In about 330 BCE, Aristotle (1991) defined rhetoric as “an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion” (Bk. 1, ch. 1.1). Rhetoric, thus, originally was conceived as a practical art, a pragmatic counterpart to philosophy. Rhetorical studies usually were written to be applied to the business of participating in democratic life, which included substantial speech making, at least by the class of persons for whom rhetorical treatises were written. The most important topic for Aristotle was the inventional resources available to a speaker, but he also focused on the generic characteristics and standard topics of speaking situations, and the role of ethos and pathos in persuasion. Stylistic issues were common subjects for rhetoricians, and issues of arrangement and delivery have become more or less important at different historical periods.

Aristotle’s view of rhetoric was “speaker centered” and for centuries, Aristotle’s followers interpreted the formation of rhetorical principles as aimed at those who sought to compose messages. By the end of the 20th century, however, that focus had shifted to an “audience-centered” perspective (at least within the research tradition in communication departments). Instead of formulating principles to assist speakers, applications of rhetorical theory increasingly were envisioned from an audience’s perspective, with the study of rhetoric often focused on assisting audiences to resist the persuasive messages of the powerful.

Several factors probably contributed to this shift, including the expansion of human populations and the media, the broader reach of higher education, and the professional interests and perspectives of academic elites. Whatever the causes may have been, this domination of rhetorical criticism over the older practice of what one might call “rhetorical construction” influences the focus of this chapter. As a summary of prevailing practices in the research literature, this chapter must primarily address rhetorical criticism. However, we begin by situating criticism and constructionism within the concept of “applied research,” and we close with recommendations to encourage additional constructionist efforts. In between, we describe the basic assumptions that shape rhetorical methods and four particular approaches to applied rhetorical criticism: metaphoric analysis, narrative studies, fantasy theme analysis, and ideological critique.

**Binaries and Categories of Applied Rhetorical Studies**

Three binaries shape the distinction between “more and less” applied rhetorical studies. The first is the distinction between criticism and construction. Critical studies examine discourse to discover how it works. Criticism need not be hostile but most contemporary criticism is biased toward showing that a particular discourse is undesirable in some way. This tenor puts criticism at odds with construction-oriented studies, which seek effec-
tive means for presenting one’s case. Although the construction orientation to rhetorical studies is the common core of the public speaking course, it rarely appears elsewhere in the curriculum, and rhetoricians rarely publish on this subject.

The second binary demarcating more from less applied rhetorical studies is the immediate or particular versus the general. Some studies address a particular case, at a narrowly defined moment. For example, Dow (1996) examined television programs about women during the political rise of feminism from 1970 up to the writing of her book. Other studies address a topic across a broader expanse of time, such as Darsey’s (1997) exploration of prophetic forms of address across history. Applied work usually is perceived as requiring a narrow focus, but studies of more general topics that focus, at least in part, on the present also may have applied qualities.

The third distinction regards the audience of an academician’s discourse. That audience may consist of academics and students, or what we call “change agents”—people and institutions that have a relatively direct and immediate ability to influence outcomes related to a particular issue. Discourse addressed to other academics and students potentially reshapes the world in the long run. Academics influence other academics and, together, they influence students, and students may learn from prescriptions generated by rhetorical methods and apply what they have rehearsed to issues they face throughout their life (Hart, 1993; Sproule, 1990). However, these applications are diffuse; although academics are members of the public, they are a teeny fraction of the public and are not sufficiently organized to influence public processes directly. Given sensibilities about what constitutes “applied” work, such work usually is perceived to require a nonacademic audience. However, given the disjunction in outlets for public and academic discourses, applied work in rhetorical studies also may appear in academic journals.

Given these three sets of binaries, and their complications, the published studies that appear as lowest in their applied qualities are critical studies that focus on general issues and address academic or student audiences. Such studies occasionally might be undertaken solely to “understand” the world. However, because most contemporary rhetorical theories suggest that people’s understanding of the world entails attitudes toward things in the world, and that such attitudes further entail actions, even critical efforts that seek only understanding have implications for shaping the world. Thus, as Black (1965) suggested, “If the critic has a motive for understanding—and he [she] usually does—that motive is to enhance the quality of human life” (p. 9). To this extent, all rhetorical studies are applied, at least to some degree. However, studies that focus on the construction of messages about particular topics and address audiences of change agents more closely fit the general notion of “applied communication research” (Cisna, 1995) and, more specifically, intervention-oriented applied communication research (see Frey & SunWolf, this volume).

Although there are eight combinations of these binaries (see Figure 5.1), the four types targeted to academic audiences are more visible than the four types targeted to change agents, and critical studies are far more common than construction-oriented studies. At the “least applied” end of the continuum are critical studies of general phenomena that appear exclusively in academic outlets (e.g., Campbell & Jamieson, 1976). These studies provide general tools for enhanced critical perception of major groups of discourse to enable academics to better resist rhetorical appeals, in general, and perhaps to assist students to resist these pulls as well. The second category consists of critical studies of particular phenomena intended to increase resistance to the particular content of particular discourses by academics and students, and, perhaps, the broader community (e.g., DeLuca & Demo, 2000).
Construction-oriented rhetorical studies are far less common in academic publications. Some critics would deny the distinction between critical and constructive discourse, and argue that all critical discourses are constructive. Others would argue that constructive discourse is presence making and, therefore undesirable. Assuming some difference between criticism and constructivism, and assuming the desirability of constructive discourse, it nonetheless is understandable that academic publications rarely urge academics to take specific actions, except actions pertaining specifically to academic practices, because constructive discourse that appears in academic venues might well be indistinguishable from constructive discourse that appears in nonacademic venues. Such discourse threatens the legitimacy of academic discourses as worthy of special funding and support. Such exhortations also might not be a particularly good use of space and energy because the academic audience is small and not organized to promote specific social change. The closest group of construction-oriented rhetorical studies published for an academic audience consists of theories explicitly intended for use in message construction within a particular context, such as an apologia (see pp. 111–112 below). Such theories are intended to be applied by students or by consultants, and, obviously, are more likely to be general than particular.

