Now that we have tentatively come up with a tentative definition of ritual, we move on to lay out some principles and implication of communication theory by:

1. Laying out a propositional argument of ritual as one of the strongest forms of ritual communication; and

2. Analyzing layers of the communicative properties of ritual to understand its power

(1) Ritual is a Communicative Form:

* All forms of ritual are communicative, symbolic behaviors in social situations.

* Their movements are signs of something else. If they do not function to communicate, they do nothing.

(2) The Effective Mechanisms of Ritual are Communication Devices

* The effectiveness of ritual operates through communication devices (e.g. the logic of sign systems, shared human meaning, morality, habit and cooperation)

* Rituals work in the ways that communication works, subject to all the human failings thereof

* Ritual is specifically one of the ways in which we say things

(3) Ordering (and other) Effects of Ritual
Are Subject to the Vicissitudes of Communication:

* The meaning of a ritual is subject to interpretation

* The same ritual may, within social bounds, mean different things to different people and groups

* If ritual is a way of doing social order, its effectiveness for doing so remains subject to the vicissitudes of communication

(4) Symbolic Effectivity is Real Effectivity:

* If rituals help social systems work, and operate through sign and meaning systems, we must take signs and meanings seriously

* Such communication is not only useful for doing things, sometimes it is the thing done

* Presenting oneself in a certain fashion may help create that reality

* Symbols may even affect physiology

* Yet the individual is not in complete control: the cultural repertoire is key.

(5) Socially Constructed Reality is Real Reality:

* It is often hard to take symbolic effectivity seriously as it appears to have irrational or false implications

* Common critiques lead to either solipsism or condemnation of the arbitrary

* We cannot simply construct any reality we so choose (“obdurate reality”). Symbolically constructed realities are part of the environment
we must navigate

* Dismissing an element of social reality as “socially constructed,” of an arbitrary, second class or illegitimate reality is both empirically indefensible and implicitly favors brute physicality

* This also suggests something dark and manipulative is at play.

* Stark dichotomies oversimplify to a fault, getting in the way of understanding ritual and communication

(6) Within the Limits of Communicative Effectiveness
Ritual is a Strong Form:

* The reality of social construction is a structural phenomenon for individuals, even limiting interpretation, ritual is a strong form of communicative effectiveness

* How does this work?

(7) Symbolicity and Generality:

* All human communication is constructed of signs

* Signifiers are are signs that stand for what they are not (the signified), to someone, for some purpose

* Indexes are signs that depend on a causal relationship between signifier and signified

* Icons are signs that depend on a relationship of resemblance

* Symbols are signs that depend on a relationship of convention between signifier and signified
* As we move from indexes to symbols, we move from the particular to the general

* These distinctions help us understand how rituals, which gear toward transcendence of particulars, work

(8) Materiality and Indexicality:

* Ritual communication brings together inner and outer worlds by shaping material to express ideas.

* Material elements operate causally; together they can be interpreted as indexical signs

* Ritual is special as it brings the performance of the indexical to prominence, making it a prop of ensurance against potential indeterminateness

* This is done through bodily participation in form

* Balance between correctness and felicity important

* Performative aspect is what counts, regardless of subjective feeling

* The world as lived and imagined are fused in ritual under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms: making real in this world an ideal world

(9) Backward and Forward References:

* Rituals always refer backward to the social order in which it is embedded and forward to the world of those performing it

* It is about both position in a cosmic order and alignment in a practical world
(10) The Relation of Witness and Spectator, Ritual and Spectacle:

* Spectacle is often distrusted today

* What of the role of witness?

* Spectating is a mode of participation

(11) The Phenomenal Status of the Ritual text in the Actor’s Environment:

* To engage in ritual is to voluntarily submit oneself to an order of signs

* Interpretation is not complete freedom: ritual depends on both an actor’s performance and operates as a condition of that performance

(12) Some Implications:

* Rituals are not always substantively voluntary or representative of the actor’s internal state

* Socialization devices can shape these without enforced coercion

* Proposals and responses can be structured according to consequences, role taking and role making, and subtle identity construction

* Because ritual performance must be according to form, it is a more constraining presence in the environment than any other form of communication