

The Evolution of Communication Theory Over the Past 50 Years: An Analysis of the Multi-Edition Book "Theories of Human Communication" 1978 - 2021

*Prahastiwi Utari

<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-9014-2785>

Pramana Pramana

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7254-6908>

Department of Communication, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: prahastiwi@staff.uns.ac.id

Abstract

Background: Academic textbooks are indispensable resources facilitating the organisation and dissemination of scholarly knowledge within a given field. The scientific ideas set forth and elucidated in academic textbooks will delineate the trajectory and direction of how these ideas will be employed and utilised by a range of users. Consequently, academic textbooks indirectly influence the evolution of scholarly thought.

Objective: This paper examines the evolution of communication theory by analysing successive editions of Stephen W. Littlejohn's academic textbook *Theories of Human Communication*, which was published from 1978 to 2021.

Methodology: This paper employs a textual analysis of each edition of the book to investigate the evolution of communication theory. It Examines the progression of communication theory by comparing the changes and additions to the content of each edition. It equally investigates the evolution of communication theory and its response to the latest trends.

Results: An analysis of 12 editions of Littlejohn's "Theories of Human Communication" reveals the significant evolution of communication theory. Each edition reflects the adaptation and adjustment of theory to changing social, technological, and academic contexts. The stages include incremental, developmental, canonical, and revolutionary growth, indicating the gradual addition, elaboration, stabilisation, and radical paradigmatic shifts in theory development. The findings confirm that communication theory constantly evolves and adapts to remain relevant amidst dynamic contextual changes.

Conclusion: This paper demonstrates the dynamic evolution of communication theory, which initially posited that communication theory is a multidisciplinary field. It employs a multi-theoretical approach to advance the study of communication in a scientific manner while retaining the interdisciplinary nature of other sciences.

Unique Contribution: The analysis of the content of the 12 editions of the book *Human Communication Theories* illustrates the stages of communication theory evolution over 50 years. Incremental growth (1978 - 1989), developmental growth (1989-2005), canonical development (2005-2017), and revolutionary period, 2017-2021.

Key Recommendation: This analysis of 12 communication theory books offers insights into the field's evolution, strengths, weaknesses, and future. It serves as a valuable contribution, critically reflecting on scientific challenges and developments in communication studies.

Keywords: Domain Theories, Evolution Communication Theories, Framework Theories, Human Communication Theories, Stages of Development Theories

Introduction

Grasping communication theory evolution is vital in communication studies. It offers frameworks for understanding message transmission and reception across contexts. With technological and social shifts, communication methods change, necessitating theory updates for relevance. These changes reflect evolving technology, media, and our comprehension and analysis of communication processes.

One artefact that is functional in scholarly development is academic textbooks. (Koschmann & Campbell, 2019) note that academic textbooks are important artefacts that govern entire fields of study and are also a vehicle for how key theories are represented in a scientific field. The development of a scientific field is seen through the representation and dissemination of key scientific ideas within it (Palmer et al., 2013). The scientific ideas articulated and explained in an academic textbook will form a roadmap of how various users will likely utilise these ideas. Academic textbooks thus indirectly shape the development of scholarship, which (Okeeffe, 2013) describes as the evolution of theory.

Stephen W. Littlejohn's "Theories of Human Communication" is a key reference for understanding communication theory's evolution. Since its 1978 debut, the book has seen numerous updates, mirroring shifts in the communication field. Each edition includes the latest theories and removes outdated ones, illustrating communication theory's progression. This documentation chronicles the field's historical development and enhances our comprehensive understanding of communication. Conversely, this textbook's appeal lies in its role as a reference for other academic texts (Rubin et al., 1990), (Baran & Davis, 1995), (West & Turner, 2000), (Miller, 2001), (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011), (Fuchs, 2016), (Griffin et al., 2019).

In his early editions, Littlejohn advocated for a multidisciplinary communication theory, integrating diverse perspectives and methods. However, influenced by thinkers like (Craig, 1999), who saw communication as a distinct discipline, Littlejohn shifted towards a more focused approach in later editions, enhancing the field's comprehensive understanding.

This shift is significant, illustrating communication theory's adaptability to evolving contexts. "Theories of Human Communication" establishes communication theory as a distinct, well-defined field. It enriches academic literature and offers a specific framework for researchers and practitioners. The book's contribution is crucial to developing and understanding communication theory, making it an invaluable resource for enthusiasts.

