

Cultivating Communication: Grounded Practical Theory, Culture, and the Paradox of Pluralism

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In their article, "Discursive Reflexivity in the Ethnography of Communication," Carbaugh et al. (2011) distinguished five types of reflexive ethnographic practice. This lecture will explore the possibility of a sixth type: cultivating communicative practices through the use of Grounded Practical Theory (GPT) methodology. A GPT interpretation of cultural practices produces an idealized reconstruction of problems, techniques and normative principles designed to inform critical awareness and deliberative choice in practical conduct. The philosophy of culture that underlies GPT is one of pragmatist pluralism rather than strict cultural relativism. After introducing GPT as a potential mode of discursive reflexivity in the ethnography of communication, we reflect on problems that may confront this approach, especially the paradox of pluralism as it manifests in dilemmas of normativity, power, and cognitive diversity.