It is more difficult to assess the four categories of rhetorical work presented to change agents, because such applied efforts are not conveniently gathered in academic journals. Nonetheless, there probably are few instances of either critical or constructive discourses focusing on only general concepts addressed to change agents. Exceptions may be media interviews of rhetoricians asking for explanations of inaugurals or presidential debates, and the few books about political processes that have managed to reach a public audience (e.g., Jamieson, 2000). Such general commentary perhaps is rare or rarely successful because the U.S. public is uninterested in general concepts and because the nature of change processes calls forth more particular responses. However, with regard to particu-

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### Figure 5.1 A continuum of more to less applied and most to least visible rhetorical studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Least Visible</th>
<th>Most Applied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Least Applied</td>
<td>Least Visible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction studies of specific topics targeted to change-agent audiences</td>
<td>Construction studies of specific topics targeted to academic audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction studies of general topics targeted to change-agent audiences</td>
<td>Construction studies of general topics targeted to academic audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical studies of specific topics targeted to change-agent audiences</td>
<td>Critical studies of general topics targeted to academic audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical studies of general topics targeted to change-agent audiences</td>
<td>Critical studies of general topics targeted to academic audiences</td>
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lar and immediate topics, both critical and constructive rhetorical efforts addressed to change agents may prosper.

Rhetorical critiques of particular and immediate discourses addressed to change agents perhaps are best exemplified by Campbell’s (1972) critiques of public speeches broadcast over radio station KPFK in Los Angeles in the late 1960s. She used rhetorical criticism to encourage the public audience to resist speeches such as President Richard Nixon’s “Vietnamization” address. In more recent critical efforts, Stephen Hartnett, a rhetorician, has facilitated public dialogues about the death penalty in an interactive art space (a death row cell) and organized social protest against the war on Iraq (Hartnett, 2007).

The use of rhetorical studies to construct discourse probably is more common than the sharing of critical works with change agents. Many rhetoricians undoubtedly write letters to newspapers and speak to organizations, such as Rotary International or Kiwanis International, in favor of particular actions, and other rhetoricians use their training to consult. When producing messages, rhetoricians inevitably draw on their rhetorical training. However, less common is scholarship about such activities. For example, Condit heard many stories about Michael Calvin McGee’s efforts to promote Michael Osborn’s campaign for public office. Both of these rhetoricians drew on rhetorical theories to construct messages during the campaign, but neither of them wrote analyses of this effort. A welcome exception to academic silence about applied rhetorical construction is the case study by Esrock, Hart, and Leichty (2007) describing their efforts to promote an increase in the Kentucky tobacco excise tax. This academic report, of course, is about their use of rhetorical principles to construct discourse for a change-agent audience rather than discourse aimed at the change agents per se. However, more academic discourse about such efforts might legitimate and improve such applications.

Given the paucity of treatments of constructive efforts and efforts to address non-academic audiences, the remainder of this chapter necessarily focuses on critical efforts by academics, most of which are at the lower half of the “applied” continuum. We first describe key assumptions of rhetorical criticism that feed into its applied character and then explain four types of critical efforts.

Assumptions of Applied Rhetorical Criticism

Rhetorical criticism might be defined as the study of ways in which symbolic components of particular discourse shape or constitute beliefs, attitudes, and actions. Four guiding assumptions of rhetorical criticism are crucial to it functioning as an applied communication research method: (1) rhetorical criticism examines texts; (2) rhetorical criticism is guided, but should not be controlled, by theory; (3) rhetorical criticism engages in evaluation; and (4) the goal of rhetorical criticism is to produce change in the world.

Rhetorical Criticism Examines Texts

By text, we do not mean only a single speech, television show, or other statement but, rather, the broader understanding of any cultural product that can serve as the object of critical analysis. Although “great speeches” can serve as texts for analysis, Wrage (1947, p. 451) is correct that “exclusive devotion to monumental works is hopelessly inadequate as a way of discovering and assessing those ideas which find expression in the marketplace,” because the force of ideas is found when those ideas are expressed in common discourse, in addition to the statements of monumental speakers. A focus on a monumental work alone neglects some of the critic’s important scholarly and practical responsibilities—namely, the substantive origins of discourse, its injection into an
actual content, and the results linked to the deployment of the work (Baskerville, 1977). Rather than viewing texts as externally existent singularities, a more useful perspective is that texts are the result of multiple discursive fragments brought together by the critic (McGee, 1990). By clumping fragments together with respect to similarities perceived by the critic, patterns in discourse can be described as expressions of ideas that have permeated a culture. These fragments then can be used to reconstruct the ideational environment in which the apparently finished discourse emerged. The critic can proceed to describe the “solid intellectual residue” left by ideas as they are “integrated with, refracted by, modified by, and substituted for one another in the process of rhetorical formation” (Wrage, 1947, p. 451).

**Rhetorical Criticism is Guided, but Should Not Be Controlled, by Theory**

To describe this intellectual residue, the critic should be guided by rhetorical theory. Although there are many theoretical concepts in rhetoric, there are few rigid methodologies of rhetorical criticism. Many critics are likely to agree with Lucas (1981) that critics should “reject the application of predetermined formulas, which are most likely to produce scholarship which is dull, mechanical, unimaginative, and commonplace” (p. 16). Rather than adopt methods, rhetorical critics first adopt a critical posture and then choose critical referents for their analyses. Having received formal training in rhetorical theories, the critic selects the critical referents that best help to understand a given text. As Baird and Thonssen (1947) claimed, a good critic “will wisely refuse to succumb to the rigidities of any formula” in performing analysis; instead, the good critic will “define clearly his [or her] critical referents but will exercise reasonable independence and flexibility in the application of his [or her] norms” (p. 136). As such, concepts help to perform criticism but should not predetermine the analysis performed.

