Thomas, Sari, ed.
Culture and Communication:
Methodology, Behavior, Artifacts and Institutions, Vol. III

The first time I saw this book a familiar feeling began welling up within me—a feeling somewhat akin to a child spying a much anticipated gift. Thoughts of interesting and stimulating ideas went dancing through my head. What treasures lie within? What innovative ideas, methods, and results would I now possess?

I was not disappointed by this "gift" of selected papers presented at the Fifth International Conference on Culture and Communication held in 1983. Supported by Temple University, and held in Philadelphia, this conference "endeavors to provide a multidisciplinary forum for the discussion of social theory and research with an emphasis on the role played by information (in its broadest sense) in cultural processes." With this broad mandate, one expects and receives a cornucopia of authors and papers.

Volume III contains 27 of the more than 300 papers presented at the conference. Sari Thomas, the editor (and coordinator of the Conference), attempts to offer some order to the offerings through a four-part sectioning: (1) Methodology and Philosophy of Social Science, (2) Behavior, (3) Artifacts, and (4) Institutions. However, there is tremendous diversity within and between each part. Diversity is a strength of this publication, since the working philosophy of the conference is "to umbrella a variety of epistemological perspectives and, by doing so, to support non-mainstream work as well as more traditional themes and approaches." For the most part, work published here will not be seen in academic journals in our field. In many ways, mainstream journals do not seem to welcome the topics, methods, and perspectives offered here into their self-defined "scientific community."

Our field is much the richer for having the annual International Conference on Culture and Communication and this resultant volume.
There are several gems, but the section on methodology and philosophy of social science drew my immediate attention. The chapters in this part, include: "Ideology and Consciousness: The Construction of Social Meaning" by Farrel Corcoran; "The Technological Determination of Philosophy" by Paul Levinson; "The 'Root Metaphors' Orientations: Implications for Intercultural Communication Researchers" by Stella Ting-Toomey; "Agenda-Setting Research: A Critique and Theoretical Alternative" by Kevin Carragee, Mark Rosenblatt, and Gene Michaud. Also, this part includes two interesting chapters, by Stuart J. Sigman and Michelle A Wolf, respectively, which delve into the use of ethnographic methods in communication research.

Five, or almost one-fifth, of all the chapters are written by professors in Canadian universities. This enhances the cross-cultural applicability of this text. However, in only two of these five chapters do the authors specifically discuss Canadian-related issues. Berkeley Kaite discusses feminine hygiene advertising and how roles for, and self-concepts of, American women are both reflected and nurtured. J. R. Rayfield, in "The Language of Education and Revolutionary Policies in Formerly French West Africa," doesn't discuss the mass media, but discusses educational policies and how they affect cultural balance and independence in the developing nations of West Africa. Graham Knight's, "News of Talk, News of Riot," refers to the way ideology is presented during the news coverage of events in Northern Ireland.

Thomas L. McPhail, in "Contemporary Canadian Communications Issues," offers a well-written insight into issues facing Canada in this "Information Age." McPhail covers the policy implications connected with satellites, transborder data flow, and the impact upon Canadian culture and sovereignty. While his references are timely and authoritative, the four year gap between the conference and publication has, unfortunately, made this discussion a bit dated.
The fifth chapter authored by a Canadian is entitled, "The Coverage of El Salvador in the Globe and Mail" by Veronica Schild. Schild discusses how the Globe and Mail presents a reality to its readers concerning El Salvador which conforms to normative expectations. This conclusion parallels Knight's conclusion in his discussion of Northern Ireland. In both instances, news media are found to reinforce mainstream, dominant beliefs.

In true academic fashion, this book has alerted scholars to the related work of others. In this case, scholars in three separate Canadian universities were conducting conceptually similar work, while unaware of each other's efforts.

For this reviewer, this book has performed well. As a point of constructive criticism, however, I would have liked an "about the authors" section. Without information about the author, other than current occupational affiliation, it is difficult to know where the author is "coming from." This would certainly help the readers construct a more informed meaning for the contents of each chapter.

Overall, I applaud and support the efforts of Sari Thomas as Coordinator of the Conference on Culture and Communication, and editor of this series. In spirit, and in fact, the mandate for academic diversity is being well served.

Reviewed by: Stuart Surlin
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This collection of 16 articles is remarkable for its high standard of scholarship and its comprehensiveness. Nearly all possible approaches to composition are represented, from the process to the product school, and from the scientific to the humanistic. The