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Survey of Communication Study

Survey of Communication Study

Welcome

Welcome to the open source version of Survey of Communication Study. This text offers the opportunity to introduce people to Communication as an academic field of study. We have broken the book into two parts. First, we lay the foundation by covering the scope of communication study, its history, as well as a brief introduction to theories and research methods. Second, we provide chapters that survey many of the areas of specialization practiced in the field of Communication today.

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Chapter 1 - Foundations: Defining Communication and Communication Study

Chapter 1

Foundations: Defining Communication and Communication Study

Chapter Objectives:

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

• Explain Communication Study.

• Define Communication.

• Explain the linear and transactional models of communication.

• Discuss the benefits of studying Communication.

Y

ou are probably reading this book because you are taking an introductory communication class at your college or university. Many colleges and universities around the country require students to take some form of communication course in order to graduate. Introductory communication classes include courses on public speaking, interpersonal communication, or a class that combines both. However, a new trend is beginning to emerge. Many Communication departments are now offering an introductory course that explains what Communication is, how it is studied as an academic field, and what areas of specialization make up the field of Communication. That is our goal in this text.

As professors, we hear a lot of people talk about communication both on and off our campuses. We're always surprised at how few people can actually explain what communication is, or what Communication departments are about. Even our majors sometimes have a hard time explaining to others what it is they study. Through this book we provide you with the basics for understanding what communication is, what Communication scholars and students study, and how you can effectively use the study of communication in your life, whether or not you are a Communication major. We accomplish this by taking you on a journey through time. The material in the text is framed chronologically, and is largely presented in context of the events that occurred before the industrial revolution (2500 BCE-1800's), and after the industrial revolution (1800's-Present). In each chapter we include boxes that provide examples on that chapter's topic in context of "then," "now," and "you" to help you grasp how the study of communication at colleges and universities impacts life in the "real world."

To help you have a general understanding of communication study as an academic field, we have divided the book into two parts: Part I (Chapters 1–6) provides you with the foundations of Communication as an academic field of study. In this chapter you will learn the definitions of Communication and Communication study, as well as understand possible careers that result from studying communication. In Chapters 2 and 3 you will learn that verbal and nonverbal communication are the primary human acts we study as an academic field. By reading a brief history of Communication study in Chapter 4, you will learn the chronological development of the field, which determined our choices for how we ordered the chapters in Part II. Finally, Chapters 5 and 6 briefly highlight the different theories and research methods we use to study human communication. Part II (Chapters 7–13) highlights many of the prominent communication specializations that have shaped the field in the past 100 years. We present them in the chronological order in which they became part of the Communication discipline. While there are many more areas of specialization we would like to cover in this text, we have chosen to highlight the ones that have shaped what you likely recognize as part of the Communication departments at your colleges and universities. Because we cannot cover every specialization, we chose to include ones that were instrumental in the earlier development of the field that are still being explored today, as well as specializations we believe represent new directions in the field that examine communication in our every-changing society.

Before we introduce you to verbal and nonverbal communication, history, theories, research methods, and the chronological development of communication specializations; we want to set a foundation for you in this chapter by explaining Communication Study, Communication, Models of Communication, and communication at work.

Defining Communication Study

When we tell others that we teach Communication, people often ask questions like, "Do you teach radio and television?" "Do you teach public speaking?" "Do you do news broadcasts?" "Do you work with computers?" "Do you study Public Relations?" "Is that Journalism or Mass Communication?" But, the most common question we get is, "What is that?" It's interesting that most people will tell us they know what communication is, but they do not have a clear understanding of what we study and teach as an academic discipline. In fact, many professors in other departments on our campus also ask us what it is we study and teach. If you're a Communication major, you've probably been asked the same question, and like us, had a hard time answering it succinctly. If you memorize the definition below, you will have a quick and simple answer to those who ask you what you study as a Communication major.

Bruce Smith, Harold Lasswell, and Ralph D. Casey (1946) provided a good and simple answer to the question, "What is communication study?" They state that **communication study** is an academic field whose primary focus is ***"who says what, through what channels (media) of communication, to whom, [and] what will be the results"*** (p. 121).

Communication Study
• Who?
• What?
• What Channel?
• To Whom?
• What Are the Results?

Although they gave this explanation over 60 years ago, it still succinctly describes the focus of Communication scholars and professionals. As professors and students of communication we extensively examine the various forms and outcomes of human communication. In 1995, the National Communication Association (NCA), our national organization, stated that **communication study** ***"focuses on how people use messages to generate meanings within and across various contexts, cultures, channels and media. The field promotes the effective and ethical practice of human communication"*** (NCA, 1995). Now, if people ask you what you're studying in a Communication class, you have an answer!

We use Smith, Lasswell, and Casey's definition to guide how we discuss the content in this book. Part I of this book sets the foundation by explaining the historical development of how we came to this definition, the "what" and "channels" (verbal and nonverbal communication), and the "whom" and "results" (theories and research methods). Before we get into those chapters, it is important for you to know how we define the actual term communication to give you context for our discussion of it throughout the book.

Defining Communication

Now that you know how to define communication study, are you able to develop a simple definition of communication? Try to write a one-sentence definition of communication!

> **Communication Study Then**
>
> *Aristotle The Communication Researcher*
>
> *Aristotle said, "Rhetoric falls into three divisions, determined by the three classes of listeners to speeches. For of the three elements in speech-making -- speaker, subject, and person addressed -- it is the last one, the hearer, that determines the speech's end and object."*
>
> *For Aristotle it was the "to whom" that determined if communication occurred and how effective it was. Aristotle, in his study of "who says what, through what channels, to whom, and what will be the results" focused on persuasion and its effect on the audience. Aristotle thought is was extremely important to focus on the audience in communication exchanges.*
>
> *What is interesting is that when we think of communication we are often, "more concerned about ourselves as the communications source, about our message, and even the channel we are going to use. Too often, the listener, viewer, reader fails to get any consideration at all (Lee, 1993).*
>
> *Aristotle's statement above demonstrates that humans who have been studying communication have had solid ideas about how to communicate effectively for a very long time. Even though people have been formally studying communication for a long time, it is still necessary to continue studying communication in order to improve it.*
>
> *Lee, R. L. (1993). Developing Effective Communications [Website]. University of Missouri Extension. Available:* [1] *[2008, March 31st].'*

We're guessing it's more difficult than you think. Don't be discouraged. For decades communication professionals have had difficulty coming to any consensus about how to define the term communication (Hovland, 1948; Morris, 1946; Nilsen, 1957; Sapir, 1933; Schramm, 1948; Smith, 1950; Stevens, 1950). Even today, there is no single agreed-upon definition of communication. In 1970 and 1984 Frank Dance looked at 126 published definitions of communication in our literature and said that the task of trying to develop a single definition of communication that everyone likes is like trying to nail jello to a wall. Over twenty years later, defining communication still feels like nailing jello to a wall.

We recognize that there are countless good definitions of communication, but we feel it's important to provide you with our definition. We are not arguing that this definition of communication is the best, but you will understand the content of this text better if you understand how we have come to define communication. For the purpose of this text we define communication as ***the process of using symbols to exchange meaning***.

Let's examine two models of communication to help you further grasp this definition. Shannon and Weaver (1949) proposed a Mathematical Model of Communication (sometimes called the Linear Model) that serves as a basic model of communication. This model suggests that communication is simply the transmission of a message from one source to another. Watching television serves as an example of this. You act as the receiver when you watch television, receiving messages from the source (the television program). To better understand this, let's break down each part of this model.

The **Mathematical or Linear Model of Communication** is a model that suggests communication moves only in one direction. The **Sender** encodes a **Message**, then uses a certain **Channel** (verbal/nonverbal communication) to send it to a **Receiver** who decodes (interprets) the message. **Noise** is anything that interferes with, or changes, the original encoded message.

• A **sender** is ***someone who encodes and sends a message to a receiver through a particular channel***. The sender is the initiator of communication. For example, when you email a friend, ask a salesclerk a question, or wave to someone you are the sender of a message.

• A **receiver** is ***the recipient of a message***. The receiver must decode messages in ways that are meaningful for him/her. For example, if you see your friend make eye contact, smile, wave, and say "hello" as you pass, you are receiving a message intended for you. When this happens you must decode the verbal and nonverbal communication in ways that are meaningful.

• A **message** is ***the particular meaning or content the sender wishes the receiver to understand***. The message can be intentional or unintentional, written or spoken, verbal or nonverbal, or any combination of these. For example, as you walk across campus you may see a friend walking toward you. When you make eye contact, wave, smile, and say "hello," you are offering a message that is intentional, spoken, verbal and nonverbal.

• A **channel** is ***the method a sender uses to send a message to a receiver***. The most common channels humans use are verbal and nonverbal communication which we will discuss in detail in Chapters 2 and 3. Verbal communication relies on language and includes speaking, writing, and sign language. Nonverbal communication includes gestures, facial expressions, paralanguage, and touch. We also use communication channels that are mediated (such as television or the computer) which may utilize both verbal and nonverbal communication. Using the greeting example above, the channels of communication include both verbal and nonverbal communication.

• **Noise** is ***anything that interferes with the sending or receiving of a message***. Noise is external (a jack hammer outside your apartment window or loud music in a nightclub), and internal (physical pain, psychological stress, or nervousness about an upcoming test). External and internal noise make encoding and decoding messages more difficult. Using our ongoing example, if you are on your way to lunch and listening to your ipod when your friend greets you, you may not hear your friend say "hello," and you may not wish to chat because you are hungry. In this case, both internal and external noise influenced the communication exchange. Noise is in every communication context, and therefore, NO message is received exactly as it is transmitted by a sender because noise distorts it in one way or another.

A major criticism of the Linear Model is that it suggests communication only occurs in one direction. It also does not show how context, or our personal experiences, impact communication. Television serves as a good example of the linear model. Have you ever talked back to your television while you were watching it? Maybe you were watching a sporting event or a dramatic show and you talked at the people in the television. Did they respond to you? We're sure they did not. Television works in one direction. No matter how much you talk to the television it will not respond to you. Now apply this idea to your relationships. It seems ridiculous to think that this is how we would communicate with each other on a regular basis. This example shows the limits of the linear model for understanding communication, particularly human to human communication.

Given the limitations of the Linear Model, Barnlund (1970) adjusted the model to more fully represent what occurs in most human communication exchanges. The Transactional Model demonstrates that communication participants act as senders AND receivers simultaneously. Communication is not a simple one-way transmission of a message: The personal filters and experiences of the participants impact each communication exchange. The Transactional Model demonstrates that we are simultaneously senders and receivers, and that noise and personal filters always influence the outcomes of every communication exchange.

The Transactional Model of Communication adds to the Linear Model by suggesting that ***both parties in a communication exchange act as both sender and receiver simultaneously, encoding and decoding messages to and from each other at the same time***.

While these models are overly simplistic representations of communication, they illustrate some of the complexities of defining and studying communication. Going back to Smith, Lasswell, and Casey we may choose to focus on one, all, or a combination of the following: senders of communication, receivers of communication, channels of communication, messages, noise, context, and/or the outcome of communication. We hope you recognize that studying communication is simultaneously detail-oriented (looking at small parts of human communication), and far-reaching (examining a broad range of communication exchanges).

Communication Study and You

If you think about Smith, Lasswell, and Casey's statement that those of us who study communication investigate, "who says what, through what channels (media) of communication, to whom, [and] what will be the results" you should realize how truly complex a task we perform (p. 121). While we'll explore many examples later in the book, we want to briefly highlight a few examples of what you might study if you are interested in communication.

Communication Study Now

Aristotle and an Aardvark Go to Washington: Understanding Political Doublespeak Through Philosophy and Jokes? - Book by Thomas Cathcart and Daniel Klein.

Does Aristotle's work still apply today outside of college classrooms? Of course it does. In their new book "Aristotle and an Aardvark Go to Washington: Understanding Political Doublespeak Through Philosophy and Jokes," Cathcart and Klein use Aristotle's work with persuasion to take a humorous look at how our politicians communicate.

"For instance, 'Rumsfeld complained that there were no decent targets for bombing in Afghanistan and that we should consider bombing in Iraq, which, he said, had better targets.'" The authors of this text state that, "Rumsfeld is here employing the old con known as ignoratio elenchi (ignorance of the issue)."

Using jokes, cartoons, and insights from Aristotle and others, this book explains statements from politicians such as: "The absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence." (Donald Rumsfeld), and "It depends on what the meaning of the word 'is' is." (Bill Clinton).

-BuzzFlash. (2008). BuzzFlash Reviews. [Website]. BuzzFlash. Available: [2] *[2008, March 31st].*

Studying communication is exciting because there are so many possibilities on which to focus. For example, you might study celebrity gender images in magazine advertising (Stafford, Spears & Chung-Kue, 2003); the effect of political advertising and news on people's perceptions of political candidates (Tasperson & Fan, 2004); the various ways teachers communicate power and credibility in the classroom (Teven & Herring, 2005); how sons and daughters communicate disappointment (Miller-Day & Lee, 2001); how power is communicated and challenged in corporations (Patel & Xavier, 2005); the impact of intercultural communication and its effects on the "global village" (Young, 2005); or how women make sense of, and enact, their role as both professional and mother (Buzzanell, Meisenbach, Remke, Liu, Bowers & Conn, 2005).

The above examples demonstrate just a small taste of what we can examine through the lens of communication. In reality, studying communication has almost limitless possibilities. That's what makes this field so dynamic and exciting! When you think about the infinite number of variables we can study, as well as the infinite number of communication contexts, the task of studying "who says what, through what channels (media) of communication, to whom, [and] what will be the results?" is open to countless possibilities. The study of communication has proven helpful to us as social beings as we work to better understand the complexities of our interactions and relationships.

As a student taking an introductory Communication course, you might be thinking, "Why does this matter to me?" One reason it is important for you to study and know communication is that these skills will help you succeed in personal, social, and professional situations. A survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that "College students who wish to separate themselves from the competition during their job search would be wise to develop proficiencies most sought by employers, such as communication, interpersonal, and teamwork skills." In fact, in 2004, three of the top six qualities employers looked for in employees were "communication skills," "interpersonal skills," and "teamwork skills." Whether you major in Communication or not, the more you understand communication, the greater potential you have to succeed in all aspects of your life. Another important reason for studying communication is that in can lead to a variety of career opportunities.