**Rhetorical Criticism Engages in Evaluation**

In addition to using theoretical concepts to explain a text, the rhetorical critic evaluates discourse. R. L. Scott and Brock (1972) said that rhetorical criticism employs artistic/aesthetic, effects/pragmatic, and ethical/truth standards to evaluate rhetorical acts. Using these criteria, the critic is most “likely to enter the arena of social influence” (R. L. Scott & Brock, p. 405), by understanding how messages become meaningful to participants in a rhetorical situation. Wichelns (1925) argued that the rhetorical critic must foreground pragmatic standards to understand the “persuasive purpose” that a rhetor enacts in “a concrete situation” (pp. 207, 208). Similarly, Rosenfield (1968) claimed that “the critic’s objective is to explicate that [terminal] condition” of the rhetorical event “and the communication factors which contribute to retard the transaction” (p. 62; for an opposing view, see Whitson & Poulakos, 1993). Although the critic is concerned with a rhetorical act’s structure, style, evidence, and the like, an account of how a rhetor used these elements for persuasion is only half of the critic’s task.

Beyond pragmatic standards, Hochmuth (1955) urged the critic to employ ethical standards. As Hochmuth put it, the critic must “be ready to alert a people, to warn what devices of exploitation are being exercised, by which skillful manipulations of motives men [and women] are being directed to or dissuaded from courses of action” (p. 17). When the critic evaluates rhetoric with an eye for its effectiveness and its ethicality, rhetorical criticism—an act that “lies at the boundary of politics” (Wichelns, 1925, p. 215)—can cross into politics proper.
The Goal of Rhetorical Criticism is to Produce Change in the World

As a critic pronounces judgments about rhetorical acts, rhetorical criticism crosses into the realm of politics. Bitzer (1968) claimed that “rhetoric as a discipline is justified insofar as it provided principles, concepts, and procedures by which we effect valuable changes in reality” (p. 66). These changes occur at two levels: the conceptual and social. At the conceptual level, rhetorical criticism produces change by shaping ways audiences view later rhetorical acts. Because many rhetorical situations are recurrent, the analysis of the response to one situation can alter people’s judgment of other responses to similar situations. More concretely, R. L. Scott and Brock (1972, p. 7) claimed that “criticism is a potent social force” because, although academic critics typically are more cautious than their counterparts, both “usually embrace vigorously the possibility of the persuasive impact of their acts” for the larger public. When a critic pronounces a rhetorical act effective, he or she attempts to influence others to see that rhetorical act as successful and to take action accordingly. Similarly, if a critic determines that a rhetorical actor has employed unethical means, the intent is to dissuade audience members from adopting the speaker’s advocacy. This type of criticism, Wander (1983) insisted, “carries us to the point of recognizing good reasons and engaging in right action” and, thus, assists “the efforts of real people to create a better world” (p. 18).

Exemplars of Applied Rhetorical Criticism

Although most rhetorical studies are applied communication research in that they employ theory to construct or critique communicative acts about important issues, some rhetorical applications more directly bring rhetorical tools “to bear to make a difference in people’s lives” (Frey, 2000, p. 179; see also Eadie, 2000). To illustrate various ways in which rhetorical studies may be applied, we offer examples from three categories of applied rhetorical studies. The first case, William Benoit’s work on image restoration discourse, exemplifies applied research that is construction oriented, providing prescriptions for constructing discourse but directed at an academic audience. The second case, George Cheney’s studies of workplace democracy, exemplifies work that uses critical approaches to expand academic and student audiences’ understanding of discursive possibilities. The third case, the Health and Heritage Team’s work on public understanding of the relationship between race and genetics, illustrates a construction-oriented approach for intervening in processes of institutional and expert formation of discourse.

Benoit’s Studies of Image Restoration Strategies

Benoit uses rhetorical criticism to analyze the defenses offered by communicators accused of wrongdoing. In his research on image restoration, Benoit demonstrates how rhetorical criticism can aid understanding of communicative acts in concrete situations and, thereby, the formulation of specific recommendations for addressing similar situations in the future.

Benoit (1995a) studies image restoration discourse “because blame occurs throughout human society and...the felt need to cleanse one’s reputation with discourse occurs throughout our lives” (p. 5). As a genre, image repair discourse is an extension of Ware and Linkuge’s (1973) theory of apologia and Burke’s (1970) theory of purification. Although Benoit (1995a) drew much of his theoretical inspiration from these sources, he held that these accounts were merely descriptive. To make image restoration scholarship more useful and applied, Benoit emphasized the prescriptive possibilities of rhetorical
analysis. That is, if rhetorical critics indicate which image restoration strategies work and why, they can supply, through education or consultancy, useful information to rhetors attempting to account for a discrediting action by naming the options available, as well as by offering examples where these options succeeded or failed.

In theorizing image repair discourse, Benoit (1995a, 1997b) identified five major strategies and 14 specific types of image repair that rhetors use. These strategies have been used by numerous individuals in widely varying situations, including attempts by Kenneth Starr (Benoit & McHale, 1999) and Tonya Harding (Benoit & Hanczor, 1994) to prove their sense of fair play, and defenses offered by Clarence Thomas (Benoit & Nill, 1998) and Hugh Grant (Benoit, 1997a) of their sexual propriety. Moreover, although apologia is considered primarily as a defense employed by an individual, Benoit expanded the theory of image repair to organizational communication, including studies of defenses given by Tylenol (Benoit & Lindsey, 1987) and Dow Corning (Brinson & Benoit, 1996) regarding the safety of their products, and responses by Sears (Benoit, 1995b) and AT&T (Benoit & Brinson, 1994) to charges of corporate malfeasance.

Through these case studies, Benoit has drawn general conclusions about the efficacy of image repair strategies, using the standard methodological assumptions and practices of rhetorical scholars. In several studies, Benoit has supplemented close examination of the components of the discourse and the context with the testimony of persons who created or received the discourse, poll data, and comparisons of discourse and other behavior before and after exposure to a text. Using these methods, Benoit consistently has found that apologies, concessions, and corrective actions are the most effective and audience-appropriate strategies for image restoration (Benoit, 1995a; Benoit & Drew, 1997), whereas bolstering, minimization, provocation, and simple denial are the least effective and least likely to be seen as appropriate. Through analysis of specific cases and interpretation of patterns across these cases, Benoit has illustrated how genre theory can have a pragmatic impact. Specifically, Benoit’s use of rhetorical criticism helps to understand communicative acts in particular situations and to offer recommendations for rhetors who face similar situations in the future.