Based on the background, This study explores the 50-year evolution of communication theory and Littlejohn's "Theories of Human Communication" as a reflection and contributor. The research questions investigate theory development across 12 editions, changes in groupings, technological/social influences, and academic thought's impact on Littlejohn's approach. The study identifies and analyses communication theory evolution, examines grouping and approach changes, explains technological/social impacts, and evaluates Craig's influence on Littlejohn. Focusing on 12 editions from 1978-2021, this research significantly contributes to understanding and developing communication theory, demonstrating its adaptability to evolving social and technological dynamics.

Literature Review

The Usefulness of Theories

The main purpose of this paper is to describe the evolution of communication theory through the development of theories in 12 textbooks of "Theories of Human Communication." For this reason, it is important to explain what theory is, its function, and related communication theories.

A theory is a set of interrelated concepts, definitions, and propositions used to explain, understand, and predict phenomena based on observations, experiments, and systematic research (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Theories are symbolic constructs (Kaplan, 2017). They selectively focus on certain aspects while ignoring others. No single theory can reveal the entire truth or fully address a subject in human life (Cobley & Schulz, 2013). Theory serves as a crucial foundation for research, which includes the following purposes for theory:

1. Explain the how and why of a phenomenon.
2. It establishes relationships between variables and shows their interconnections in explaining phenomena. Prediction theory allows us to foresee what will happen in a given situation.
3. Helps predict the results of actions or interventions.
4. Aids our comprehension of controlling variables to achieve intended outcomes.
5. Offers direction for addressing a problem or attaining an objective.
6. Structure information and knowledge into a coherent, systematic framework for better understanding and accessibility.
7. Promote scientific advancement by offering a testable framework for further development.
8. New theories can enhance our scientific comprehension.
9. A theory offers a distinct viewpoint on a phenomenon.
10. Theories can alter our worldview by providing alternative explanations.

Comprehending the role of theory enables us to understand scientific development and leverage it to solve problems, devise solutions, and enhance our worldly knowledge.

The researcher underlines what Littlejohn's main study of communication theory is. Theories are transient, reflecting contextual trends and perspectives that rise and fall in prominence. Some endure, others become obsolete. Littlejohn's work traces how past "Theories of Human Communication" shaped today's dominant theories, providing a record of communication theory's evolution.

Academic Textbook

To explore the development of communication theory, one can draw from a variety of informative sources. Textbooks such as "A First Look at Communication Theory" (Griffin et al., 2023), "Introducing Communication Theory Analysis and Application" (West & Turner, 2024) and "Theories of Human Communication" (Littlejohn et al., 2021) provide in-depth explanations of communication theory, its history, and applications. Academic journals are another primary source, publishing the latest research and theoretical advancements. Journals like "Journal of Communication", "Communication Theory", and "Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication" often feature cutting-edge work and debates within the field.

Review articles in these journals offer comprehensive overviews of emerging trends and theoretical developments, highlighting areas of consensus and controversy among experts. Dissertations and theses from graduate programmes can also provide in-depth explorations of specific communication theories.

Presentations and papers from conferences, such as the International Communication Association (ICA) and the National Communication Association (NCA), grant insight into the latest discussions and research directions. Practical perspectives can be gleaned from reports by research institutes and case studies by communication companies, such as those published by Pew Research Centre and Nielsen. Scholarly databases, including JSTOR, Google Scholar, and PubMed, provide broad access to many research articles and publications in the communication field. By leveraging this diverse array of sources, one can thoroughly understand the evolution and current state of communication theory.

For this research, we chose academic textbooks published in revised form. The main reason is that these textbook editions provide a consistent, continuous narrative tracing theoretical development in a discipline. New editions recast, update, and expand prior content, offering a clear picture of long-term conceptual evolution. Littlejohn's "Theories of Human Communication" charts 50 years of communication theory in a structured, accessible manner.

Academic journals disseminate innovative research, but revised textbooks offer distinct advantages. They provide consistency, broader context, systematic structure, and synthesis of diverse studies - making them invaluable for understanding long-term communication theory development. Seminal texts like "Theories of Human Communication" (12 editions), "First Look at Communication" (11 editions), and "Introducing Communication Theory" (8 editions) exemplify this.