Summary

Communication Study and You

Careers with a Communication Degree

The kind of skills developed by Communication majors are highly valued by all kinds of employers. Courses and activities in Communication departments both teach and make use of the skills ranked consistently high by employers. Students with a degree in Communication are ready to excel in a wide variety of careers. Below are listed some broad categories that most commonly come to mind:

Education (including elementary, high school, and college), Law, Dispute Resolution, Business Management, Marketing, Sales, Advertising, Public Relations, Social Advocacy, Communication Consulting, Computer Services, Radio Broadcasting, TV Broadcasting, Administration, Politics, Corporate Training and Development

In this chapter you have learned that the purpose of this book is to introduce you to the academic field of Communication by setting a foundation of communication history and study in the first six chapters, followed by the chronological presentation of some of the major specializations that make up this academic field.

Smith, Laswell, and Casey offer a simple definition of communication study: “who says what, through what channels (media) of communication, to whom, [and] what will be the results” (p.121). Now you can provide an answer to those who ask you what Communication study is about. Our definition of communication, ***the process of using symbols to exchange meaning***, allows you to understand how we use this term throughout the book. The linear and transactional models of communication act as a visual representations of both communication study and communication. Finally, you are now aware of the importance of studying communication: that it impacts your personal, social, and professional life.

Discussion Questions

1. According to our definition, what is communication? What do we not consider to be communication?
2. Using our definition of communication study, explain how Communication is different from other majors such as Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, etc?
3. Name three people who you feel use communication effectively in their jobs? In what ways do they communicate effectively using verbal and nonverbal communication?

Key Terms

- channel
- communication
- communication study
- linear model
- message
- noise
- receiver
- sender
- transactional model

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[2] http://www.buzzflash.com/store/reviews/937

Chapter 2 - Verbal Communication

Chapter 2

Verbal Communication

Chapter Objectives:

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

• Define verbal communication and explain its main characteristics.

• Understand the three qualities of symbols.

• Describe the rules governing verbal communication.

• Explain the differences between written and spoken communication.

• Describe the functions of verbal communication.

I

magine for a moment that you have no language with which to communicate. It's hard to imagine isn't it? It's probably even harder to imagine that with all of the advancements we have at our disposal today, there are people in our world who actually do not have, or cannot use, language to communicate.

Nearly 25 years ago, the government of Nicaragua started bringing deaf children together from all over the country in an attempt to educate them. These children had spent their lives in remote places and had no contact with other deaf people. They had never learned language and could not understand their teachers or each other. Likewise, their teachers could not understand them. A short while after bringing these students together, the teachers noticed that the students communicated with each other in what appeared to be an orderly and organized fashion: they had literally brought together the individual gestures they used at home and organized them into a new language. Although the teachers still did not understand what the kids were saying, they were astonished at what they were witnessing—the birth of a new language in the late 20th century!

Realizing that some humans still do not have language was an unprecedented discovery. In 1986 American linguist Judy Kegl went to Nicaragua to find out what she could learn from these children without language. She contends that our brains are open to language until the age of 12 or 13, and then language becomes difficult to learn. She quickly discovered approximately 300 people in Nicaragua who did not have language and says, "They are invaluable to research--among the only people on Earth who can provide clues to the beginnings of human communication."

Adrien Perez, one of the early deaf students who formed this new language (referred to as Nicaraguan Sign Language), says that without verbal communication, "You can't express your feelings. Your thoughts may be there but you can't get them out. And you can't get new thoughts in." As one of the few people on earth who has experienced life with and without verbal communication his comments speak to the heart of communication: it is the essence of who we are and how we understand our world. We use it to form our identities, initiate and maintain relationships, express our needs and wants, construct and shape world-views, and achieve personal goals (Pelley, 2000). In this chapter, we want to provide and explain our definition of verbal communication, highlight the differences between written and spoken verbal communication, and demonstrate how verbal communication functions in our lives.

Defining Verbal Communication

When people ponder the word communication, they often think about the act of talking. We rely on verbal communication to exchange messages with one another and develop as individuals. The term verbal communication often evokes the idea of spoken communication, but written communication is also part of verbal communication. Reading this book you are decoding the authors' written verbal communication in order to learn more about communication. Let's explore the various components of our definition of verbal communication and examine how it functions in our lives.

Verbal communication is about language, both written and spoken. In general, verbal communication refers to our use of words while nonverbal communication refers to communication that occurs through means other than words, such as body language, gestures, and silence. Both verbal and nonverbal communication can be spoken and written. Many people mistakenly assume that verbal communication refers only to spoken communication. However, you will learn that this is not the case. Let's say you tell a friend a joke and he or she laughs in response. Is the laughter verbal or nonverbal communication? Why? As laughter is not a word we would consider this vocal act as a form of nonverbal communication. For simplification, the box below highlights the kinds of communication that fall into the various categories. You can find many definitions of verbal communication in our literature, but for this text, we define **Verbal Communication** as ***an agreed-upon and rule-governed system of symbols used to share meaning. Let's examine each component of this definition in detail***.

	Verbal Communication	Nonverbal Communication
Oral	Spoken Language	Laughing, Crying, Coughing, etc.
Non Oral	Written Language/Sign Language	Gestures, Body Language, etc.

A System of Symbols

Symbols are ***arbitrary representations of thoughts, ideas, emotions, objects, or actions used to encode and decode meaning*** (Nelson & Kessler Shaw, 2002). Symbols stand for, or represent, something else. For example, there is nothing inherent about calling a cat a cat. Rather, English speakers have agreed that these symbols (words), whose components (letters) are used in a particular order each time, stand for both the actual object, as well as our interpretation of that object. This idea is illustrated by C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richard's triangle of meaning (1923). The word "cat" is not the actual cat. Nor does it have any direct connection to an actual cat. Instead, it is a symbolic representation of our idea of a cat, as indicated by the line going from the word "cat" to the speaker's idea of "cat" to the actual object.

Symbols have three distinct qualities: they are arbitrary, ambiguous, and abstract. Notice that the picture of the cat in the triangle more closely represents a real cat than the word "cat." However, we do not use pictures as language, or verbal communication. Instead, we use words to represent our ideas. This example demonstrates our agreement that the word "cat" represents or stands for a real cat AND our idea of a cat. The symbols we use are **arbitrary** and have ***no direct relationship to the objects or ideas they represent***. We generally consider communication successful when we reach agreement on the meanings of the symbols we use (Duck, 1993).

Not only are symbols arbitrary, they are **ambiguous** -- that is, they have ***several possible meanings***. Imagine your friend tells you she has an apple on her desk. Is she referring to a piece of fruit or her computer? If a friend says that a person he met is sick, does he mean that person is ill or a great person? The meanings of symbols change over time due to changes in social norms, values, and advances in technology. You might be asking, "If symbols can have multiple meanings then how do we communicate and understand one another?" We are able to communicate because there are a finite number of possible meanings for our symbols, a range of meanings which the members of a given language system agree upon. Without an agreed-upon system of symbols, we could share relatively little meaning with one another.

A simple example of ambiguity is represented on a street sign one of your authors sees when he cycles on rural roads. Every time he passes one of these signs he chuckles at the various meanings that he infers from it. We all can agree that the sign is intended to warn drivers that children are playing in the area and to drive slowly. However, it can also be interpreted to mean that there are slow moving children in the area (Imagine children playing tag in slow motion!). It could also be interpreted as a euphemism to describe mentally-challenged children who are playing. Even a simple word like slow can be ambiguous and open to more than one interpretation.

The verbal symbols we use are also **abstract**, meaning that, ***words are not material or physical. A certain level of abstraction is inherent in the fact that symbols can only represent objects and ideas***. This abstraction allows us to use a phrase like the public in a broad way to mean all the people in the United States rather than having to distinguish among all the diverse groups that make up the U.S. population. Abstraction is helpful when you want to communicate complex concepts in a simple way. However, the more abstract the language, the greater potential there is for confusion.

Rule-Governed

Verbal communication is **rule-governed**. ***We must follow agreed-upon rules to make sense of the symbols we share***. Let's take another look at our example of the word cat. What would happen if there were no rules for using the symbols (letters) that make up this word? If placing these symbols in a proper order was not important, then cta, tac, tca, act, or atc could all mean cat. Even worse, what if you could use any three letters to refer to cat? Or still worse, what if there were no rules and anything could represent cat? Clearly, it's important that we have rules to govern our verbal communication. There are four general rules for verbal communication, involving the sounds, meaning, arrangement, and use of symbols.

Case In Point

Sound It Out!

1. The bandage was wound around the wound.
2. The farm was used to produce produce.
3. The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
4. We must polish the Polish furniture.
5. He could lead if he would get the lead out.
6. The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
7. A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.
8. When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
9. I did not object to the object.
10. The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
11. There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.
12. The were too close to the door to close it.
13. The buck does funny things when the does are present.
14. The seamstress and a sewer fell down into a sewer line.
15. To help with planting, the farmer taught his sow to sow.
16. The wind was too strong to wind the sail.
17. After a number of injections my jaw got number.
18. Upon seeing the tear in the painting I shed a tear.
19. I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.
20. How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?

- ***The study of speech sounds*** is called **phonology**. The pronunciation of the word cat comes from the rules governing how letters sound, especially in relation to one another. The context in which words are spoken may provide answers for how they should be pronounced. When we don't follow phonological rules, confusion results. One way to understand and apply phonological rules is to use syntactic and pragmatic rules to clarify phonological rules.
- **Semantic rules** help us understand ***the difference in meaning between the word cat and the word dog***. Instead of each of these words meaning any four-legged domestic pet, we use each word to specify what four-legged domestic pet we are talking about. You've probably used these words to say things like, "I'm a cat person" or "I'm a dog person." Each of these statements provides insight into what the sender is trying to communicate. The statements in the "Sound It Out" box not only illustrate the idea of phonology, but also semantics. Even though many of the words are spelled the same, their meanings vary depending on how they are pronounced and in what context they are used.

We attach meanings to words; meanings are not inherent in words themselves. As you've been reading, words (symbols) are arbitrary and attain meaning only when people give them meaning. While we can always look to a dictionary to find a ***standardized definition of a word***, or its **denotative meaning**, meanings do not always follow standard, agreed-upon definitions when used in various contexts. Consider the word bitch. The denotative meaning is, "A female canine animal, especially a dog." However, **connotative meanings**, ***the meanings we assign based on our experiences and beliefs***, are quite varied. It's likely that you most often hear the term bitch used connotatively as a derogatory descriptor of women (and sometimes men) rather than denotatively to literally define a female dog. A more recent connotative meaning of bitch is that of sisterhood and solidarity among women. When asked why she would "choose to glamorize the unappealing female stereotype of the bitch," Andi Zeisler, co-founder of Bitch magazine replied: "When we chose the name, we were thinking, well, it would be great to reclaim the word "bitch" for strong, outspoken women, much the same way that "queer" has been reclaimed by the gay community" (Solomon, 2006, p. 13). Used in this sense, women, who historically have been at the brunt of this derogatory word, have reclaimed it for their own purposes. They have challenged the mainstream connotative use of the term by assigning a new connotative meaning to it.

Case In Point

McDonalds vs. Websters

McDonald's says it deserves a break from the unflattering way the latest Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary depicts its job opportunities. Among some 10,000 new additions to an updated version released in June was the term "McJob," defined as "low paying and dead-end work." In an open letter to Merriam-Webster, McDonald's CEO Jim Cantalupo said the term is "an inaccurate description of restaurant employment" and "a slap in the face of the 12 million men and women" who work in the restaurant industry. The company e-mailed the letter to media organizations Friday, and it was also published in the Nov. 3 edition of an industry trade publication. Cantalupo also wrote that "more than 1,000 of the men and women who own and operate McDonald's restaurants today got their start by serving customers behind the counter." McDonald's, the world's largest restaurant chain, has more than 30,000 restaurants and more than 400,000 employees. Walk Riker, a spokesman for McDonald's, said the Oak Brook Ill., fast-food giant also is concerned that "McJob" closely resembles McJOBS, the company's training program for mentally and physically challenged people.

--San Francisco Chronicle, November 10th, 2003

"

- ***The study of language structure and symbolic arrangement*** is known as **syntactics**. Syntactics focuses on the rules we use to combine words into meaningful sentences and statements. We speak and write according to agreed-upon syntactic rules to keep meaning coherent and understandable. Think about this sentence: "The pink and purple elephant flapped its wings and flew out the window." While the content of this sentence is fictitious and unreal, you can understand and visualize it because it follows syntactic rules for language structure.
- ***The study of how people actually use verbal communication*** is **pragmatics**. For example, as a student you probably speak more formally to your professors than to your peers. It's likely that you make different word choices when you speak to your parents than you do when you speak to your friends. Think of the words "bowel movements," "poop," "crap," and "shit." While all of these words have essentially the same denotative meaning, people make choices based on context and audience regarding which word they feel comfortable using. These differences illustrate the pragmatics of our verbal communication. Even though you use agreed-upon symbolic systems and follow phonological, syntactic, and semantic rules, you apply these rules differently in different contexts. Each communication context has different rules for "appropriate" communication. We are trained from a young age to communicate "appropriately" in different social contexts.

It is only through an agreed-upon and rule-governed system of symbols that we can exchange verbal communication in an effective manner. Without agreement, rules, and symbols, verbal communication would not work. The reality is, after we learn language in school, we don't spend much time consciously thinking about all of these rules, we simply use them. However, rules keep our verbal communication structured in ways that make it useful for us to communicate more effectively.

Spoken versus Written Communication: What's the Difference?

While both spoken and written communication function as agreed-upon rule-governed systems of symbols used to convey meaning, there are enough differences in pragmatic rules between writing and speaking to justify discussing some of their differences. Imagine for a moment that you're a college student who desperately needs money. Rather than looking for a job you decide that you're going to ask your parents for the money you need to make it through the end of the semester. Now, you have a few choices for using verbal communication to do this. You might choose to call your parents or talk to them in person. You may take a different approach and write them a letter or send them an email. You can probably identify your own list of pros and cons for each of these approaches. But really, what's the difference between writing and talking in these situations? Let's look at four of the major differences between the two: formal versus informal, synchronous versus asynchronous, recorded versus unrecorded, and privacy.