Cheney’s Analysis of Rhetorical Identification in Organizations

Whereas Benoit’s analyses generate prescriptions to be used in constructive discourse secondhand, Cheney’s research on workplace democracy illustrates critical assessment directed at expanding academic/student critique. Cheney realizes that organizations are corporate units that take on identities separate from those of their constituents. Because organizations engage in communicative action to advance their interests, Cheney (1991) asserted that “organizations are rhetorical and rhetoric is organizational” (p. 9). For instance, to recruit and socialize members, organizations attempt to create a shared identity among members so that they identify their interests with those of the organization.

Cheney (1983a, 1983b, 1995, 1999) has spent substantial time studying the Mondragón cooperative in Spain, a worker-based, interlocking network of businesses formulated on the principles of ownership and governance by the workers. Cheney applied Burke’s (1969) concept of “rhetorical identification” to explore ways in which concepts, such as “social solidarity,” shape identities within that organization. By understanding how organizations preserve organizational interests without violating members’ other corporate identities, Stohl and Cheney (2001) found that apparent contradictions in identities actually can strengthen organizations when organizations select interests that are consubstantial with individual members’ interests and deselect interests that drive members to withdraw (see also C. R. Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998). The most acute
tension experienced by workers may be that between their identities as citizens and as employees. Stohl and Cheney found that as organizations increasingly use the language of a “democratic workplace,” organizations experience additional tensions between their desire for efficient, productive workers and a workplace with a high degree of worker agency. By examining these moments of tension and understanding how identifications are fostered or discouraged, feasible strategies for adapting to future tensions can be articulated. For example, by outlining patterns of identificatory practices at Mondragón, Cheney (1999) noted instances where workplace democracy has been interpreted simultaneously as increased demands on workers, a disguise for increased control and surveillance, and as allowing employees to determine their work conditions. By examining the efficacy of each interpretation, Cheney indicated how Mondragón could serve as a model of the potential impacts of different discursive choices. Throughout Cheney’s work on corporate identification, he illustrates ways in which Burke’s theories open possibilities for rethinking worker and consumer roles to encourage a more democratic workplace. His emphasis on using such work to maintain critical thinking about rhetorical processes is illustrated by the way in which Cheney (1997) closed one of his essays on the Mondragón cooperative, with the last sentence reading, “It’s time to reflect carefully on what our organizations are doing for us and to us” (p. 70).

The Health and Heritage Team’s Efforts to Reshape Genetic Medicine

Benoit’s and Cheney’s use of rhetorical criticism has urged communication scholars to revise theories and critical perspectives to make them more helpful in concrete situations. That work, however, is shaped by the commitments that these scholars have made to communication as an independent field. The Health and Heritage Project, in contrast, is directed largely at change agents outside the communication field. Specifically, the Health and Heritage Team, of which we are members, has sought to use research to reform labeling practices and discriminatory assumptions in developing race-based medicine. To do so, this team has combined rhetorical analyses of discourse about race and genetics with focus group and survey studies revealing lay understandings of race and genetics, and the impact of messages about genetics.

Our team addressed some of the findings from this research program to academic audiences through communication journals (e.g., Condit, 2000; Condit, Bates et al., 2002; Condit, Condit, & Achter, 2001; Ramsey, Achter, & Condit, 2001). Nevertheless, because our target audience has been researchers developing, disseminating, and employing new technologies, we have reached these audiences by publishing in their journals—both journals in the broader field of science (e.g., Condit, 1999a; Condit, Parrott, & Harris, 2002) and in mainline medical and genetics journals read by physicians and geneticists (e.g., Condit, 2001, 2004c; Condit, Achter, Lauer, & Sefcovic, 2002; Parrott et al., 2005; Sankar et al., 2004)—and by presenting at their academic conferences (Condit, 2003b, 2004b). We also have presented work from this project in venues beyond academic outlets, including discussions with museum curators and presentations at events sponsored by the National Institutes of Health and at seminars designed to help the press report more effectively about genetics (e.g., Condit, 2002, 2003a, 2004a).

Throughout these investigations, we consistently employ two rhetorical concepts: rhetorical formations and audiences. The way in which we use these concepts, however, illustrates the stark difference between rhetorical criticism for humanist understanding and rhetorical criticism as intervention-oriented applied communication research. If engagement with change-agent audiences outside one’s academic field is taken seriously, one’s approach needs to be tailored to that audience’s assumptions. We believe that
the academic journals and conferences where new technical medical practices are being debated is the best site for intervention. Because this audience is accustomed to research based on experimental procedures, we triangulate rhetorical criticism with social-scientific methods to use a language and structure that is familiar to the medical-genetics audience but framed within a program shaped by the perspectives of rhetorical studies (the fullest explanation is in Condit, 1999b). Had we presented arguments only using the language and procedures of rhetorical studies, the audience likely would have regarded it as “merely” speculative work. Publication would have been unlikely and essays that were published would not be convincing to most target readers. The choice to use the language and structure of science, thus, is a rhetorical device to persuade a particular audience.

The commitment to audience adaptation may make rhetorical criticism as applied communication research more likely to persuade audiences that can affect real change. In this particular case, we believe that our interventions won a few battles but they were insufficient to influence the larger “war.” At one conference, for example, a presentation by Condit (2003b) was well received, and the top prize among the posters was awarded to a poster that supported our social claims about genetic evidence. Participants explicitly linked the selection of that award-winning poster to the influence of Condit’s talk. The development of race-based medicine, nonetheless, goes forward because of the economic returns it offers. From a rhetorical perspective, however, the goal of a good rhetor is to discover and employ the available means of persuasion, regardless of whether those means ultimately prove effective. Indeed, from a rhetorical perspective, a single instance of discourse, or even a program of discourse, is unlikely to change measurably the flow of social discourse, and certainly not in the short term. Performing good rhetoric is done as an act of conscience, with hope for good outcomes, not with a sense of scientific certainty about one’s ability to produce predictable effects.

