Anderegg; Fashina Aladé; David R. Ewoldsen; Zheng Wang	HCR 43 (3) 2017
Entertaining Each Other? Arthur A. Raney & Qihao Ji	HCR 43 (4) 2017
Threat Appeals as Multi-Emotion Messages: An Argument Structure Model of Fear and Disgust. James Price Dillard & Lijiang Shen	HCR 44 (2) 2018
The Complementary Importance of Static Structure and Temporal Dynamics in Teamwork Communication . Martin Hilbert, Ryan G James, Teresa Gil-Lopez, Ke Jiang & Yining Zhou	HCR 44 (4) 2018

1.7.4 A Focus on the Communication Part across
Open-Endedly-Many Topics

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, we humans are not limited to re/acting to a fixed set of exigences with a fixed set of communicative items that bring about a fixed set of results. Accordingly, our investigations of what incentivizes the doing of communication and what results from it cannot be exhaustive. It is therefore not surprising that the listed research in those two journals in one short period comprises so broad a range of topics, methods, and data, nor that all the research in the discipline published in other journals besides CM and HCR, and in edited books and authored books, comprises an even broader range of topics, methods, and data. At the same time, under the surface of those diverse topics, our research shares a focus on the communication part – configurable elements of communicative items in relation to what incentivizes communication, what results from it, and the doing of it – thereby making a distinct contribution to knowledge among the other social sciences.