The first difference between spoken and written communication is that we generally use spoken communication **informally** while we use written communication **formally**. Consider how you have been trained to talk versus how you have been trained to write. Have you ever turned in a paper to a professor that "sounds" like how you talk? How was that paper graded compared to one that follows the more formal structures and rules of the English language? In western societies like the U.S., we follow more formal standards for our written communication than our spoken communication. With a few exceptions, we generally tolerate verbal mistakes (e.g. "should of" rather than "should have") and qualifiers (e.g. "uh" "um" "you know," etc.) in our speech, but not our writing. Consider a written statement such as, "I should of, um, gone and done somethin' 'bout it' but, um, I I didn't do nothin'." In most written contexts, this is considered unacceptable written verbal communication. However, most of us would not give much thought to hearing this statement spoken aloud by someone. While we may certainly notice mistakes in another's speech, we are generally not inclined to correct those mistakes as we would in written contexts.

While writing is generally more formal and speech more informal, there are some exceptions to the rule, especially with the growing popularity of new technologies. For the first time in history, we are now seeing exceptions in our uses of speech and writing. Using text messaging and email, people are engaging in forms of writing using more informal rule structures, making their writing "sound" more like conversation. Likewise, this style of writing often attempts to incorporate the use of "nonverbal" communication (known as emoticons) to accent the writing. Consider the two examples in the box. One is an example of written correspondence using email while the other is a roughly equivalent version following the more formal written guidelines of a letter.

Case In Point

Email Version

dude… fyi were having… party friday. btw its byod so bring whatwhatever you want. rmember last time you spiled all that stuff on floor I was rotfl that was so funny everyone was lol anway imho this should be the funnest party this year

CU there

-F

Letter Version

Bob,

For your information, we are having a party this Friday. By the way, we are making it a Bring Your Own Drink party. So, bring what you want. Remember last time when you spilled those drinks on the floor? I was rolling on the floor laughing. That was so funny. Everyone was laughing out loud. Anyway, in my humble opinion, this party should be the most fun one of the year.

See you there,

Notice the informality in the email version. While it is readable, it reads as if Frank was actually speaking in a conversation rather than writing a document. Your authors have noticed that when their students turn in written work that has been written in email programs, the level of formality of the writing decreases. Email is a relatively new written medium, and it's beginning to blur the lines of formality between writing and speech. However, when students use a word processing program like Microsoft Word, the writing tends to follow formal rules more often. As we continue using new technologies to communicate, new rule systems for those mediums will continue altering the rule systems in other forms of communication

The second difference between spoken and written forms of verbal communication is that spoken communication or speech is almost entirely synchronous while written communication is almost entirely asynchronous. **Synchronous** communication is ***communication that takes place in real time***, such as a conversation with a friend. When we are in conversation and even in public speaking situations, immediate feedback and response from the receiver is the rule. For instance, when you say "hello" to someone, you expect that the person will respond immediately. You do not expect that the person will get back to you sometime later in response to your greeting. In contrast, **asynchronous** communication is ***communication that is not immediate and occurs over longer periods of time***, such a letters or email messages. When someone writes a book, letter, or even email, there is no expectation from the sender that the receiver will provide an immediate response. Instead, the expectation is that the receiver will receive the message, and respond to it when he/she has time. This is one of the reasons people sometimes choose to send an email instead of calling another person, because it allows the receiver to respond when he/she has time rather than "putting him/her on the spot" to respond right away.

Just as new technologies are changing the rules of formality and informality, they are also creating new situations that break the norms of written communication as asynchronous and spoken communication as synchronous. Answering machines and voicemail have turned the telephone and our talk into asynchronous forms of communication. Even though we speak in these contexts, we understand that if we leave a message on an answering machine or voice mail system, we will not get an immediate reply. Instead, we understand that the receiver will call us back at his/her convenience. In this example, even though the channel of communication is speaking, there is no expectation for immediate response to the sent message. Similarly, text messaging is a form of written communication that follows the rules of spoken conversation in that it functions as synchronous communication. When you type a text message to someone you know, the expectation is that they will respond almost immediately. Even expectations regarding how quickly people should respond to emails seem to be changing. For example, one of your authors had a student email him asking for advice at 11:40 p.m. The student requested in her email that your author respond to her by midnight, a twenty-minute expectation for response. Needless to say, your author was at home asleep, not attentively monitoring his email in his office twenty minutes before midnight. In an attempt to reduce misunderstandings that can result from differing expectations of response, some professors state on their syllabi that they will respond to emails during traditional business hours of 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

The third difference between spoken and written communication is that written communication is generally **archived** and recorded for later retrieval, while spoken communication is generally not recorded. When we talk with friends, we do not tend to take notes or tape record our conversations. Instead, conversations tend to be ongoing and catalogued into our personal memories rather than recorded in an easily retrievable written format. On the other hand, it is quite easy to reference written works such as books, journals, magazines, newspapers, and electronic sources such as web pages and emails for long periods after the sender has written them. Your authors routinely keep emails years after they have read them. This way, we are able to reference our correspondence.

Verbal Communication Then

Historians have come up with a number of criteria people should have in order to be considered a civilization. One of these is writing, specifically for the purposes of governing and pleasure. Written verbal communication is used for literature, poetry, religion, instruction, recording history and governing. Influential written verbal communication from history includes:

1. The *Ten Commandments* that Jews used as a guide to their faith.
2. *Law Code of Hammurabi* which was the recorded laws of the Ancient Babylonians.
3. The *Quran* which is core to the Islam faith.
4. The *Bible* which is followed by Christians.
5. The *Declaration of Independence* which declared the U.S. independent from Britain.
6. *Mao's Little Red Book* which was used to promote communist rule in China.

-Global Virtual Classroom

As with the previous rules we've discussed, new technologies are changing many of the dynamics of speech and writing. For example, many people use email informally like spoken conversation, as an informal form of verbal communication. Because of this, they often expect that email operates and functions like a spoken conversation with the belief that it is a private conversation between the sender and receiver. However, many people have gotten into trouble because of what they have "spoken" about others through email. The corporation Epson (a large computer electronics manufacturer) was at the center of one of the first lawsuits regarding the recording and archiving of employee use of email correspondence. Employees at Epson assumed their email was private and therefore used it to say negative things about their bosses. What they didn't know was their bosses were saving and printing these email messages, and using the content of these messages to make personnel decisions. When employees sued Epson, the courts ruled in favor of the corporation, stating that they had every right to retain employee email for their records. While most of us have become accustomed to using technologies such as email and instant messaging in ways that are similar to our spoken conversations, we must also consider the repercussions of using communicating technologies in this fashion because they are often archived and not private.

As you can see, there are a number of differences between spoken and written forms of verbal communication. Both forms are rule-governed as our definition points out, but the rules are often different for the use of these two types of verbal communication. However, it's apparent that as new technologies provide more ways for us to communicate, many of our traditional rules for using both speech and writing will continue to blur as we try to determine the "most appropriate" uses of these new communication technologies. As Chapter 2 pointed out, practical problems of the day will continue to guide the directions our field takes as we continue to study the ways technology changes our communication. As more changes continue to occur in the ways we communicate with one another, more avenues of study will continue to open for those interested in being part of the development of how communication is conducted. Now that we have looked in detail at our definition of verbal communication, and the differences between spoken and written forms of verbal communication, let's explore what our use of verbal communication accomplishes for us as humans.

Functions of Verbal Communication

Our existence is intimately tied to the communication we use, and verbal communication serves many functions in our daily lives. We use verbal communication to define reality, organize, think, and shape attitudes.

Verbal Communication Now

Being able to communicate effectively through verbal communication is extremely important. No matter what you plan to do as a career, effective verbal communication helps you in all aspects of your life. Former President Bush was often chided (and even chided himself) for the verbal communication mistakes he made. Here is a list of his "Top 10" according to About.com.

10) "Families is where our nation finds hope, where wings take dream." —LaCrosse, Wis., Oct. 18, 2000

9) "I know how hard it is for you to put food on your family." —Greater Nashua, N.H., Jan. 27, 2000

8) "I hear there's rumors on the Internets that we're going to have a draft." —second presidential debate, St. Louis, Mo., Oct. 8, 2004

7) "I know the human being and fish can coexist peacefully." —Saginaw, Mich., Sept. 29, 2000

6) "You work three jobs? … Uniquely American, isn't it? I mean, that is fantastic that you're doing that." —to a divorced mother of three, Omaha, Nebraska, Feb. 2005

5) "Too many good docs are getting out of the business. Too many OB-GYNs aren't able to practice their love with women all across this country." —Poplar Bluff, Mo., Sept. 6, 2004

4) "They misunderestimated me." —Bentonville, Ark., Nov. 6, 2000

3) "Rarely is the questioned asked: Is our children learning?" —Florence, S.C., Jan. 11, 2000

2) "Our enemies are innovative and resourceful, and so are we. They never stop thinking about new ways to harm our country and our people, and neither do we." —Washington, D.C., Aug. 5, 2004

1) "There's an old saying in Tennessee — I know it's in Texas, probably in Tennessee — that says, fool me once, shame on — shame on you. Fool me — you can't get fooled again." —Nashville, Tenn., Sept. 17, 2002

- ***Verbal communication helps us define reality.*** We use verbal communication to define everything from ideas, emotions, experiences, thoughts, objects, and people (Blumer, 1969). Think about how you define yourself. You may define yourself as a student, employee, son/daughter, parent, advocate, etc. You might also define yourself as moral, ethical, a night-owl, or a procrastinator. Verbal communication is how we label and define what we experience in our lives. These definitions are not only descriptive, but evaluative. For example, one rainy day, one of your authors was running errands with his two-year-old and four-year-old daughters. Because of the gray sky and rain, he defined the day as dingy and ugly. Suddenly, his older daughter commented from the back seat, “Dad, this is a beautiful day.” Instead of focusing on the weather, she was referring to the fact that she was having a good day by hanging out with her dad and older sister. This statement reflects that we have choices for how we use verbal communication to define our realities. We make choices about what to focus on and how to define what we experience and its impact on how we understand and live in our world.

- ***Verbal communication helps us organize complex ideas and experiences into meaningful categories.*** Consider the number of things you experience with your five primary senses every day. It is impossible to comprehend everything we encounter. We use verbal communication to organize seemingly random events into understandable categories to make sense of our experiences. For example, we all organize the people in our lives into categories. We label these people with terms like, friends, acquaintances, romantic partners, family, peers, colleagues, and strangers. We highlight certain qualities, traits, or scripts to organize outwardly haphazard events into meaningful categories to establish meaning for our world.
- ***Verbal communication helps us think.*** Without verbal communication, we would not function as thinking beings. The ability most often used to distinguish humans from other animals is our ability to reason and communicate. With language, we are able to reflect on the past, consider the present, and ponder the future. We develop our memories using language. Try recalling your first conscious memories. Chances are, your first conscious memories formed around the time you started using verbal communication. The example we used at the beginning of the chapter highlights what a world would be like for humans without language.
- ***Verbal communication helps us shape our attitudes about our world.*** The way you use language shapes your attitude about the world around you. Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf developed the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis to explain that language determines thought. People who speak different languages, or use language differently, think differently (Mandelbaum, 1958; Maxwell, 2004; Whorf, 1958). The argument suggests that if a native English speaker had the exact same experiences in his/her life, but grew up speaking Chinese instead of English, his/her worldview would be different because of the different symbols used to make sense of the world. When you label, describe, or evaluate events in your life, you use the symbols of the language you speak. Your use of these symbols to represent your reality influences your perspective and attitude about the world. It makes sense then that the more sophisticated your repertoire of symbols is, the more sophisticated your world view can be for you.

While we have overly-simplified the complexities of verbal communication for you in this chapter, when it comes to its actual use—accounting for the infinite possibilities of symbols, rules, contexts, and meanings—studying how humans use verbal communication is daunting. When you consider the complexities of verbal communication, it is a wonder we can communicate effectively at all. But, verbal communication is not the only channel humans use to communicate. In the next chapter we will examine the other most common channel of communication we use: nonverbal communication.

Summary

In this chapter we defined verbal communication as an agreed-upon and rule-governed system of symbols used to share meaning. These symbols are arbitrary, ambiguous, and abstract. The rules that dictate our use and understanding of symbols include phonology, semantics, syntactics, and pragmatics. As you recall there are distinct differences between written and spoken forms of verbal communication in terms of levels of formality, synchronicity, recording, and privacy. Yet, new technologies are beginning to blur some of these differences. Finally, verbal communication is central to our identity as humans and it allows us to define reality, organize ideas and experiences into categories, help us think, and shape out attitudes about the world.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do you define yourself as a person? What kinds of definitions do you have for yourself? What do you think would happen if you changed some of your self-definitions?
2. How do advances in technology impact verbal communication? What are some examples?
3. How does popular culture impact our verbal communication? What are some examples?
4. When you use text messages or email, are you formal or informal?

Key Terms

- abstract
- ambiguous
- arbitrary
- archived
- asynchronous
- connotative meaning
- context
- denotative meaning
- formal
- informal
- phonology
- pragmatics
- reclaim
- rule-governed
- semantics
- symbols
- synchronous
- syntactics
- verbal communication

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Chapter 3 - Nonverbal Communication

Chapter 3

Nonverbal Communication

Chapter Objectives:

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

• Define nonverbal communication and explain its main characteristics.

• Explain the differences between verbal and nonverbal communication.

• Describe the eight types of nonverbal communication.

• Describe the functions of nonverbal communication.

Your brother comes home from school and walks through the door. Without saying a word, he walks to the fridge, gets a drink, and turns to head for the couch in the family room. Once there, he plops down, stares straight ahead, and sighs. You notice that he sits there in silence for the next few minutes. In this time, he never spoke a word. Is he communicating? If your answer is yes, what meanings would you take from these actions? What are the possible interpretations for how he is feeling? What types of nonverbal communication was your brother using?

Like verbal communication, nonverbal communication is essential in our every day communication. Remember that verbal and nonverbal communication are the two primary channels we study in the field of Communication. While nonverbal and verbal communication have many similar functions, nonverbal communication has its own set of functions for helping us communicate with each other. Before we get into the types and functions of nonverbal communication, let's define nonverbal communication to better understand how it is used in this text.