Theories of Human Communication Book

The study of human communication has significantly transformed in 50 years, paralleling technological, social, and scientific advances. Stephen W. Littlejohn's "Theories of Human Communication", first published in 1978, is a seminal reference charting the field's theoretical evolution. Its 12 editions from 1978-2021 reflect the discipline's conceptual progression.

Analysing 12 editions of "Theories of Human Communication" traces communication theory's progression from simple to complex, interdisciplinary frameworks. This seminal text reflects the discipline's evolution, adapting to technological and social changes. As such, it's an invaluable resource for understanding communication theory's development and future trajectory.

Methodology

To analyse the content of the 12 books of "Theories of Human Communication", the researchers did so qualitatively, using qualitative content analysis (McKee, 2003). This approach identified themes, patterns, and meanings within the texts. The researcher first read the books thoroughly to establish context, then broke down the content into relevant units of analysis, such as paragraphs, sentences, or phrases, to meet research objectives.

This qualitative content analysis involved a systematic multi-stage process. The researcher first established preliminary categories, then meticulously coded relevant text, identifying predetermined and emergent themes. Axial coding connected categories, uncovering relationships and patterns, while selective coding selected core categories to craft a comprehensive narrative. This rigorous approach enabled robust analysis and insightful findings.

The researcher rigorously analysed data sources while maintaining the original text's integrity and context. Emerging themes were identified, books were compared, and patterns or differences were noted. Combining findings, the researcher formulated implications and recommendations. This systematic approach allowed for a deeper exploration of each theory's meaning and understanding of each theory's contribution.

Result

In the research results section, the findings from 12 "Theories of Human Communication" editions are displayed in tables, offering readers a clear, structured presentation of information. These tables enable chronological and thematic visualisation of communication theory's evolution, highlighting patterns and trends. Providing quick references, the tables support the researcher's analyses and strengthen the arguments and conclusions drawn from the data. This tabular approach facilitates reader understanding and accessibility compared to lengthy narrative texts.

Table 1. Summary of Data Findings from 12 "Theories of Human Communication" Books

Edition	Year	Development Phase	Domain Theories	New Theories Added	Elimination Theories	Special Notes
1.	1978	Incremental Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Orientation Theories • Basic Process Theories • Contextual Theories 			Early foundations of communication theory.
2.	1983		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Theories • Thematics Theories. • Contextual Theories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules Theories • Theories of Language • Theory of Information Processing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theory of Thinking 	Conduct theory evaluation and theory expansion and updating.
3.	1989		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Theories • Contextual Theories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural and Behavioural Theories, • Theories of Cultural and Social Reality • Interpretive and Critical Theories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories of Information Processing • Theories of Persuasion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Booster is a theory according to the development of the conditions at the time the book was published. • Removal of theory due to economic constraints.
4.	1992	Development Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics in Communication Theories • Contextual Theories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories of Sign and Language • Theories of Discourse • Theories of Message Production, • Theories of Message Reception • Theories of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories of Cognitive and Behavioural 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding new theories and removing theories deemed irrelevant. • Summarised example of a research operation.

				Experience Interpretation		
5.	1996		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics in Communication Theories • Contextual Theories 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additions and subtractions to the theory. • Theory grouping same as 4th edition.
6.	1999		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics in Communication Theories • Contextual Theories 			
7.	2022		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics in Communication Theories • Contextual Theories 			
8.	2005	Canonical Growth	Communication Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Communicator • The message, • The Conversation, • The Relationship, • The Group, • The Organisation, • The media, • Culture and Society • Theoretical Traditions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Semiotics, 2. Phenomenological, 3. The Cybernetic, 4. The Socio-Psychological, 5. The Socio Cultural, 6. The Critical and 7. The Rhetorical. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouping theories based on the salience of the communication context to the theoretical tradition. • 9th and 10th editions same theory groupings as 8th edition.
9.	2008		Communication Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Communicator • The Message, • The Conversation, • The Relationship, • The Group, • The Organization, • The Media, • Culture and Society, • Theoretical Traditions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Semiotics, 2. Phenomenological, 3. The Cybernetic, 4. The Socio-psychological, 5. The Socio Cultural, 6. The Critical, and 7. The Rhetorical 			
10.	2011		Communication Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Communicator • The Message, • The Conversation, • The Relationship, • The Group, • The Organization, • The Media, • Culture and Society, • Theoretical Traditions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Semiotics, 2. Phenomenological, 3. The Cybernetic, 4. The Socio-Psychological, 5. The Socio Cultural, 6. The Critical, and 7. The Rhetorical 			
11.	2017	Revolutionary Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Element Theories • Contextual Theories 			The concept of Beyond Human Communication Theories Emerged