**Theoretical Approaches to Rhetorically Informed Applied Communication Research**

The research exemplars of Benoit, Cheney, and the Health and Heritage Team illustrate different combinations of critical and construction-oriented approaches, directed toward academic and broader audiences. These three examples represent only a small sampling of the theoretical tools available to rhetorical scholars for conducting applied work. There are over 2000 years of theoretical development in rhetoric, providing a smorgasbord of rhetorical concepts. It is not possible to summarize the full range of theories available; instead, we select four theoretical strains that have been prominent among applied work in rhetorical studies: metaphoric analysis, narrative criticism, fantasy theme analysis, and ideological critique. Although many researchers who employ these theories do not consider themselves to be rhetorical critics, these techniques have their origins in theories written by Aristotle (metaphor), Quintilian (narratio), Bormann (1982; fantasy theme analysis), and a host of ideological critics of discourse. The lack of distinct boundaries for rhetorical criticism does not seem to us to be particularly problematic, given the emphasis in applied studies on changing the world rather than maintaining academic traditions.

**Metaphoric Analysis**

Metaphoric analysis presumes that terms can be employed to refer to two unlike objects, events, or concepts to suggest a similarity. In a metaphor, the vehicle (“the ‘figure’ of the speech”) is different from the tenor (“the principal subject”) for a reason; it produces new associations that encourage the auditor to understand the tenor in a new way (Richards,
If Lakoff and Johnson (1980) are correct that metaphors are constitutive of reality, understanding the entailments of these metaphors can help us to understand how social reality is created. On a more practical level, once this process is understood, different metaphors can be employed to help people construct alternative realities.

Enumerating and categorizing the metaphors employed can provide insight into the operational code of a group or organization; these enduring metaphorical patterns, in turn, can be used to assess the group or organizational members, and to lay the groundwork for future action (Coffman, 1992; Gibbs & Franks, 2002; Gorden & Nevins, 1987; Yerby, 1989). Beyond describing which metaphors are commonly used, researchers identify alternative metaphors to offer opportunities for enacting positive changes (e.g., Gribas & Sims, 2006). Metaphoric analyses have found that when management personnel view an organization as a culture (Nicotera & Cushman, 1992), a protean beast (Shockley-Zalabak, 2002), or as being in chaos (Sellnow, Seeger, & Ulmer, 2002), employees’ thoughts and actions often become literalized as enactments of management’s preferred metaphors. Furthermore, as Koch and Deetz (1981) argued, identifying metaphors allows critics to perform hermeneutic readings of organizational documents to show how these metaphors become unquestioned guides to action. By grounding advocacy in reaction to the linguistic micropolitics of organizations, these metaphorical analyses identify political opportunities within constraining systems for practical action.

Despite many calls to investigate the efficacy of using metaphors to enact change, relatively few studies have done so. Most work showing how metaphoric analysis contributes to change is speculative (e.g., Burrell, Buzzanell, & McMillan, 1992; David & Graham, 1997; Rawlins, 1989). However, Czarniawska-Joerges and Joerges’s (1988) study of Swedish organizations showed how changing metaphors can change everyday practices. They found that when an oil company replaced mechanical with agricultural metaphors, members began to think that management was attempting to provide the best conditions for their growth and development (e.g., as a gardener does with plants). Workplace satisfaction and increases in productivity, subsequently, were associated with this metaphor change. Czarniawska-Joerges and Joerges concluded that metaphors have an instrumental use in altering perceptions of reality, but that this power is limited by the need for a metaphor acceptable to both the speaker and auditor. Hence, although metaphoric analysis can identify opportunities for intervention, simply using a new metaphor is not a panacea. This form of applied communication research, thus, demonstrates how rhetoric may alter reality.

Narrative Criticism

A second strain of rhetorical criticism widely used in applied communication research is narrative criticism. There are many different uses of narrative approaches; here, we focus on two uses. Fisher (1985) held that texts are persuasive because they tell stories that foreground “good reasons” accepted by auditors or they fail to be persuasive because the good reasons foregrounded or the methods of foregrounding are improper. According to Fisher, the critic’s task is to discern the good reasons offered in a story and to evaluate them for narrative probability and fidelity. Judging narrative probability involves determining whether “a story coheres or ‘hangs together’”; judging narrative fidelity involves assessing the “truth qualities’ of the story” and considering the story’s “soundness of reasoning and the value of its values” (Fisher, pp. 349–350). When a rhetorical act is evaluated in these ways, the critic can determine “whether or not one should adhere to the stories one is encouraged to endorse or to accept as the basis for decisions and actions” (Fisher, p. 348).
Fisher’s (1985) call to examine the external legitimation of narratives has been taken seriously by applied communication researchers to examine how persuasive such messages are to their target audience (e.g., Kelly & Zak, 1999; Kenny, 2002; Stutts & Barker, 1999). Several researchers have examined the use of narratives to socialize and monitor organizational members, especially with regard to how narrative consistency manages norms and limits change (e.g., Adelman & Frey, 1997; Brown, 1990; Vanderford, Stein, Sheeler, & Skochelak, 2001). Other critics have focused on how individuals in power positions reconstruct narratives to ensure that they retain narrative consistency (e.g., Anderson & Geist-Martin, 2003; Conrad & Millay, 2001; Eggly, 2002). These analyses indicate that narrative consistency is a technique that identifies opportunities for advocacy by highlighting where a story is beginning to disintegrate and offering new ways to integrate that story.