Defining Nonverbal Communication

Like verbal communication, we use nonverbal communication to share meaning with others. Just as there are many definitions for communication and verbal communication, there are also many ways to define nonverbal communication.

Burgoon, Buller, and Woodall (1996) define nonverbal communication similar to how we defined verbal communication in Chapter 2. They state that nonverbal behaviors are "typically sent with intent, are used with regularity among members of a social community, are typically interpreted as intentional, and have consensually recognized interpretations" (p. 113). We disagree with this definition because to us it sounds too much like verbal communication, and might best be described as symbolic and systematic nonverbal communication.

Mead (1934) differentiated between what he termed as "gesture" versus "significant symbol," while Buck and VanLear (2002) took Mead's idea and argued that "gestures are not symbolic in that their relationship to their referents is not arbitrary," a fundamental distinction between verbal and nonverbal communication (p. 524). Think of all the ways you unconsciously move your body throughout the day. For example, you probably do not sit in your classes and think constantly about your nonverbal behaviors. Instead, much of the way you present yourself nonverbally in your classes is done so unconsciously. Even so, others can derive meaning from your nonverbal behaviors whether they are intentional or not. For example, as professors we watch our students' nonverbal communication in class (such as slouching, leaning back in the chair, or looking at their watch) and make assumptions about them (such as they are bored, tired, or worrying about a test in another class). These assumptions are often based on acts that are typically done unintentionally.

While we certainly use nonverbal communication consciously at times to generate and share particular meanings, when examined closely, it should be apparent that this channel of communication is not an agreed-upon rule-governed system of symbols. Rather, nonverbal communication is most often spontaneous, unintentional, and may not follow formalized symbolic rule systems.

With this in mind, we define **nonverbal communication** as ***any meaning conveyed through sounds, behaviors, and artifacts other than words***. To help explain this idea, it is useful to consider some of the differences between verbal and nonverbal communication.

Differences Between Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

The first difference between verbal and nonverbal communication is that we use a **single channel** (words) when we communicate verbally versus **multiple channels** when we communicate nonverbally. Try this exercise! Say your first and last name at the same time. You quickly find that this is an impossible task. Now, pat the top of your head with your right hand, wave with your left hand, smile, shrug your shoulders, and chew gum at the same time. While goofy and awkward, our ability to do this demonstrates how we use multiple nonverbal channels simultaneously to communicate.

In Chapter 2 we learned how difficult it can be to decode a sender's single verbal message due to the arbitrary, abstract, and ambiguous nature of language. But, think how much more difficult it is to decode the even more ambiguous and multiple nonverbal signals we take in like eye contact, facial expressions, body movements, clothing, personal artifacts, and tone of voice at the same time. Despite this difficulty, Motley (1993) found that we learn to decode nonverbal communication as babies. Hall (1984) found that women are much better than men at accurately interpreting the many nonverbal cues we consider.

A second difference between verbal and nonverbal communication is that verbal communication is **distinct** (linear) while nonverbal communication is **continuous** (in constant motion and relative to context). Distinct means that messages have a clear beginning and end, and are expressed in a linear fashion. We begin and end words and sentences in a linear way to make it easier for others to follow and understand. If you pronounce the word "cat" you begin with the letter "C" and proceed to finish with "T." Continuous means that messages are ongoing and work in relation to other nonverbal and verbal cues.

> **Case In Point**
>
> The digital clock is read in a linear fashion. Likewise, when the time changes, the read-out changes because one number is replaced with another. When we speak, we do so in a linear fashion, replacing one letter/word with another as we move along.
>
> In contrast, the analog clock is constantly in motion. It never stops. We understand the time by understanding the moving relationship between the three hands of the clock and the position they are in on the clock. When we use nonverbal communication, it is an ongoing movement of multiple channels in relationship to one another and context.

Think about the difference between analog and digital clocks. The analog clock represents nonverbal communication in that we generate meaning by considering the relationship of the different arms to each another (context). Also, the clock's arms are in continuous motion. We notice the speed of their movement, their position in the circle and to each other, and their relationship with the environment (is it day or night?).

Nonverbal communication is similar in that we evaluate nonverbal cues in relation to one another and consider the context of the situation. Suppose you see your friend in the distance. She approaches, waves, smiles, and says "hello." To interpret the meaning of this, you focus on the wave, smile, tone of voice, her approaching movement, and the verbal message. You might also consider the time of day, if there is a pressing need to get to class, etc.

Now contrast this to a digital clock, which functions like verbal communication. Unlike an analog clock, a digital clock is not in constant motion. Instead, it replaces one number with another to display time (its message). A digital clock uses one distinct channel (numbers) in a linear fashion. When we use verbal communication, we do so like the digital clock. We say one word at a time, in a linear fashion, to express meaning.

A third difference between verbal and nonverbal communication is that we use verbal communication **consciously** while we generally use nonverbal communication **unconsciously**. Conscious communication means that we think about our verbal communication before we communicate. Unconscious communication means that we do not think about every nonverbal message we communicate. If you ever heard the statement as a child, "Think before you speak" you were being told a fundamental principle of verbal communication. Realistically, it's nearly impossible not to think before we speak. When we speak, we do so consciously and intentionally. In contrast, when something funny happens, you probably do not think, "Okay, I'm going to smile and laugh right now." Instead, you react unconsciously, displaying your emotions through these nonverbal behaviors. Nonverbal communication can occur as unconscious reactions to situations. We are not claiming that all nonverbal communication is unconscious. At times we certainly make conscious choices to use or withhold nonverbal communication to share meaning. Angry drivers use many conscious nonverbal expressions to communicate to other drivers! In a job interview you are making conscious decisions about your wardrobe, posture, and eye contact.

A fourth difference between verbal and nonverbal communication is that some nonverbal communication is **universal** (Hall, Chia, and Wang, 1996). Verbal communication is **exclusive** to the users of a particular language, whereas some nonverbal communication is recognized across cultures. Although cultures most certainly have particular meanings and uses for nonverbal communication, there are universal nonverbal behaviors that almost everyone recognizes. For instance, people around the world recognize and use expressions such as smiles, frowns, and the pointing of a finger at an object.

Now that you have a definition of nonverbal communication, and can identify the primary differences between verbal and nonverbal communication, let's examine what counts as nonverbal communication. In this next section, we show you eight types of nonverbal communication we use regularly: kinesics, haptics, appearance, proxemics, environment, chronemics, paralanguage, and silence.

Types of Nonverbal Communication

K

inesics is ***the study of how we use body movement and facial expressions***. We interpret a great deal of meaning through body movement, facial expressions, and eye contact. Many people believe they can easily interpret the meanings of body movements and facial expressions in others. But the reality is, it is almost impossible to determine an exact meaning for gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact. Even so, we rely a great deal on kinesics to interpret and express meaning. We know that kinesics can communicate liking, social status, and even relational responsiveness (Mehrabian, 1981). Facial expressions are a primary method of sharing emotions and feelings (Ekman & Friesen, 1967). For example, imagine yourself at a party and you see someone across the room you are attracted to. What sort of nonverbal behaviors do you engage in to let that person know? Likewise, what nonverbal behaviors are you looking for from them to indicate that it's safe to come over and introduce yourself? We are able to go through exchanges like this using only our nonverbal communication. As you probably know, some exchanges are more successful than others!

Haptics is ***the study of touch***. Touch is the first type of nonverbal communication we experience as humans and is vital to our development and health (Dolin & Booth-Butterfield, 1993). Those who don't have positive touch in their lives are less healthy both mentally and physically than those who experience positive touch. We use touch to share feelings and relational meanings. Hugs, kisses, handshakes, or even playful roughhousing demonstrate relational meanings and indicate relational closeness. In western society, touch is largely reserved for family and romantic relationships. Generally girls and women in same-sex friendships have more liberty to express touch as part of the relationship than men in same-sex friendships. However, despite these unfortunate social taboos, the need for touch is so strong that men are quite sophisticated at findings ways to incorporate this into their friendships in socially acceptable ways. One such example is wrestling among adolescent and young-adult males. Do you ever wonder why you don't see as many women doing this? Perhaps it's because wrestling is socially acceptable for men whereas women are more likely to hug, hold hands, and sit touching one another. Perhaps one day we will progress beyond these arbitrary gender constructs, and everyone can engage in needed touching behaviors in ways that are comfortable to them.

Personal Appearance, Objects, and **Artifacts** are also types of nonverbal communication we use to communicate meaning to others. Consider your preferences for hair-style, clothing, jewelry, and automobiles, as well the way you maintain your body. Your choices express meanings to those around you about what you value and the image you wish to put forth. As with most communication, our choices for personal appearance, objects, and artifacts occur within cultural contexts, and are interpreted in light of these contexts.

Proxemics is ***the study of how our use of space influences the ways we relate with others***. It also demonstrates our relational standing with those around us. Edward Hall (1959, 1966) developed four categories of space we use in the U.S. to form and maintain relationships. *Intimate space* consists of space that ranges from touch to eighteen inches. We use intimate space with those whom we are close (family members, close friends, and intimate partners). *Personal space* ranges from eighteen inches to four feet and is reserved for most conversations with non-intimate others (friends and acquaintances). *Social space* extends from four to twelve feet and is used for small group interactions such as sitting around a dinner table with others or a group meeting. *Public space* extends beyond twelve feet and is most often used in public speaking situations. We use space to regulate our verbal communication and communicate relational and social meanings. A fun exercise to do is to go to a public space and observe people. Based on their use of the above categories of space, try to determine what type of relationship the people are in: Romantic, Family, or Friends.

Case In Point

Feng Shui

Feng Shui, which means wind and water, is the ancient Chinese art of living in harmony with our environment. Feng Shui can be traced as far back as the Banpo dwellings in 4000 BCE. The ideas behind Feng Shui state that how we use our environment and organize our belongings affects the energy flow (chi) of people in that space, and the person/people who created the environment. The inclusion or exclusion, and placement, of various objects in our environments are used to create a positive impact on others. The theory is to use the five elements of metal, wood, water, fire and earth to design a space. Feng Shui is applicable to cities, villages, homes, and public spaces. The Temple of Heaven in Bejing, China is an example of Feng Shui architecture. To keep harmony with the natural world, the Temple houses the Hall of Annual Prayer which is comprised of four inner, 12 middle, and 12 outer pillars representing the four seasons, 12 months, and 12 traditional Chinese hours.

Our **environment** acts as another type of nonverbal communication we use. Think of your home, room, automobile, or office space. What meanings can others perceive about you from these spaces? What meanings are you trying to send by how you keep them? Think about spaces you use frequently and the nonverbal meanings they have for you. Most educational institutions intentionally paint classrooms in dull colors. Why? Dull colors on walls have a calming effect, theoretically keeping students from being distracted by bright colors and excessive stimuli. Contrast the environment of a classroom to that of a fast food restaurant. These establishments have bright colors and hard plastic seats and tables. The bright colors generate an upbeat environment, while the hard plastic seats are just uncomfortable enough to keep patrons from staying too long (remember, it's FAST food). People and cultures place different emphasis on the use of space as a way to communicate nonverbally.

Chronemics is ***the study of how people use time***. Are you someone who is always early or on-time? Or, are you someone who arrives late to most events? Levine (1997) believes our use of time communicates a variety of meanings to those around us. Think about the person you know who is most frequently late. How do you describe that person based on their use of time? Now, think about someone else who is always on time. How do you describe that person? Is there a difference? If so, these differences are probably based on their use of time. In the U.S., we place high value on being on time, and respond more positively to people who are punctual. But, in many Arab and Latin American countries, time is used more loosely, and punctuality is not necessarily a goal to achieve. You may have heard the expression, "Indian time" to refer to "the perception of time [that] is circular and flexible" (Shutiva, 2004, p.134). Here the belief is that activities will commence when everyone is present and ready; not according to an arbitrary schedule based on a clock or calendar. Neither approach is better than the other, but the dissimilar uses of time can create misunderstandings among those from different cultural groups.

Paralanguage is the term we use to describe ***vocal qualities such as pitch, volume, inflection, rate of speech, and rhythm***. While the types of nonverbal communication we've discussed so far are non-vocal, some nonverbal communication is actually vocal. How we say words often expresses greater meaning than the actual words themselves. Sarcasm and incongruency are two examples of this. The comedian Stephen Wright bases much of his comedy on his use of paralanguage. He talks in a completely monotone voice throughout his act and frequently makes statements such as, "I'm getting really excited" while using a monotone voice, accompanied by a blank facial expression. The humor lies in the incongruency—his paralanguage and facial expression contradict his verbal message. Whenever you use sarcasm, your paralanguage is intended to contradict the verbal message you say. Your authors have found that using sarcasm in the classroom can backfire when students do not pick up our paralinguistic cues and focus primarily on the verbal message. We have learned to use sarcasm sparingly so as not to hurt anyone's feelings.

> **Nonverbal Communication Now**
>
> Women In Black
>
> An organization of women called Women in Black uses silence as a form of protest and hope for peace; particularly, peace from war and the unfair treatment of women. Women in Black began in Israel in 1988 by women protesting Israel's Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Women in Black continues to expand and now functions in the United States, England, Italy, Spain, Azerbaijan and Yugoslavia. Women gather in public spaces, dressed in black, and stand in silence for one hour, once a week. Their mission states, "We are silent because mere words cannot express the tragedy that wars and hatred bring. We refuse to add to the cacophony of empty statements that are spoken with the best intentions yet have failed to bring lasting change and understanding, or to the euphemistic jargon of the politicians which has perpetuated misunderstanding and fear that leads to war….our silence is visible."

Finally, **silence** serves as a type of nonverbal communication. Have you ever experienced the "silent treatment" from someone? What meanings did you take from that person's silence? Silence is powerful because the person using silence may be refusing to engage in communication with you. Likewise, we can use silence to regulate the flow of our conversations. Silence has a variety of meanings and, as with other types of nonverbal communication, context plays an important role for interpreting the meaning of silence.