12.	2021		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Element Theories • Contextual Theories 			Adding the study of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a study in Beyond Human Communication Theories
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Source: (Littlejohn, 1978, 1983; Littlejohn et al., 2017, 2021; Littlejohn, 1989, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002; Littlejohn & Foss, 2005, 2008, 2011)

Tables present a concise 12-edition overview of the evolution of "Theories of Human Communication." Detailed explanations contextualise and analyse the changes, guiding readers through communication theory's development. This structured approach clearly conveys the information, enabling readers to trace the discipline's progression effectively.

a. Incremental Growth in Communication Theory (1978-1992)

The incremental growth stage saw the gradual, cumulative development of existing ideas and new theories, enhancing comprehension without altering core structures. Littlejohn's editions 1-3 (1978-1989) exemplify this, gradually introducing new theories across domains without restructuring foundations. Concepts like General Systems, cybernetics, and symbolic interactionism saw cumulative development.

Littlejohn's 1983 edition evaluated and integrated the first edition's theories, pursuing a more comprehensive understanding. Fundamental changes included renaming, adding, and restructuring theory groupings. Contextual Theories were divided into Interpersonal and Mediated domains, expanding the framework's scope. This iterative approach gradually enriched the theoretical landscape.

Littlejohn's 1989 edition emphasised communication theory's multidisciplinary nature, incorporating diverse perspectives. Theories were regrouped as General and Contextual, with additions and removals reflecting gradual development. The iterative restructuring and selective updates demonstrate how the field continues to grow and adapt over time, adjusting to changing social and academic contexts.

b. Developmental Growth in Communication Theory (1992-2005)

The developmental growth stage saw the significant evolution and elaboration of existing communication theories, increasing their complexity and applications. Littlejohn's "Theories of Human Communication" editions 4-7 (1992-2002) exemplify this stage. The 4th edition (1992) expanded coverage, explained theory utilisation, and included research examples. Restructured theory groupings as Topics and Contextual Theories reflected the elaboration of increasingly complex frameworks.

Littlejohn's 5th (1996) to 7th (2002) editions maintained the 4th edition's rigorous yet accessible approach. The 5th emphasised comprehensible yet substantive theory for undergrads and postgrads. The 6th reinforced that mastering communication theory demands specialised aptitude. The 7th began questioning communication's multidisciplinary nature, contemplating integrating diverse theories into a cohesive framework.

Littlejohn's 7th edition incorporated Craig's vision of unifying diverse theories into a cohesive framework (Craig, 1999). This signified increased elaboration, with core groupings largely maintained since the 4th edition. Topics and Contextual Theories expanded, reflecting the increasing complexity and breadth of communication theory. Stable groupings indicated a phase of substantive expansion and integration.

c. Canonical Growth in Communication Theory (2005-2017)

Communication theory's canonical growth stage saw standardised, stable theories emerge with widely accepted features. Littlejohn's 8th-10th "Theories of Human Communication" editions (2005-2011) reflect this. The 8th edition (2005) restructured the book, emphasising communication theory's specificity and introducing the Seven Traditions framework as the primary lens. This shift towards a more defined, mainstream approach signified the field's growing maturity and consolidation.

The 8th edition's model emphasised communication contexts and traditions. Contexts included Communicator, Message, Relationship, Media, and Culture. Traditions were Semiotics, Cybernetic, Critical, and Rhetorical. This restructuring aimed to offer a comprehensive, cohesive communication theory framework.

The 9th and 10th editions maintained the 8th edition's structure, emphasising communication traditions' strengths across contexts. Updates involved theory additions/subtractions to reflect the latest developments. These editions signified communication theories' stability and canonisation, with established frameworks now serving as standards for research and education.