Although narrative consistency is a powerful resource, a coherent story may not have suasive impact on a community if it lacks narrative fidelity. When a narrative “rings true” for its auditors, the narrative’s value structure reinforces the values of a community (Smart, 1999). Unfortunately, this closure can authorize antisocial behavior. In studies of tobacco use (DeSantis, 2002), excessive drinking (Workman, 2001), and domestic violence (Stamp & Sabourin, 1995), researchers found that when a smoker, alcoholic, or abusive male told his story to other members of that population, the story was read as having fidelity and allowed both the storyteller and auditors to justify these behaviors. Although narrative analysis can identify barriers to change, the act of sharing narratives can restrict change by enhancing the fidelity of socially destructive narratives. Despite this danger, critics also have found the reinforcing properties of narrative fidelity useful for advocating prosocial change. For instance, Clair, Chapman, and Kunkel (1996) Taylor and Conrad (1992), and Wood (1992) found that as sexual harassment narratives were told, women perceived fidelity between these narratives and their experiences. As such, these stories became a teaching tool that allowed women to identify sexual harassment and served as a normative declaration against such behavior. In the conclusion to these studies, each of these narrative analyses became pedagogical acts and authorized collective storytelling to seek change.

Fantasy Theme Analysis

Bormann’s (1972) fantasy theme analysis examines narratives using a different conceptual apparatus than that of narrative analysis. Whereas Fisher (1985) emphasized narrative consistency and fidelity, Bormann (1972) focused on stories that “chain out” among group members. Bormann (1972) called such stories rhetorical fantasies, and suggested that they “cast there-and-then events in narrative frames and provide a structured, understandable, and meaningful interpretation of what happened” (p. 134). These rhetorical fantasies, however, have little power until they are shared through a process called fantasy theme chaining, which is identified when consistent patterns are found of “similar dramatizing material such as wordplay, narratives, figures of speech and analogies [having] cropped up in a variety of messages in different contexts” (Bormann, Kroll, Watters, & McFarland, 1984, p. 289). Because these elements, in a successful fantasy theme analysis, become articulated as consistent and convergent, Bormann renamed his method “symbolic convergence theory.” Both labels currently are in use, reflecting, to some extent, a divergence in methodological techniques.

Fantasy theme analyses represent a hybrid methodology, with early studies using methods of close textual analysis and later investigations employing a Q-sort methodology (for an overview, see Bormann et al., 1984). In the Q-sort approach, dramas are identi-
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fied in texts that articulate possible stock fantasy types for a community using traditional close textual analysis. Members of the community then are asked to sort the components of these dramas according to their fidelity to their experience, and researchers determine which elements emerge as most salient for different forms of social consciousness. This method has been used successfully with many populations, including lawyers (McFarland, 1985), public relations personnel (Palenchar & Heath, 2002), hog farmers (Cragan & Shields, 1992), teachers (Putnam, van Hoeven, & Bullis, 1991), and students (Stone, 2002). In each case, understanding the narratives shared through fantasy themes allowed the researchers to make recommendations for improving communication.

Ideological Critique

As explained by Grossberg (1979), rhetorical criticism centered on ideological critique has four characteristics: it (1) examines concrete phenomena in addition to abstract ideas, (2) examines these phenomena in relation to other phenomena, (3) holds that these relations are those of contradiction that produce identities, and (4) holds that these identities are related to the experience of human reality through shared discourse. Many ideological critics are concerned that, in the analysis of rhetoric, relationships that exist outside of the texts immediately under examination are forgotten or ignored too often. Wander (1983) argued that criticism bound only to a text without awareness of historical, social, and institutional forces impinging on that text is ineffective as advocacy because it fails to account for psychological and material factors that are not wholly captured by speech. Rather than passing over these forces, ideological critics hold that the analysis of these social structures is essential for politically powerful rhetorical criticism (e.g., Jandt, 1980).

Because ideological criticism is concerned with the intersection of assumptions, language, and ideology, it often is performed under the auspices of Marxian, Foucaultian, feminist (see Buzzanell, Meisenbach, Remke, Sterk, & Turner, this volume), race (see Nicotera, Clinkscales, Dorsey, & Niles, this volume), or ethnically based theories. Although these theories may clash in their different manifestations, all are useful because they allow different approaches to the same problematic. As Mumby (1993, p. 21) put it, because these theories are concerned with how some groups “struggle to fix and institutionalize the dominance of certain groups and meaning structures over others,” they help critics to reflect on “the complex system of discursive and nondiscursive practices” that make up human relations. Moreover, ideological criticism itself is a political act. Rushing and Frentz (1991, p. 385) explained that practicing ideological criticism “is to perform a morally significant act of fighting oppression by unmasking the rhetorical strategies that maintain it” because exposure of contradictions of a dominant order makes it possible to act against oppression. This desire for rhetorical criticism to oppose dominant ideologies is widely shared, but it also might be desirable for ideological criticism to transcend oppositional stances and account for ways that ideologies emerge through multiple relations among people, as well as the particular modes by which ideologies are expressed (Condit, 1994; Fiske, 1986). By presenting unresolved contradictions of an ideology, a critic encourages auditors to choose whether to accept the ideology by relying on the structural coherencies that resolve most contradictions or to struggle against the ideology by focusing on the places where the structure fails to do so.

Ideological critics who emphasize dominant ideology often dispute the possibility of social change. Some of these critics indicate that social change is nearly impossible, as the interactions among, for instance, gender relations and capitalism (Clair & Thompson, 1996), science and education (Schiebel, 1996), and technology and expertise (Coogan,
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(2002) allow normative assumptions to sediment in such a way that oppression becomes multifaceted and enduring. Examinations of ideologies of health (Easland, 1994), law (Goodwin, 1996), art (David, 1999), education (Artz, 1998), work (Ralston & Kirkwood, 1995), and research (Williams & Coupland, 1998) indicate that although ideological norms come into conflict with other ideological forces (e.g., liberalism, social justice, or equality), the opportunities opened when the structure becomes momentarily destabilized are foreclosed when consistency is presumed and made operant.