You should now recognize the infinite combination of verbal and nonverbal messages we can share. When you think about it, it really is astonishing that we can communicate effectively at all. We engage in a continuous dance of communication where we try to stay in step with one another. With an understanding of the definition of nonverbal communication and the types of nonverbal communication, let's consider the various functions nonverbal communication serves in helping us communicate. (Ekman, 1965; Knapp, 1980; Malandro & Barker, 1983).

Functions of Nonverbal Communication

In the last chapter you learned that we use verbal communication to express ideas, emotions, experiences, thoughts, objects, and people. But what functions does nonverbal communication serve as we communicate (Blumer, 1969)? Even though it's not through words, nonverbal communication serves many functions to help us communicate meanings with one another more effectively.

- ***We use nonverbal communication to duplicate verbal communication***. When we use nonverbal communication to duplicate, we use nonverbal communication that is recognizable to most people within a particular cultural group. Obvious examples include a head-nod or a head-shake to duplicate the verbal messages of "yes" or "no." If someone asks if you want to go to a movie, you might verbally answer "yes" and at the same time nod your head. This accomplishes the goal of duplicating the verbal message with a nonverbal message. Interestingly, the head nod is considered a "nearly universal indication of accord, agreement, and understanding" because the same muscle in the head nod is the same one a baby uses to lower its head to accept milk from its mother's breast (Givens, 2000). When the daughter of one of your authors was two years old, she was learning the duplication function of nonverbal communication, and didn't always get it right. When asked if she wanted something, her "yes" was shaking her head. However, her "no" was the same head-shake, accompanied with the verbal response "no." So, when she was two, she thought that the duplication was what made her answer "no."
- ***We use nonverbal communication to replace verbal communication***. If someone asks you a question, instead of a verbal reply "yes" and a head-nod, you may choose to simply nod your head without the accompanying verbal message. When we replace verbal communication with nonverbal communication, we use nonverbal behaviors that are easily recognized by others such as a wave, head-nod, or head-shake. This is why it was so confusing at first for your author to understand his daughter when she simply shook her head in response to a question. This was cleared up when he asked her if she wanted something to eat and she shook her head. When your author didn't get her anything, she began to cry. This was the first clue that the replacing function of communication still needed to be learned. Consider the following examples of the universality of the head shake as an indicator of disbelief, disapproval, and negation: used by human babies to refuse food or drink; rhesus monkeys, baboons, bonnet macaques and gorillas turn their faces sideways in aversion; and children born deaf/blind head shake to refuse objects or disapprove of touch (Givens, 2000b).
- ***We use nonverbal cues to complement verbal communication***. If a friend tells you that she recently received a promotion and a pay raise, you can show your enthusiasm in a number of verbal and nonverbal ways. If you exclaim, "Wow, that's great! I'm so happy for you!" while at the same time smiling and hugging your friend, you are using nonverbal communication to complement what you are saying. Unlike duplicating or replacing, nonverbal communication that complements cannot be used alone without the verbal message. If you simply smiled and hugged your friend without saying anything, the interpretation of that nonverbal communication would be more ambiguous than using it to complement your verbal message.
- ***We use nonverbal communication to accent verbal communication***. While nonverbal communication complements verbal communication, we also use it to accent verbal communication by emphasizing certain parts of the verbal message. For instance, you may be upset with a family member and state, "I'm very angry with you." To accent this statement nonverbally you might say it, "I'm VERY angry with you," placing your emphasis on the word "very" to demonstrate the magnitude of your anger. In this example, it is your tone of voice (paralanguage) that serves as the nonverbal communication that accents the message. Parents might tell their children to "come here." If they point to the spot in front of them dramatically, they are accenting the "here" part of the verbal message.

Nonverbal Communication and You

Nonverbal Communication and Romance

If you don't think the things that Communication scholars study (like nonverbal communication) applies to you, think again! A quick search of nonverbal communication on google will yield a great many sites devoted to translating nonverbal research into practical guides for your personal life. One example on iVillage.com is the article "Top 10 Signs He's Interested in You" written by Text in the City creator Matt Titus. In the article, Titus outlines 10 nonverbal cues to read to see if someone is interested in you romantically. While we won't vouch for the reliability of these types of pieces, they do show the relevance of studying areas like nonverbal communication has in our personal lives.

- ***We use nonverbal communication to regulate verbal communication***. Generally, it is pretty easy for us to enter, maintain, and exit our interactions with others nonverbally. Rarely, if ever, would we approach a person and say, "I'm going to start a conversation with you now. Okay, let's begin." Instead, we might make eye contact, move closer to the person, or face the person directly -- all nonverbal behaviors that indicate our desire to interact. Likewise, we do not generally end conversations by stating, "I'm done talking to you now" unless there is a breakdown in the communication process. We are generally proficient enacting nonverbal communication such as looking at our watch, looking in the direction we wish to go, or being silent to indicate an impending end in the conversation. When there is a breakdown in the nonverbal regulation of conversation, we may say something to the effect, "I really need to get going now." In fact, one of your authors has a friend who does not seem to pick up on the nonverbal cues that your author needs to end a phone conversation. Your author has literally had to resort to saying, "Okay, I'm hanging up the phone right now" followed by actually hanging up the phone. In this instance, there was a breakdown in the use of nonverbal communication to regulate conversation.
- ***We use nonverbal communication to contradict verbal communication***. Imagine that you visit your boss's office and she asks you how you're enjoying a new work assignment. You may feel obligated to respond positively because it is your boss asking the question, even though you may not truly feel this way. However, your nonverbal communication may contradict your verbal message, indicating to your boss that you really do not enjoy the new work assignment. In this example, your nonverbal communication contradicts your verbal message and sends a mixed message to your boss. Research suggests that when verbal and nonverbal messages contradict one another, receivers often place greater value on the nonverbal communication as the more accurate message (Argyle, Alkema & Gilmour, 1971). One place this occurs frequently is in greeting sequences. You might say to your friend in passing, "How are you?" She might say, "Fine" but have a sad tone to her voice. In this case, her nonverbal behaviors go against her verbal response. We are more likely to interpret the nonverbal communication in this situation than the verbal response.
- ***We use nonverbal communication to mislead others***. We can use nonverbal communication to hide deception. We also focus on a person's nonverbal communication when trying to detect deception. Recall a time when someone asked your opinion of a new haircut. If you did not like it, you may have stated verbally that you liked the haircut and provided nonverbal communication to further mislead the person about how you really felt. Conversely, when we try to determine if someone is misleading us, we generally focus on the nonverbal communication of the other person. One study suggests that when we only use nonverbal communication to detect deception in others, 78% of lies and truths can be detected (Vrij, Edward, Roberts, & Bull, 2000). However, other studies indicate that we are really not very effective at determining deceit in other people (Levine, Feeley, McCornack, Hughes, & Harms, 2005), and that we are only accurate 45 to 70 percent of the time when trying to determine if someone is misleading us (Kalbfleisch, 1992). When trying to detect deception, it is more effective to examine both verbal and nonverbal communication to see if they are consistent (Vrij, Akehurst, Soukara, & Bull, 2000; Neiva & Hickson III, 2003). Even further than this, Park, Levine, McCornack, Morrison, & Ferrara (2002) argue that people usually go beyond verbal and nonverbal communication and consider what outsiders say, physical evidence, and the relationship over a longer period of time.

Nonverbal Communication and You

Nonverbal Communication and Getting a Job

You may be thinking that getting the right degree at the right college is the way to get a job. Think again! It may be a good way to get an interview, but once at the interview, what matters? College Journal reports that, "Body language comprises 55% of the force of any response, whereas the verbal content only provides 7%, and paralanguage, or the intonation -- pauses and sighs given when answering -- represents 38% of the emphasis." If you show up to an interview smelling of cigarette smoke, chewing gum, dressed inappropriately, and listening to your iPod, you're probably in trouble.

About.Com states that these are some effective nonverbal practices during interviews:

- Make eye contact with the interviewer for a few seconds at a time.
- Smile and nod (at appropriate times) when the interviewer is talking, but, don't overdo it. Don't laugh unless the interviewer does first.
- Be polite and keep an even tone to your speech. Don't be too loud or too quiet.
- Don't slouch.
- Do relax and lean forward a little towards the interviewer so you appear interested and engaged.
- Don't lean back. You will look too casual and relaxed.
- Keep your feet on the floor and your back against the lower back of the chair.
- Pay attention, be attentive and interested.
- Listen.
- Don't interrupt.
- Stay calm. Even if you had a bad experience at a previous position or were fired, keep your emotions to yourself and do not show anger or frown.
- Not sure what to do with your hands? Hold a pen and your notepad or rest an arm on the chair or on your lap, so you look comfortable. Don't let your arms fly around the room when you're making a point.

- ***We use nonverbal communication to indicate relational standing*** (Mehrabian, 1981; Burgoon, Buller, Hale, & deTurck, 1984; Sallinen-Kuparinen, 1992). Take a few moments today to observe the nonverbal communication of people you see in public areas. What can you determine about their relational standing from their nonverbal communication? For example, romantic partners tend to stand close to one another and touch one another frequently. On the other hand, acquaintances generally maintain greater distances and touch less than romantic partners. Those who hold higher social status often use more space when they interact with others. In the U.S., it is generally acceptable for women in platonic relationships to embrace and be physically close while males are often discouraged from doing so. Contrast this to many other nations where it is custom for males to greet each other with a kiss or a hug, and hold hands as a symbol of their friendship. We make many inferences about relational standing based on the nonverbal communication of those with whom we interact and observe. Your authors were walking in Manhattan and saw a couple talking to each other across a small table. They both had faces that looked upset, had red eyes from crying, had closed body positions, were leaned into each other, and they were whispering emphatically. Upon seeing this, we both looked at each other and simultaneously said, “Breakup conversation!” We didn’t know if that was the case, but we used nonverbal cues to come to that conclusion almost instantly.
- ***We use nonverbal communication to demonstrate and maintain cultural norms***. We’ve already shown that some nonverbal communication is universal, but the majority of nonverbal communication is culturally specific. For example, in the predominant U.S. culture, people place high value on their personal space. In the U.S. people maintain far greater personal space than those in many other cultures. On a recent trip to New York City, one of your authors observed that any time someone accidentally touched her on the subway he/she made a special point to apologize profusely for the violation of personal space. Cultural norms of anxiety and fear surrounding issues of crime and terrorism appear to cause people to be more sensitive to others in public spaces; thus, this example highlights the importance of culture and context. Contrast this example to norms in many Asian cultures where frequent touch in crowded public spaces goes unnoticed because space is not used in the same ways. While teaching in China, one of your authors went grocery shopping in Beijing. As a westerner, she was shocked that shoppers would ram their shopping carts into others’ carts when they wanted to move around them in the aisle. She learned that this was not an indication of rudeness, but a cultural difference in the negotiation of space. She quickly learned to adapt to using this new approach to personal space, even though it carries a much different

meaning in the U.S. Nonverbal cues such as touch, eye contact, facial expressions, and gestures are culture specific and reflect and maintain the values and norms of the cultures in which they are used.

- ***We use nonverbal communication to communicate emotions***. While we can certainly tell people how we feel, we more frequently use nonverbal communication to express our emotions. Conversely, we tend to interpret emotions by examining nonverbal communication. One study suggests that it is important to use and interpret nonverbal communication for emotional expression, and ultimately relational attachment and satisfaction (Schachner, Shaver, & Mikulincer, 2005). Research also underscores the fact that people in close relationships have an easier time reading the nonverbal communication of emotion of their relational partners than those who aren't close. Likewise, those in close relationships can more often detect concealed emotions (Sternglanz & Depaulo, 2004).

Summary

In this chapter, you have learned that we define nonverbal communication as any meaning shared through sounds, behaviors, and artifacts other than words. Some of the differences between verbal and nonverbal include the fact that verbal communication uses one channel while nonverbal communication occurs through multiple channels simultaneously. As a result, verbal communication is distinct while nonverbal communication is continuous. For the most part, nonverbal communication is enacted at an unconscious level while we are almost always conscious of our verbal communication. Finally, some nonverbal communication is considered universal and recognizable by people all over the world, while verbal communication is exclusive to particular languages.

There are many types of nonverbal communication including kinesics, haptics, appearance, objects, artifacts, proxemics, our environment, chronemics, paralanguage, and silence. Finally, we concluded by discussing how nonverbal communication serves many functions to help us share meanings in our interactions. Now that you have a basic understanding of verbal and nonverbal communication as a primary focus of study in our field, let's look at how theory helps us understand our world.

Discussion Questions

1. Think of a time you made a conscious decision to use nonverbal communication. What prompted you to use nonverbal communication consciously instead of unconsciously?
2. How good do you think you are at detecting deception through others' use of nonverbal communication? What things do you look for?
3. Have you ever used nonverbal communication to deceive? If so, what nonverbal activities did you focus on to do this?
4. Which do you consider has greater weight when interpreting a message from someone else, verbal or nonverbal communication? Why?

Key Terms

- chronemics
- conscious
- context
- continuous
- distinct
- environment
- haptics
- kinesics
- nonverbal communication
- paralanguage
- personal appearance
- proxemics
- silence
- unconscious

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Chapter 4 - History of Communication Study

Chapter 4

The History of Human Communication Study

Chapter Objectives:

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

• Identify the four early periods of communication study.

• Explain the major changes in communication study in the 20th century.

• Identify major scholars who helped shape the field of Communication.

• Discuss how Communication departments and professional organizations formed.

C

ommunication is an increasingly popular major at colleges and universities. In fact, according The Princeton Review: Guide to College Majors (2005), Communication is the 8th most popular major in the U.S (p. 13). With increased demands placed on students to have “excellent communication skills” in their careers, many students choose to earn their degree in Communication. Most of us implicitly understand that humans have always communicated, but many do not realize that the intellectual study of communication has taken place for thousands of years.

As with the rest of the book, this chapter is divided by events that preceded the industrial revolution (2500 BCE – 1800’s), and those that occurred after the industrial revolution (1850’s-Present). Previous to the invention of the printing press, which pre-dated the industrial revolution by a few hundred years, the formal study of communication was relatively slow. However, as a result of the printing press and the rapid expansion of technology that followed during the industrial age that increased the amount of easily shared information, the formal study of communication gained considerable momentum, developing into what you now understand as Communication departments and majors at colleges and universities around the country.