The 8th-10th editions' consistent approach and theory grouping reflect communication theories' stability and reliability as a disciplinary foundation. This Canonical Growth stage indicates communication theory's high maturity, with a clear structure widely accepted by academics and practitioners.

d. Revolutionary Growth Stage (2017-2021 and beyond)

Paradigm-shifting, radical changes in communication studies characterise this stage, driven by technological and social transformations. Littlejohn's 11th and 12th "Theories of Human Communication" editions (2017-2021) exemplify this. The 11th (2017) introduced "Beyond Human Communication Theories", expanding the scope to include human interactions with nature, objects, machines and divine entities, reflecting communication's evolving boundaries.

The 11th edition organised theories into Communication Elements and Contexts. Elements included Communicator, Message, Medium, and "Beyond Human Communication". The latter group examined human interactions with nature, objects, machines, and divine entities. This addition responded to technological advancements like AI and IoT, which are transforming human-environment and human-technology interactions.

The 12th edition (2021) expanded on technology's impact, adding AI to the "Beyond Human Communication" theories. Littlejohn acknowledged that communication's scope now extends beyond human interactions, encompassing other digital-age entities. The two-category theory grouping persisted, emphasising how emerging technologies are transforming communication dynamics.

The 11th and 12th editions demonstrate radical evolution in communication theory, with new paradigms replacing old ones. This Revolutionary Growth stage indicates the need for theories addressing technology, culture, and humans' increasingly connected, intelligent world interactions. Communication theory undergoes transformative changes, reflecting fundamental shifts in modern communication understanding and practice.

Littlejohn's "Theories of Human Communication" over 12 editions offers a robust framework to trace 50 years of communication theory's evolution. The changing theory groupings and analyses reflect adaptations to shifting social, technological and academic contexts. The chronological record documents new theory introductions and adjustments to accommodate technological and social changes, like social media and digital communication. The data demonstrates communication theory's progression from General Orientation to Beyond Human Communication, signifying substantial developments. A systematic framework of incremental, developmental, canonical, and revolutionary growth stages that analyse this evolution is provided.

Discussion

Table 1, summarising the development of communication theories from the first to the twelfth editions of Littlejohn's "Theories of Human Communication", shows how the grouping of theories and the addition and deletion of theories reflect the stages of Incremental Growth, Developmental Growth, Canonical Growth, and Revolutionary Growth.

Early editions saw incremental changes with additions to the foundational General-System and Cybernetic theory, indicating cumulative growth. Editions 4-7 reflected Developmental Growth, with complex new theories and adjusted groupings accommodating social/technological change. Editions 8-10 showcased seven communication traditions' specialisations. Editions 11-12 emphasised "Beyond Human Communication".

The researchers added a more in-depth discussion of external factors that influence theory change, such as technological developments, cultural shifts, and changes in socio-political dynamics to complement why in some editions there are changes in the theory domain with additions and subtractions.

Littlejohn built the multidisciplinary nature of communication theory through extensive literature reviews and theory groupings in the first 3 editions. This belief was evident from the broad, diverse framework of prominent late 1970s theories like Systems, Cybernetics and Symbolic Interaction (Littlejohn, 1978), which showed a broad and diverse framework for understanding communication. However, by the second edition, he expressed doubts about communication's true multidisciplinary status, observing that researchers across disciplines still prioritised loyalty to their own fields over communication's interdisciplinary nature. Communication was thus seen as subordinate to other disciplines rather than a distinct field of study.

Likewise, Littlejohn's third edition perceived communication theory as increasingly voluminous, becoming a product of communication science itself. Several factors contributed to this view: rising popularity of mass media studies enriching media-related communication theory Littlejohn's third edition perceived communication theory as increasingly voluminous,

becoming a product of communication science itself. Several factors contributed to this view: rising popularity of mass media studies enriching media-related communication theory (DeFleur, 1966); emergence of a critical paradigm with Marxist-oriented ideology (Bottomore & Matterlart, 1989; Davidse et al., 2022); internationalisation of communication theory through European and Latin American scholarship and communication associations (Littlejohn, 1989); significant influence of European scientific theorists like Saussure, Eco, Derrida, Foucault, Habermas and Ricour, introducing language, hermeneutics, phenomenology, critical theory and cultural studies (Craig & Muller, 2007); and the 1980s rise of discourse and text studies, shifting the communication concept from humans to text as the core, leading to conversation analyses and semiotics studies (Cobley & Schulz, 2013). These trends indicated communication theory's continuous evolution and expanding multidisciplinary nature.