Critics focused on places where dominant ideologies come into conflict explicitly argue that, when two ideologies collide, whichever ideology is better able to mobilize discursive and nondiscursive resources will override the influence of the other. Brenton (1993) and Sherblom, Keränen, and Withers (2002), for instance, each found that when two powerful ideological forces conflicted, resolution occurred when one force displaced the other and made it no longer relevant to the issue under dispute. Applied communication researchers often outline conflicts between capitalist values and other social values, such as democracy (Harter & Krone, 2001), sex roles (Buzzanell & Glodzwig, 1991; Kirby & Krone, 2002), health and safety (Gillespie, 2001; Zoller, 2003), and tradition (Boyd, 2000; Jones & Bodtker, 1998).

The resolutions offered by many applied communication researchers adopting ideological approaches often are reformist. Nevertheless, the obligation of applied communication researchers to work toward practical solutions makes accommodation an attractive strategy. The fundamental question for ideological critique in applied communication research is not “How can the structure be overthrown?” but, as Pearce (1998) asked, “What research might we do if we focused on communication per se as well as marginalization, stigmatization, and being underresourced?” (p. 278; see also Frey & SunWolf, this volume). The first type of research involves analysis of communication that deconstructs ideological forces that “promote and maintain inequality and injustice” (Frey, Pearce, Pollock, Artz, & Murphy, 1996, p. 123). The second type of applied ideological criticism offers mediations or moderations that ameliorate the effects of oppressive ideologies, in which critics seek to “identify the grammars that oppress or underwrite relationships of domination and bring their communication resources to bear to reconstruct those grammars in more socially just ways” (Frey, 1998, p. 157). Practical projects, such as using teledemocratic computer networks as a compromise between values of full democracy and norms of efficiency (O’Sullivan, 1995), and facilitating debates within prisons to negotiate the need for control and the desire to hear the voice of prisoners (Hartnett, 1998), are not perfect. Nevertheless, given that these researchers found a clash of ideologies and then instigated a small change that allowed for a more socially just resolution, they used ideological criticism to authorize progressive change.

Making Rhetorical Studies More Applied

We have identified key assumptions of applied rhetorical studies and categorized these studies based on their audience, whether the approach is critical or construction oriented, and the generality or particularity of the objects of study. We illustrated three of these categories with descriptions of extended research programs, and described four theoretical approaches to conducting applied rhetorical research. This overview makes it evident that existing applications of rhetorical methods are more commonly found, or at least more visible, at the critical/academic/general end of the spectrum than at the end of the spectrum where particular constructed messages are targeted to change agents. In light of that distribution, it seems appropriate to consider suggestions for making rhetorical studies more applied.
To enable more rhetorical work, we suggest that rhetorical critics be prepared to speak to audiences other than rhetorical critics. In the standard mode of rhetorical criticism, critics speak primarily to other scholars, most of whom are familiar with a complex grid of shared vocabularies and agreed-on knowledge bases. Nominally, our collective goal is to make a better world, but we enact this goal in two ways. First, we may increase people’s knowledge of rhetorical processes so that they can attend to messages in more informed and critical ways. Our primary conduit for this enactment is through teaching and scholarship, because that is the way knowledge is shared within the academic community. In the second mode, however, we may seek to address an immediate problem. In this mode, we want people to understand rhetorical processes immediately, so that they act to shape the outcomes of the problem. In such cases, rhetorical critics address an audience that is not comprised primarily of other scholars or students. Scholars, therefore, cannot presume that their audience will share a rhetorical vocabulary or assumptions about communication. This difference in premises means that scholars should learn the assumptions and vocabulary of the audience to be addressed and insert the audience’s vocabulary in carefully selected and well-explained places. In our work on medical genetics, for example, to speak to an audience of medical geneticists, we had to learn their scientific terms, understand their applications, and determine assumptions within that community. Had we approached this community with the presumption that only rhetorical vocabularies are valuable, it is unlikely that this work would be read by the audience we were addressing.

In addition to learning the assumptions and vocabularies of target audiences, rhetorical critics should be prepared to adopt their audiences’ rhetorical forms. This requirement means that critics need to focus their efforts on producing research products designed for a specific suasory end, not on retaining fidelity to a set of particular means for conducting rhetorical criticism. For example, in an article published in the journal Clinical Genetics, Condit, Parrott, Bates, Bevan, and Achter (2004) enacted this requirement. Based on our understanding of the history of racist rhetoric, we believed that messages that linked race and genetics increased levels of racism in the general population. To persuade scientists, we adopted their rhetorical forms, for if we had presented the argument through traditional rhetorical analysis, scientists likely would have seen the argument as theoretical speculation at best and polemical assertion at worst. Therefore, we designed a “message impact study” that used rhetorical concepts—namely, that messages targeted to inform people about a particular idea have suasory effects that legitimate other social structures—a principle recognized by everyone from conservative theorist Weaver (1970) to leftist theorist Foucault (2001). However, these concepts were delivered in the rhetorical form of an experiment, with the random assignation to conditions and manipulation of variables under controlled conditions demanded in medical studies (see Query et al., this volume). This approach was necessary if we were to be accepted as a legitimate voice within that community. In addition, this acquired legitimacy allowed us to publish the findings in a medical genetics journal. As such, our methodological choices made it more likely that our target audience read the study, as few physicians or geneticists read communication journals.

A final modification that rhetorical critics may wish to make is to be ready to speak to “lay” audiences. Most rhetorical acts are addressed to audiences other than rhetorical critics; for instance, political speeches are addressed to voters and health messages are directed to physicians and consumers. Rhetorical critics, however, too often do not take these audiences into account as helpful interpreters of messages; instead, they perform their work without reference to an audience of actual nonacademic people. We do not believe that professional rhetoricians are the only ones capable of interpreting and judging
messages, even highly technical messages. Therefore, instead of presuming that laypeople were not able to process messages about genomics and race, we set out to explore how they processed those messages (e.g., Bates & Harris, 2004; Bates, Lynch, Bevan, & Condit, 2005; Bevan et al., 2003; Condit, Templeton, Bates, Bevan, & Harris 2003). To do this, we conducted focus groups in which people were given messages about race and asked to process those messages. Again, out of sensitivity to our audience of medical geneticists, we used quantitative procedures to analyze and discuss the content of those focus group discussions. These choices allowed us to engage with actual readers of messages, who opened up unexpected areas of discussion and contributed a broader interpretative frame that more closely corresponded to the views of public audiences. Hence, if rhetorical criticism is to have greater public utility, rhetorical critics need to consult more often with that public to see how messages actually are perceived and used.