To keep our focus on the two time periods that greatly mark the development of communication study, we have divided this chapter into the Old School and New School. Part I focuses on Old School communication study by highlighting the origins of our field through the works of classical rhetorical scholars in ancient Greece and moving through the enlightenment period that ushered in the industrial age. Part II focuses on the New School of communication study by identifying how the four early periods influenced the development of communication study over the last 100+ years into what it is today.

Old School: The Four Early Periods of Communication Study

T

o fully appreciate the current state of communication study, it’s important to have a historical perspective—not only to understand the field itself, but also to know how you ended up in a Communication class or major. Over time, the study of communication has largely been prompted by the current social issues of particular time periods. Knowing this, we’ll examine the pertinent questions, topics, and scholars of the Classical, Medieval, Renaissance, and Enlightenment periods to find out what they learned about communication to help them, before highlighting the rapid growth of contemporary communication.

There is a written historical bias that gives the accomplishments of male scholars in Ancient Greece the greatest recognition for the early development of our field. Because society favored and privileged males, it is often difficult to find written records of the accomplishments of others. We believe it is essential that you understand that many of the earliest influences on communication study also came from feminine and Eastern perspectives, not just the men of ancient Greek society. No doubt you've heard of Aristotle, but ancient Indian literature shows evidence of rhetorical theory pre-dating Aristotle by almost half a century. In fact, Indians were so attuned to the importance of communication, they worshipped the goddess of speech, Vach (Gangal & Hosterman, 1982). The Theosophical Society (2005) states:

> *To call Vach 'speech' simply, is deficient in clearness. Vach is the mystic personification of speech, and the female Logos, being one with Brahma….In one sense Vach is 'speech' by which knowledge was taught to man…..she is the subjective Creative Force which…becomes the manifested 'world of speech."*

The Mypurohith Encyclopaedia (2005) tells us that:

> *Vach appears to be the personification of speech by whom knowledge was communicated to man….who, "created the waters from the world [in the form] of speech (Vach)."*

Unfortunately, many of our field's histories exclude works other than those of Ancient Greek males. Throughout the book, we try to provide a balanced view of the field by weaving in feminine and Eastern traditions to provide you with a well-rounded perspective of the development of communication study around the world. Let's start by focusing on the earliest period of the Old School – The Classical Period.

The Classical Period (500 BCE-400 CE)

In the cult-classic 1989 movie, Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure, two air-headed teenagers use time-travel to study history for a school project. Along the way they kidnap a group of historical figures, including Socrates. During their encounter with Socrates, Ted tells Bill, "Ah, here it is, So-crates... 'The only true wisdom is in knowing that you know nothing.' That's us, dude!" Unless you are able to time-travel, you will have to read about the early founders of Old School communication, such as Aspasia, Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato. It was at the Lyceum approximately 2,500 years ago that Aristotle and other rhetoricians taught public speaking and persuasion, which marks what we refer to as the Classical Period of communication study.

If you've taken a college public-speaking class, you've probably learned and applied principles of public speaking developed during the Classical Period. During this time, people placed high value on the spoken word and argumentation skills; accentuated emotion and logic to persuade others; and developed guidelines for public presentations. It is largely agreed-upon that the formal study of communication began approximately 2,500 years ago in Greece and Sicily. It is here that we will begin our tour of Ancient Greece with the "fantastic four"—Aspasia of Miletus, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle—who have come to be regarded as the foremother and forefathers of rhetoric and the field of Communication as a whole. Then, we'll turn to scholars who extended the work of the fantastic four—Corax, Tisias, Cicero, Quintilian and Pan Chao.

The argument can be made that our field primarily emphasizes the contributions of men because women were routinely excluded from education as well as other public institutions during this time. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that several women actively contributed to this period (Harris, 1989), participating in and receiving educational opportunities not afforded to most women. This begs the question, "If some women were receiving advanced education and producing work in philosophy and rhetoric themselves, then it becomes more puzzling to explain the absence of any surviving texts by them" (Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990, p. 26). So, who can we look to as an example of a prominent female scholar during this early period?

Aspasia of Miletus (469 BCE) is an excellent example of an educated woman who is often credited as the "mother of rhetoric" (Glenn, 1995). Although relatively little is known about her scholarship because of her disappearance from history circa 401 BCE, Aspasia of Miletus is believed to have taught rhetoric and home economics to Socrates. Her influence extends to Plato as well who argued that belief and truth are not always interchangeable. Even Cicero used

Aspasia's lesson on induction as the centerpiece for his argumentation chapter in De Inventione (Glenn). Aspasia's social position was that of a hetaera, or romantic companion, who was "more educated than respectable women, and [was] expected to accompany men on occasions where conversation with a woman was appreciated, but wives were not welcome" (Carlson, 1994, p. 30). Her specialty was philosophy and politics, and she became the only female member of the elite Periclean circle. In this circle she made both friends and enemies as a result of her political savvy and public speaking ability.

Aspasia was described as one of the most educated women of her era and was determined to be treated as an equal to men (an early feminist to say the least!). She was born into privilege in Miletus, a Greek settlement on the coast of Western Turkey, and did not have many of the same restrictions as other women, working her way to prominence most often granted only to the men of her time. During this period Pericles, the Athenian ruler and Aspasia's partner, treated Aspasia as an equal and allowed her every opportunity to engage in dialogue with the important and educated men of society. Socrates acknowledged Aspasia as having one of the best intellects in the city. With this intellect and the opportunities presented to her, Aspasia was politically progressive, influencing the works of many of the men who are most-often credited with founding our field (PBS, 2005).

With Aspasia's work influencing his education, Socrates (469-399 BCE) greatly influenced the direction of the Classical Period. Most of what we know about Socrates comes from the writings of his student Plato (429-347 BCE) who wrote about rhetoric in the form of dialogues where the main character was Socrates. This era produced much discussion regarding the best ways to write and deliver speeches, with a great deal of the debate focusing on the importance of truth and ethics in public speaking.

From these writings, the idea of the **dialectic** was born. While this term has been debated since its inception, Plato conceptualized it as ***a process of questions and answers that would lead to ultimate truth and understanding***. Think for a moment about contemporary situations where people use this process. Have you ever had a discussion with a professor where he/she questioned you about your interpretation of a poem? Consider the role that a therapist takes when he/she asks you a series of questions to bring greater clarity in understanding your own thoughts, motives, and behavioral patterns. These are just two examples of dialectic at work. What others can you think of?

While Plato contributed a great deal to classical rhetorical theory he was also very critical of it. In Georgias, Plato argued that because rhetoric does not require a unique body of knowledge it is a false, rather than true, art. Similarly, Socrates was often suspicious of the kind of communication that went on in the courts because he felt it was not concerned with absolute truth. Ultimately, the legal system Socrates held in contempt delivered his fate. He was tried, convicted, and executed on charges of atheism and corrupting Athenian youth with his teachings (Kennedy, 1980). This same sentiment applies today when we think about lawyers in our courts. In the famous O.J. Simpson case in the 1990's, Johnnie Cochran became famous for his phrase "If the glove doesn't fit, you must acquit." This received great criticism because it didn't really speak to the absolute truth of the facts of the case, while at the same time, was often credited as the reason O.J. Simpson was found not guilty.

Teaching and Learning Communication Then

Sophists: The Original Speech Teachers

Like Corax and Tisias, "Sophists were self-appointed professors of how to succeed in the civic life of the Greek states" (Kennedy, p. 25). The word sophist comes from the root sophos meaning "wise" and is often translated to mean "craftsman." They taught citizens how to communicate to win an argument or gain influence in the courts, as well as governmental assemblies. Sometimes, the motivation of Sophists was in conflict with other rhetoricians like Plato and Aristotle. Plato and Aristotle were committed to using communication to search for absolute truth. When Sophists taught communication in ways that sought anything less than absolute truth, it upset rhetoricians like Plato and Aristotle. Plato even went so far as to label the work of Sophists invalid because it depended upon *kairos*, or the situation, to determine the provisional truth of the issue under contention.

The Classical Period flourished for nearly a millennium in and around Greece as democracy gained prominence in the lives of Greek citizens. During this time, people found themselves in the courts trying to regain family land that earlier tyrants had seized. As we have stated, social problems have guided the development of communication from the earliest periods. Trying to regain family through the court system became a primary social problem that influenced the focus of those studying communication during this time. Early communication practitioners sought the best methods for speaking and persuading. Although the concept of lawyers as we know them did not yet exist at this time in ancient Greece (Scallen, 2005), people needed effective persuasive speaking skills to get their family land back. Where did they learn these skills? They learned them from ***early speech teachers*** known as **Sophists**. Resourceful individuals such as Corax and Tisias (400's BCE) taught effective persuasive speaking to citizens who needed to use these skills in courts to regain land ownership (Kennedy, 1980). Historical records suggest that these two were among the first professional communication teachers that made use of the latest findings in communication for practical purposes. They also formed the basis of what we now recognize as professional lawyers (Scallen, 2005). Another Sophist, Isocrates (436-338 BCE), felt it was more important for a speaker to adapt to the individual speaking situation rather than have a single approach designed for all speaking occasions. It is likely that your public speaking teachers explain the importance of adapting to your audience in all communication situations.

Arguably the most famous Greek scholar, Aristotle (384-322 BCE), believed rhetoric could be used to create community. As we've highlighted, dialectic allows people to share and test ideas with one another. Aristotle entered Plato's Academy when he was 17 and stayed on as a teacher where he taught public speaking and the art of logical discussion until Plato's death in 347 BCE. He then opened his own school where students learned about politics, science, philosophy, and rhetoric (communication). Aristotle taught all of these subjects during his lectures in the Lyceum next to the public gymnasium, or during conversations he had with his students as he strolled along the covered walkway of the peripatos with the Athenian youth.

Aristotle defined **rhetoric** as the ***"faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever"*** (Aristotle, trans. 1967, p. 15). We want to highlight two parts of this definition as particularly significant: "the possible means" and "persuasion." "The possible means" indicates that Aristotle believed in the importance of context and audience analysis when speaking; a specific situation with a particular audience should influence how we craft our messages for each unique speaking situation.

Say you want to persuade your parents to give you a little extra cash to make it through the month. Chances are you will work through strategies for persuading them why you need the money, and why they should give it to you. You'll likely reflect on what has worked in the past, what hasn't worked, and what strategy you used last time. From this analysis, you construct a message that fits the occasion and audience. Now, let's say you want to persuade your roommate to go out with you to Mexican food for dinner. You are not going to use the same message or approach to persuade your roommate as you would your parents. The same logic exists in public speaking situations. Aristotle highlighted the importance of finding the appropriate message and strategy for the audience and occasion in order to persuade. For Aristotle, rhetoric occurs when a person or group of people engage in the process of communicating for the purpose of persuading. Aristotle divided the "means of persuasion" into three parts, or three artistic proofs, necessary to persuade others: logical reason (logos), human character (ethos), and emotional appeal (pathos).

Logos is ***the presentation of logical, or seemingly logical, reasons that support a speaker's position***. When you construct the order of your speech and make decisions regarding what to include and exclude, you engage in logos. **Ethos** is when ***"The orator persuades by moral character when his speech is delivered in such a manner as to render him worthy of confidence…moral character…constitutes the most effective means of proof"*** (Aristotle, trans. 1967, p.17). Ethos, in short, is speaker credibility. The final proof, **pathos**, occurs when ***a speaker touches particular emotions from the audience***. Aristotle explains, "the judgments we deliver are not the same when we are influenced by joy or sorrow, love or hate." (Aristotle, trans. 1967, p. 17). Super Bowl commercials are often judged as effective or ineffective based on their use of pathos. Many times we consider commercials effective when they produce an emotional response from us such as joy, anger, or happiness.

Like Aristotle, Cicero saw the relationship between rhetoric and persuasion and its applicability to politics (Cicero, trans. 1960, p. 15). Quintilian extended this line of thinking and argued that public speaking was inherently moral. He stated that the ideal orator is "a good man speaking well" (Barilli, 1989). Cicero (106-43 BCE) and Quintilian (c.

35-95 CE) deserve recognition for combining much of what was known from the Greeks and Romans into more complete theoretical ideas. Think of politicians today. Is your first impression that politicians are good people speaking well? How do Aristotle's notions of ethos, logos, and pathos factor in to your perceptions of politicians? Cicero is most famous in the field of communication for creating what we call the five **canons of rhetoric**, ***a five-step process for developing a persuasive speech that we still use to teach public speaking today***. **Invention** is ***the formulation of arguments based on logos--rational appeal or logic***. **Arrangement** is ***ordering a speech in the most effective manner for a particular audience***. **Expression or style** means ***"fitting the proper language to the invented matter" to enhance the enjoyment, and thus acceptability of the argument, by an audience*** (Cicero, trans. 1960, p. 21). **Memory**, a vital skill in the Classical Period is less of a requirement in today's public speaking contexts because we now largely believe that memorized speeches often sound too scripted and stale. Notes, cue cards, and teleprompters are all devices that allow speakers to deliver speeches without committing them to memory. Finally, **delivery** is ***the use of nonverbal behaviors such as eye contact, gestures, and tone of voice during a presentation.*** If you have taken a public speaking class, have you used some or all of these to construct your presentations? If so, you can see the far reaching effects of the early developments in communication on what we teach today.

We want to round out our discussion of the Classical Period by highlighting the work of Pan Chao (c. 45 CE-115 CE). She was the first female historian in China and served as the imperial historian of the court of emperor Han Hedi. She was a strong believer in the benefits of education, and was another of the early female pioneers to argue for the education of girls and women. Writing, in Lessons for Women, on the four qualifications of womanhood (virtue, words, bearing, and work), she said that womanly words, "need be neither clever in debate nor keen in conversation," but women should "…choose words with care; to avoid vulgar language; to speak at appropriate times; and to not weary others (with much conversation), [these] may be called the characteristics of womanly words" (Swann, 1932, p. 86).

Even though it began 2500 years ago, the Classical Period was filled with interesting people who made great strides in the formal study of communication to help with the social problems of their day. The Classical Period laid the foundation of our field and continues to impact our modern day practice of studying and performing communication. You have likely learned concepts from the Classical Period in your public speaking classes. Let's examine the Medieval Period and its further development of our field.