The researcher initially observed Littlejohn's doubts about communication's true multidisciplinary nature, noting researchers' disciplinary loyalties over communication's interdisciplinary status. However, influenced by figures like (Craig, 1999), who emphasised communication as a distinct discipline, not just a combination of other theories, Littlejohn's approach evolved. Craig's "Seven Traditions" concept - semiotics, phenomenology, cybernetics, social-psychology, socio-cultural, critical, and rhetoric - highlighted communication's diverse theoretical aspects. In later editions, Littlejohn and (Griffin, 2006) restructured their communication theory presentations to align with the "Seven Traditions" framework, recognising communication's growing maturity as an independent discipline rather than merely an amalgamation of other fields.

21st-century information technology's rapid evolution demands communication theory's adaptive response. A 1988 symposium by Human Communication Research warned of digital technology's incompatibility with existing theoretical domains, requiring a new epistemological approach (Walther, 2017). This argument gained consensus as fast-developing communication technology challenged previously siloed theories of mass and interpersonal communication (Cathcart & Gumpert, 1983; Hawkins et al., 1988), raising hopes for a long-overdue communication science paradigm shift (Reardon & Rogers, 1988).

Evolving social media, big data and computing reshape communication theory, demanding review (Cappella, 2017). Scholars use strong diction - 'rethinking' (Cappella, 2017), 'merger' (Walther, 2017), 'integrating' (High, 2019), 'bridging' (Lievrouw et al., 2001; O'Sullivan & Carr, 2018) - to propose unifying mass and interpersonal communication (Cathcart & Gumpert, 1983).

Littlejohn's 11th edition expanded communication's scope beyond just human interactions. Concepts like non-human, post-human, extra-human, a-human, and transhuman communication were explored under the "Beyond Human Communication" framework (Littlejohn et al., 2017). This broadened the definition of communication, providing opportunities to examine alternative reasons and methods of interaction between humans and non-human entities. Departing from a solely human-centric view, Littlejohn's approach offered a unique perspective compared to other communication scholars, embracing the complexities of evolving technological and social landscapes.

This directional change reflects Littlejohn's evolving perspective and adapting to social/technological communication shifts. By adopting a more focused, distinctive approach,

he provided a clearer, more specific communication theory framework, allowing the discipline to develop as an independent, well-defined field. This demonstrates communication theory's ability to adapt while retaining its essence and relevance as an important academic discipline.

Conclusion

Analysis of 12 editions of Littlejohn's "Theories of Human Communication" shows communication theory's significant evolution. Each edition reflects adaptation to changing social, technological and academic contexts. Stages include Incremental, Developmental, Canonical and Revolutionary Growth, confirming communication theory's constant evolution and adaptation to remain relevant amidst dynamic contextual changes.

This paper also underlines that a comprehensive study of Littlejohn's "Theories of Human Communication" and revised academic texts provides deeper insight into communication theory's development. This review holds academic and practical significance, as continuously evaluating and updating the discipline ensures its relevance and adaptability amidst evolving social and technological dynamics.

With this kind of research, in the future, conducting more in-depth longitudinal research on specific themes or particular theories that have undergone significant changes over several editions can provide sharper insights into the evolution of communication theory. In addition, conducting Comparative studies between Littlejohn's work and other revisionist texts can uncover pedagogical and theoretical development differences/similarities. Examining the influences of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and big data is crucial to understanding how they alter existing communication theories.

In Addition, further research could explore intercultural communication and globalisation theories, examining their evolution amidst intensifying cross-cultural interaction. Case studies demonstrating the practical application of communication theories in organisational, media, and educational contexts could evaluate their effectiveness and relevance. Adopting mixed methods or digital ethnography could enrich communication research. Investigating emerging themes like human-smart technology communication or communication ecology and forecasting future theory developments would ensure the discipline's continued relevance and adaptability. Comprehensive, multidisciplinary studies are key to updating and advancing communication theories to address forthcoming challenges and opportunities.

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