As we noted in the first section of this chapter, rhetorical criticism as a practice is highly visible in communication journals. In contrast, construction-oriented rhetorical efforts are far less visible. Although some rhetorical scholars are engaging in construction-oriented efforts, we encourage others interested in conducting applied work to report more frequently in journals regarding their rhetorical construction-oriented products because such reports build a background of experience and might increase the legitimacy of such efforts. There are several barriers, however, to the development of such a scholarly genre. To publish that type of an article, the scholars involved must expose their political commitments (and even their rhetorical skill levels) to the scrutiny of colleagues. In addition, in the absence of generic specifications, such articles seem perilously close to academic bragging. We do not today have a well-thought-out genre for such articles. Although such articles can focus on the topoi of “what works to make applied rhetorical construction effective,” it is not immediately clear what topoi will be most immediately helpful to others seeking to engage in applied rhetorical efforts. There also is the risk that such efforts might kill the goose from which they draw their theoretical golden eggs. Given the passion for social justice shared by some applied communication scholars (see Frey & Sun-Wolf, this volume), legitimating applied construction-oriented efforts rather than strictly theoretical and critical efforts for rhetorical scholars might limit the flow of theory construction and deep critical analysis on which good applied communication scholarship depends. There undoubtedly are other constraints that must be addressed as well. At this point, our hope is to begin a discussion about the desirability and means for increasing applied rhetorical construction-oriented work.

Benefits of Applied Research for Rhetorical Studies

Using rhetorical criticism in applied communication research can make important contributions to identifying opportunities for social change and intervening in practical situations. Rhetorical criticism, thus, has significant potential for enhancing applied communication research. Although the benefits of using rhetorical criticism as applied communication research named by Pettegrew (1988) emphasized the persuasive stylistic frames employed in rhetorical criticism, its theoretical, philosophical, and analytic concepts also can benefit applied communication research. Even as rhetorical criticism provides applied communication research with additional possibilities for analysis, the emphasis in the latter on providing solutions to particular situations supplies rhetorical critics with three helpful impulses: a multimethodological orientation, a concretization of research values, and a reemphasis on Isocratean purposes of rhetoric.

First, applied communication research has highlighted the value of multimethodological approaches to communication analysis. The use of rhetorical criticism in applied com-
Communication research has made clear the utility of even further expansion. Compiling diverse textual fragments through experiments, surveys, individual and group interviews, bibliometrics, and participant observation (see Ellingson, this volume), and combining these fragments with monumental texts in close textual analysis, allows for a greater selection of the contextual reality in which rhetorical acts occur. The use of several methods of data collection under the aegis of a critical referent derived from the rhetorical tradition can greatly expand and enrich the analysis. In addition, techniques common in applied communication research that authorize audience studies and participants’ contributions to research can enhance the critical qualities of rhetorical criticism and check the monologic impulse that is so common in rhetorical criticism. Limiting the monologic impulse is necessary to preserve the emphasis in rhetoric on the audience and the notion that communication always takes place within a community. Moreover, including alternative voices increases the probability that recommendations critics offer for social change will be acceptable possibilities to readers.

Second, in addition to making multimethodological approaches more relevant to criticism, the values of practical action foregrounded in applied communication research enrich the long-standing interest of rhetorical criticism in practical wisdom. The need for applied communication research to make a difference in people’s life leads rhetorical criticism to be more explicit about its aims and criteria. If rhetorical criticism seeks to judge the value of a text, applied communication research demands that the standards employed in rhetorical criticism be defined clearly and operationalized effectively. This demand increases the likelihood that research findings will be relevant to future situations, because parallel factors in the new situation can be clearly identified and divergent factors can be taken into account. Applied communication research also has helped to concretize the policy actions encouraged by rhetorical criticism. Thus, applied communication research can help rhetorical critics to offer particular solutions to concrete problems.

Finally, the focus in applied communication research on the study of communication for intervention (see Frey & SunWolf, this volume), as well as insight, may help to encourage the Isocratean impulse in rhetoric. Rhetoricians have made much of Isocrates’s (1929b) claim that “there is no institution devised by man [or woman] which the power of speech has not helped us to establish” (p. 327). Rhetorical critics have justified their studies by positing rhetoric as essential to the formation of human communities. Isocrates, however, urged more than reflection; the study of rhetoric was supposed to improve communities. Isocrates (1929a) attacked thinkers who “pretend to have knowledge of the future but are incapable either of saying anything pertinent or of giving any counsel regarding the present” (p. 167). To more fully implement Isocrates’s vision, rhetorical critics may want to enact applied communication research more regularly with a particular emphasis on giving pertinent counsel about present situations and future actions. This call to make rhetorical criticism most useful to communities may be the most important contribution that applied communication research has made to the rhetorical tradition.

Conclusion

Human beings innately are rhetorical beings. It is not surprising, therefore, that studies of the rhetorical facets of our being are thousands of years old. The accumulated wisdom from such studies has been applied to shape human societies, institutions, and relationships uncountable times. In this sense, applied rhetorical studies are pervasive. Within the confines of scholarly publication, however, some categories of applied rhetorical studies are more visible than others. Specifically, rhetorical criticism has become the dominant practice, with critical studies having a limited scope of operation, as they are shared
primarily with other rhetoricians and students rather than with the public at large or with particular external groups. That stance is unfortunate, for there are a plethora of well-developed theories and methods available for conducting applied rhetorical work, and it may well be time for rhetorical scholars to consider expanding the audiences for criticism and reporting construction-oriented rhetorical efforts. Rhetorical studies were founded as an applied art, and the future health of the field may well be tied to the diversity and richness of its applications.

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