The Medieval Period (400 CE-1400 CE)

In contrast to the Classical Period, which saw tremendous growth and innovation in the study of communication, the Medieval Period might be considered the dark ages of academic study in our field. During this era, the Greco-Roman culture was dominated by Christian influence after the fall of the Roman Empire. The church felt threatened by secular rhetorical works they considered full of pagan thought. While the church preserved many of the classical teachings of rhetoric, it made them scarce to those not in direct service to the church. A secular education was extremely hard to obtain during the Medieval Period for almost everyone.

Even though Christianity condemned communication study as pagan and corrupt, it embraced several aspects of the Classical Period to serve its specific purposes. The ideas from the Classical Period were too valuable for the church to completely ignore. Thus, they focused on communication study to help them develop better preaching and letter writing skills to persuade people to Christianity. Emphasis was placed on persuasion and developing public presentations, both oral and written. Like the Classical Period, those in power continued to stifle women's participation in communication study, keeping them largely illiterate while men served as the overseers of the church and the direction of academic inquiry.

One of the most recognizable people from this era was Augustine (354 CE-430 CE), a Christian clergyman and renowned rhetorician who actually argued for the continued development of ideas that had originated during the Classical Period. He thought that the study of persuasion, in particular, was a particularly worthwhile pursuit for the church. Augustine was a teacher by trade and used his teaching skills as well as knowledge of communication to move "men" toward truth, which for him was the word of God (Baldwin, 1965).

With the exception of Augustine, the formal study of communication took a back seat to a focus on theological issues during the Medieval Period. Fortunately, the study of communication managed to survive as one of the seven branches of a liberal education during this period, but it remained focused on developing presentational styles apt for preaching. Boethius and the Archbishop Isidore of Seville made small efforts to preserve classical learning by reviving the works of Cicero and Quintilian to persuade people to be just and good. Nevertheless, aside from Augustine's work, little progress was made during the remaining Medieval years; the formal study of communication literally plunged into the "dark ages" before reemerging during the Renaissance.

The Renaissance (1400-1600 CE)

Powered by a new intellectual movement during this period, secular institutions and governments started to compete with the church for personal allegiances. As more people felt comfortable challenging the church's approach to education, reinvigorated attention to classical learning and fresh opportunities for scholarly education reemerged. As with the two previous periods we've examined, obtaining education for women was still tough, as many social limitations continued to restrict their access to knowledge.

Teaching and Learning Communication Then

Laura Cereta: "Defense of the Liberal Instruction of Women"

The following is an excerpt of a letter by Cereta to Bibulus Sempronius written January 13, 1488. In an earlier correspondence he praised her as a woman of intelligence but insulted her as if she was unique among women. This is part of her impassioned response and defense of the education of women.

"All history is full of such examples. My point is that your mouth has grown foul because you keep it sealed so that no arguments can come out of it that might enable you to admit that nature imparts one freedom to all human beings equally - to learn. But the question of my exceptionality remains. And here choice alone, since it is the arbiter of character, is the distinguishing factor. For some women worry about the styling of their hair, the elegance of their clothes, and the pearls and other jewelry they wear on their fingers. Others love to say cute little things, to hide their feelings behind a mask of tranquility, to indulge in dancing, and to lead pet dogs around on a leash. For all I care, other women can long for parties with carefully appointed tables, for the peace of mind of sleep, or they can yearn to deface with paint the pretty face they see reflected in their mirrors. But those women for whom the quest for the good represents a higher value restrain their young spirits and ponder better plans. They harden their bodies with sobriety and toil, they control their tongues, they carefully monitor what they hear, they ready their minds for all-night vigils, and they rouse their minds for the contemplation of probity in the case of harmful literature. For knowledge is not given as a gift but by study. For a mind free, keen, and unyielding in the face of hard work always rises to the good, and the desire for learning grows in the depth and breadth.

So be it therefore. May we women, then, not be endowed by God the grantor with any giftedness or rare talent through any sanctity of our own. Nature has granted to all enough of her bounty; she opens to all the gates of choice, and through these gates, reason sends legates to the will, for it is through reason that these legates transmit desires. I shall make a bold summary of the matter. Yours is the authority, ours is the inborn ability. But instead of manly strength, we women are naturally endowed with cunning, instead of a sense of security, we are naturally suspicious. Down deep we women are content with our lot. But you, enraged and maddened by the anger of the dog from whom you flee, are like someone who has been frightened by the attack of a pack of wolves. The victor does not look for the fugitive; nor does she who desires a cease-fire with the enemy conceal herself. Nor does she set up camp with courage and arms when the conditions are hopeless. Nor does it give the strong any pleasure to pursue one who is already fleeing" (Robin, 1997, p. 78-9).

Despite the continued oppression, several brave women took advantage of the changes brought in by the Renaissance. Christine de Pisan (1365-1429) has been praised as "Europe's first professional woman writer" writing 41 pieces over a 30-year period (Redfern, 1995, p.74). Her most famous work, The Treasure of the Cities of Ladies, provided instruction to women on how they could achieve their potential and create for themselves lives rich in meaning and importance. According to Redfern, while "she neither calls herself a rhetorician nor calls The Treasure a rhetoric, her instruction has the potential to empower women's speech acts in both public and private matters. Her most important lesson is that women's success depends on their ability to manage and mediate by speaking and writing effectively" (Redfern, p. 74). Italian Laura Cereta (1469-1499) initiated intellectual debates with her male counterparts through letter writing. Given the difficulties women had earning recognition in the educational arena, many of her letters went unanswered (Rabil, 1981). Despite these obstacles, she continued her education with diligence and is considered one of the earliest feminists. Through her letters she questioned women's traditional roles and attempted to persuade many to alter their beliefs about the role of women and education. Ideas surrounding issues of style in speaking situations received significant attention during the Renaissance period. Petrus Ramus (1515-1572) paid great attention to the idea of style by actually grouping style and delivery of the five canons together. Ramus also argued that invention and arrangement did not fit the canon and should be the focus of logic, not rhetoric. Ramus, who often questioned the early scholars, believed that being a good man had nothing to do with being a good speaker and didn't think that focusing on truth had much to do with communication at all. Needless to say, he had a way of making a name for himself by challenging much of what early scholars thought of truth, ethics, and morals as they applied to communication. In contrast to Ramus, Francis Bacon (1561-1626), a contemporary of Shakespeare, believed that the journey to truth was paramount to the study and performance of communication. According to Bacon, reason and morality required speakers to have a high degree of accountability, making it an essential element in oration. Where do you think ethics, truth, and morality fit into communication today? Think about your concept of politicians or car salespersons. How do these notions fit when communicating in these contexts?

Scholars like Cereta, de Pisan, Ramus, and Bacon all furthered the study of communication as they challenged, debated, and scrutinized well established assumptions and "truths" about the field developed during the Classical Period. Their works reflect the dynamic nature of the Renaissance Period and the reemergence of discussion and deliberation regarding the nature and uses of communication. The works of these scholars were a springboard back into a full-blown examination of communication, which continued into The Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment (1600-1800 CE)

A maturing Europe continued to see a lessening of tension between the church and secular institutions, and the transformation of the Communication field was a reflection of broader cultural shifts. Modernizations like the printing press made the written word more readily available to the masses through newspapers and books thus, forever changing the ways people learned and communicated. This era was the precurser to the industrial revolution and began the rapid changes in the development of our field that were to come. Golden, Berquist, and Colemen (1989) point to four prominent trends during The Enlightenment. **Neoclassicism** revived the classical approach to rhetoric by ***adapting and applying it to contemporary situations***. Second, the **eclectic method of belletristic scholars** offered ***standards of style for presenting and critiquing oration, drama, and poetry***. Englishman Hugh Blair (1718-1800) advocated the notion of good taste and character in communication encounters, and a book of his lectures was so popular that his publisher stated, "half of the educated English-speaking world was reading Blair" (Covino, p. 80). Third, the **psychological/epistemological school of rhetoric** ***applied communication study to basic human nature, knowledge, and thought***. The Scottish minister and educator, George Campbell (1719-1796), tried to create convincing arguments using scientific and moral reasoning by seeking to understand how people used speech to persuade others. Finally, the **elocutionary approach** concentrated on ***delivery and style by providing strict rules for a speaker's bodily actions such as gestures, facial expressions, tone, and pronunciation***. Overall, the Enlightenment Period served as a bridge between the past and the present of communication study, the old and the new school. During this period, people used many of the early approaches to further explore communication in ways that would ignite an explosion in the Communication field in the 20th Century. While we've quickly covered 2400 years of communication study, let's look at the 20th century, which witnessed more advances in communication study than the previous 2400 years combined.

New School: Communication Study in the 20th Century

Issues such as persuasion, public speaking, political debate, preaching, letter writing, and education guided communication study in the early periods as these were the pressing social matters of the day. With the industrial revolution in full effect, major world changes took place that impacted the continuing advancement of communication study. We have seen more changes in the ways humans communicate, and communication study, in the past 100 years than in any other time in history. Rapid advances in technology, and the emergence of a "global village," have provided almost limitless areas to study communication. In this half of the chapter, we examine the development of the modern field of Communication, demonstrating how it has developed into the departments of Communication that you may recognize on your campus today.

The Emergence of a Contemporary Academic Field

Think about the different departments and majors on your campus. What about the department of Communication. How did it get there? You may not know it, but academic departments like Communication are a relatively recent phenomenon in human history. While there is evidence of speech instruction in the U.S. as far back as the colonial period, 100 years ago there were only a few departments of Communication in U.S. colleges and universities (Delia, 1987). From 1890 to 1920, "the various aspects of oral communication were drawn together and integrated, under the common rubric of speech" and generally housed in departments of English (Gray, 1954, p. 422). Some universities moved to create specific academic departments of communication in the late 1800's, such as De Pauw (1884), Earlham (1887), Cornell (1889), Michigan and Chicago (1892), and Ohio Wesleyan (1894), which led the way for the continued academic development of Communication study (Smith, 1954).

The first large-scale demand to create distinct departments of Communication came at the Public Speaking Conference of the New England and North Atlantic States in 1913 (Smith, p. 455). Here, faculty expressed the desire to separate from departments of English. The art and science of oral communication went in different directions than traditional areas of focus in English, and those with these interests wanted the resources and recognition that accompanied this field of study. Hamilton College was an early pioneer of Speech instruction in the U.S. and had a recognized department of Elocution and Rhetoric as early as 1841. But, it was not until the early 20th century that Communication saw the emergence of 7 M.A. programs and the granting of the first Ph.D.'s in the early 1920's. By "1944 the United States Office of Education used its own survey of speech departments to assure the educational world that 'the expressive arts have gained full recognition in college programs of study'" (Smith, p. 448).

Case In Point

International, National, and Regional Organizations of Communication Study

A variety of professional organizations are devoted to organizing those interested in studying communication, organizing conferences for scholars to communicate about current research, and publishing academic journals highlighting the latest in research from our discipline. To find out more about what these organizations do, you can visit their websites.

The International Communication Association (ICA) was first organized in the 1940's by various speech departments as the National Society for the Study of Communication (NSSC). By 1950 the NSSC had become the ICA and had the express purpose of bringing together academics and professionals around the world interested in the study of human communication. The ICA currently has over 3,400 members with over two-thirds of them working as teachers and researchers in educational settings around the world. International Communication

Association (ICA) http://www.icahdq.org

A relatively new organization that takes advantage of computer technologies to organize its members is the American Communication Association (ACA). The ACA was founded in 1993 and actually exists as a virtual professional association that includes researchers, teachers, and professionals devoted to communication study in North, Central, and South America as well as in the Caribbean. American Communication Association (ACA)

http://www.americancomm.org

The largest United States organization devoted to communication is the National Communication Association (NCA). NCA boasts the largest membership of any communication organization in the world. Currently there are approximately 7,100 members from the U.S. and more than 20 foreign countries. The NCA is a scholarly society devoted to "enhancing the research, teaching, and service produced by its members on topics of both intellectual and social significance" (www.natcom.org). National Communication Association (NCA)

http://www.natcom.org.There are also smaller regional organizations including the Eastern Communication Association (ECA) http://www.jmu.edu/orgs/eca, the Southern States Communication Association (SSCA) http://ssca.net, Central States Communication Association (CSCA) http://www.csca-net.org, and Western States Communication Association (WSCA) http://www.westcomm.org.

As Communication scholars formed departments of Communication, they also organized themselves into associations that reflected the interests of the field. The first organization of Communication professionals was the National Association of Elocutionists, established in 1892 (Rarig & Greaves, 1954, p. 490), followed by The Eastern Public Speaking Conference formed in 1910. Within a year, over sixty secondary-school teachers of Speech attended a conference at Swarthmore (Smith, p. 423). Our current National Communication Association began during this time in 1914 as the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking, and became the Speech Communication Association in 1970. It wasn't until 1997 that members voted to change it to its current name. As a result of the work of the early founders, a number of organizations are currently devoted to bringing together those interested in studying communication.

After 2400 years of study going in a variety of directions, the beginning of the 20th century showed the desire of communication teachers to formally organize and institutionalize the study of communication. These organizations have played a large part in determining how departments of Communication look and function on college campuses, including what curriculum is part of the field, and the latest in teaching strategies for Communication professors. To better understand the Communication department on your campus today, let's examine some of the important events and people that shaped the study of communication during the 20th century.

1900-1940

From the mid 1800's through the early part of the 20th century, significant changes occurred in politics, social life, education, commercialization, and technology creating the world of organizations, universities, colleges, and mass production that we know today. As a result of all of this change, new areas of communication research emerged to answer the relevant questions of the day presented by this onslaught of social changes. From 1900–1940, communication study focused on five primary areas that experienced rapid changes and advances: "(1) work on communication and political institutions, (2) research concerned with the role of communication in social life, (3) social-psychological analyses of communication, (4) studies of communication and education, and (5) commercially motivated research" (Delia, 1987, p. 25). It's likely that many of these areas are represented in the Communication department at your campus. This period brought many changes to the political landscape, with new technologies beginning to significantly alter the communication of political messages. When you think about our focus on politics, much of our assessment of the communication in this arena came from the work of scholars in the early 20th century. They focused on propaganda analysis, political themes in public communication (magazines, textbooks, etc.), and public opinion research that explored the opinions of society at large on major political and social issues. If you watch politics, you're obviously familiar with political polls that try to determine people's beliefs and political values. This line of work was influenced by the early works of Walter Lippman (1922) who is considered the father of public opinion analysis. Similarly, Harold Lasswell's (1927) pioneering work on propaganda set the foundation for studying how mass communication influences the social conscious of large groups of people. All of us have been exposed to a barrage of public opinion polls and political messages in the media.

Understanding these may seem quite daunting to the average person. Yet, through the work of scholars such as Lippman and Lasswell, analysis of public opinion polls and propaganda have been able to provide incredible insight into the impacts of such communication. For example, according to a CNN poll in 2003, 68% of Americans thought the war in Iraq was a good thing. Five years later, only 36% of Americans now believe the situation in Iraq was worth going to war over. Public opinion polls and analysis of propaganda messages allow us to follow the sentiment of large groups of people.

During the early 20th century, society changed through urbanization, industrialization, and continued developments in mass media. As a result, there was a need to understand how these changes impacted human communication. A very influential group of scholars studied communication and social life at the Chicago School of Sociology. Herbert Blumer (1933), Charles H. Cooley (1902; 1909), John Dewey (1922; 1927), George Herbert Mead (1934), and Robert E. Park (1922; 1923; 1925) committed themselves to "scientific sociology" that focused on the "sensitivity to the interrelation of persons' experiences and the social contexts of their lives" (Delia, 1987, p. 31). They focused on how people interacted; examined the effects of urbanization on peoples' social lives; studied film and media institutions and their effects on culture; explored culture, conflict, and consensus; highlighted the effects of marketing and advertising; and researched interpersonal communication. This group of scholars, and their research interests, were pivotal in creating what you know as Communication departments because they moved the field from being solely humanistic (focused on public speaking performance and analysis), to social scientific (exploring the social impacts and realities of communication through scientific methods).

The third focus of communication inquiry during this time was the advancement of Social Psychology, which explored individual social behavior in communication contexts. If you have seen the Jacksass movies/show or the show Candid Camera, you've witnessed how the characters of these shows violate communication norms to get a reaction from others. Social Psychologists focused on issues such as communication norms and the impact of our communication in social contexts. In other words, where do we get ideas of "normal" communication behaviors and how does our communication impact social situations? Another area of focus in Social Psychology was the study of the effects of media on communication outcomes. A particular focus was movies. Movies developed rapidly as a source of entertainment for youth prior to World War I, and researchers wanted to understand what impact watching movies had on young people. It's likely that you've heard debate and discussion about the potential harm of seeing violence in movies, television, and video games. Much of this research began with the Social Psychologists of the early 20th century and continues today as we discuss the impact of mass media on society, culture, relationships, and individuals.

The study of communication in education was the fourth important development in the field between 1900 and 1940. Do you have good professors? Do you have poor professors? What makes them good or poor? Think about your college classroom today. A great deal of the way it is organized and conducted can be traced back to early research in instructional communication. Early on, the possible impacts of every major new technology (radio, film, and television) on educational outcomes became a primary focus of this specialization. Many thought that these technologies would completely change how we received an education. Now, some people think that the personal computer will revolutionize classroom instruction. Instructional communication research in the early 1900's through the present day seeks to discover the best communicative techniques for teaching.

The fifth important development in communication study during this period focused on commercialism and human communication. With an increase in national brands, marketing, and advertising, commercial organizations were interested in influencing consumer habits. During this period, people began to understand mass media's ability to persuade (think advertising!). There were incredible financial implications for using mass media to sell products. These implications didn't escape those who could profit from mass media, and prompted lines of research that examined the impacts of advertising and marketing on consumer behavior. Paul Lazarsfeld (1939; 1940; 1944; 1949) studied mass communication to understand its commercial implications and was an early pioneer in understanding persuasion and advertising. Examine ads on television or in magazines. What makes them effective or ineffective? What advertising messages are most likely to influence you to purchase a product? These sorts of questions began to be explored in the early part of the 20th century. This line of research is so powerful that Yankelovich Inc. estimates that the average urban American now sees or hears 5,000 advertisements a day. While this number may seem impossible, think of the radio, TV, movie, billboard, and internet advertisements you encounter everyday. In fact, one of your authors was astounded when he went into a public bathroom and there were advertisements above and IN the urinal!

While these early communication research areas actually emerged from other academic disciplines (sociology, psychology, anthropology, and politics), Communication scholars found it necessary to organize themselves to further advance the field. Continued changes in the world, including World War I and World War II, prompted even greater advances in Communication research and the development of the field from the 1940's through the 1960's.

1940-1970

World War II played a major role in shaping the direction of communication study during the 1940s. Two instrumental players in communication research during this era, Kurt Lewin (1936; 1941; 1947a; 1947b) and Carl Hovland et al. (1949; 1953; 1959) studied group dynamics and mass communication. Following World War II, scholars such as Lazarsfeld, Lasswell, Hovland, and Schramm wanted to bring more credibility and attention to their research. One approach they used to accomplish this was to call for Communication study to be its own field of research at universities. They began using the terms "mass communication" and "communication research" more frequently in their writings, which helped begin the process of distinguishing Communication research and departments from other fields such as political science, psychology, and sociology (Rogers, 1994). This served as the big push to create departments of Communication that you are familiar with today.

In 1949 Lazarsfeld and Stanton argued that, "the whole field of communications research should be covered simultaneously" (p. xi), which was an attempt to formalize communication study as a field that included not only the humanities, but the "social science of communication aimed at theory development" (Delia, 1987, p. 59). These Communication scholars began forming Communication into its own academic field by creating and adopting a vocabulary specific to the field, writing core subject matter into Communication textbooks, and agreeing to a relatively stable set of communication processes that could be taught in college and university classrooms. Of course, the continued formal organization of communication scholars we discussed earlier continued to help strengthen this move.

Another notable contributor to the development of the field during this time was Wilbur Schramm. Schramm is often credited as the first person to create university classes with "communication" in the title, author textbooks for Communication-specific courses, be awarded a Ph.D. in Communication, and have the title "Professor of Communication" at the University of Illinois (Rogers, 1994, p. 446-447). After World War II, Schramm moved to the University of Illinois and founded the Institute of Communications Research in 1947 and its sister institute at Stanford University in 1956. He is often credited as being the modern father of communication study. As a result of his work, departments and colleges of Communication and Speech began to form around the country, particularly in the mid-west. Schools in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Washington, and North Carolina began to form departments and/or colleges that included "communication" as part of their title. In fact, if you're planning on getting a Ph.D. in Communication, it is very likely you will attend a school in the mid-west or east because of the early developments of departments in these regions. Now, departments of Speech, Communication, and Speech Communication exist on colleges and universities both nationally and internationally.

The 1950’s saw two areas of research develop that are still a major focus in our field today--research on voting and mass media (Lazarsfeld, Hadley, & Stanton, 1939; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944), and experimental studies on persuasion (Hovland, 1953; 1959). The move from mass media and political communication research in the early 1900’s to a more theoretical approach in the 1940’s and 50’s brought together two areas that make Communication study such an important academic field today--theory and practice. Research in the 40’s and 50’s was conducted using experimental and survey methods with an emphasis on generating theories of how and why we communicate. As the field began to grow and emerge, Delia states that it struggled with the following question: “Was the field to be interdisciplinary or autonomous; and if autonomous, on what terms? Communication study in the late 1940’s embraced divergent and contradictory attitudes that leave this question unresolved after [50] years” (p. 72).

Teaching and Learning Communication Now

In 2007, Denzel Washington played the late Melvin B. Tolson in the movie The Great Debaters. Melvin B. Tolson was an American Modern poet who taught Speech and English at the historically black Wiley College. While he is quite famous for his poetry, the movie depicts his success at forming and coaching the first debate team at Wiley College. The team achieved notoriety by participating in the first collegiate interracial debate in the U.S. and by defeating the champion debate team of USC in 1935. Unfortunately, during this time, they were not allowed to call themselves the champions because African-Americans were not admitted into the debate society until after WWII. One of Tolson’s students, James Farmer Jr. used his communication skills to found the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) which can be found at http://www.core-online.org

Following World War II, other communication research focused on public speaking, instructional communication, communication anxiety, persuasion, group dynamics, and business communication. While the early 20th century saw major new approaches for studying communication, the 1960’s and 70’s saw renewed emphasis and focus on the works of those from the Classical Period. Thus, the 60’s and 70’s worked to bridge together the old and new school of Communication study for the first time. While scholars in the 60’s and 70’s reconsidered classical approaches, others such as Burke (1962; 1966) pushed the boundaries of rhetorical study. Rather than focusing on the speeches of “dead white guys,” Burke wanted to analyze a much broader scope of communication events including protest rhetoric, film, television, and radio (Delia, 1987, p. 81).

With this bridging of the old and new schools, Communication departments now have professors who study and teach classical rhetoric, contemporary rhetoric, empirical social science, and qualitative social science. As each era generated new research, previous knowledge laid the foundation for the innumerable challenges of studying communication in a rapidly changing technological, postmodern world. Since the 1970s, we have seen more technological and world changes than at any other time in history, guiding the ways in which we now study communication.

1970 to the Present Day

The emergence of the women’s, civil-rights, and anti-war movements in the 1960’s and 70’s reintroduced old social questions and concerns that had gone largely ignored by society. Fortunately, the field of Communication was progressive enough to take on the challenge of responding to these questions and concerns from its own perspective. Thus, the 1970’s saw a rise in feminist scholarship that contributed greatly to a field that has seen progressive and consistent development since 400 BCE by those not afraid to tackle the dominate social problems of the day.

Teaching and Learning Communication Now

Remember our discussion earlier regarding the overwhelming exclusion of women in education, including communication study. In its report, Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities Summary Report 2006, The National Opinion Research Center Reported that 507 Ph.D.'s were awarded in Communication. Of those, 287 were awarded to women. This means 56.6% of Ph.D.'s earned in Communication in 2006 were earned by women. We've come a long way from the Classical Period. Now, it's more likely that you will have a female professor than a male professor! While change has been slow, it is happening.

[1]

Two pioneering organizations devoted to women's scholarship in Communication are the Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender (OSCLG) founded in 1972, and the Organization for Research on Women and Communication (ORWAC) founded in 1977. Over the course of the next decade, women's scholarship gained prominence in the various professional organizations devoted to teaching and researching communication. Feminist researchers like Donna Allen, Sandra A. Purnell, Sally Miller Gearhart, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, Sonja K. Foss, Karen A. Foss and many others have been instrumental in the formation of a well-established and respected body of research that challenged the status quo of many of our theoretical assumptions and research practices established in past eras. (Their research will be discussed in more detail in Part II of the text.)

Through the 1980's and 1990's the field of Communication continued to grow. The field maintains strong teaching and research interests in areas such as rhetoric, mass communication, instructional communication, interpersonal communication, group communication, organizational communication, intercultural communication, gender communication, health communication, and many more.

Communication Study Today and Tomorrow

Today, many colleges and universities have Communication as part of their curriculum with departments titled with names like Speech, Speech Communication, and Communication. Likewise, our professional organizations are still active in growing and strengthening the field through teaching and research. Even with the increased recognition, there is still considerable growth, change, and movement taking place in communication study. Those involved in the field actively and openly debate and discuss various theoretical and methodological approaches for studying human communication. The study of human communication continues to be a wide and diverse field, with each area increasing our understanding of how humans communicate.

Teaching and Learning Communication Now

If you're reading this book, you are learning about communication in an introductory communication course. Or, you are a major learning about communication and wondering what you are going to do with your degree. Well, Blythe Camenson wrote just the book for you. In Great Jobs for Communications Majors you can further explore how to take what you learned in your major and apply it to getting a good job. Or, try Ferguson's Top Careers for Communications Graduates. There are many opportunities to learn, and even teach, the content of what you studied in Communication in your professional life. Will you be the next Aspasia or Aristotle?

As history explains, changes in the world will continue to guide our approaches for understanding and researching communication. We have moved from an industrial age to an information age and have yet to fully understand the communicative implications of this shift. Advances in communication and information technologies are forever changing the ways we research and teach communication in our colleges and universities. While it is difficult to predict the specific areas and phenomena of study for future communication research, it is safe to assume that continued global and social changes will shape the development of our field.

Summary

Our history tells us that men and women from all cultures have been interested in observing and theorizing about the role of communication in multiple contexts—government, politics, law, religion, technology, and education. The Old School of communication study consisted of four major periods of intellectual development—Classical, Medieval, Renaissance, and Enlightenment. The Classical Period (500 BCE-400 CE) gave birth to seminal figures who set the foundation for communication study. Plato (428-348 BCE) introduced the concept and practice of the dialectic. Aristotle (384-322 BCE) defined rhetoric and three necessary proofs for persuasion. Cicero (106-43BCE) contributed the canons of rhetoric—invention, arrangement, expression/style, memory, and delivery.

As the church dominated public life in the Medieval Period (400-1400 CE), there was little intellectual development. St. Augustine is one who stands out for his continued development of rhetorical theory and its relationship to the church.

The Renaissance (1400-1600 CE) was a rebirth of sorts as Christine de Pisan (1365-1429) and Laura Cereta (1469-1499) continued the tradition of Aspasia and Pan Chao in securing educational opportunities for women. Ramus further developed the canons by combining style and delivery while Bacon continued his work following the classical tradition.

The final period, the Enlightenment (1600-1800), is characterized by intellectual trends—neoclassicism, the eclectic method of belletristic scholars, psychological/epistemological study of rhetoric, and the elocutionary approach.

The New School of communication study brought about more formal academic departments of Communication in the 1800-1900s. Along with these academic placements came the formation of professional organizations such as NCA and ICA that helped foster greater recognition and development of the study of communication on a national and international scale. As the U.S. and world was challenged by changes in technology, politics, and social life, Communication scholars sought to address them by focusing on five areas of research—political institutions, the role of communication in social life, social-psychological analyses of communication, communication and education, and commercially motivated research. Following WWI and WWII scholars continued to be motivated by global and social issues such as the women's movement, the civil rights movement, and the anti-war movement. The trend continues as current scholars are driven by the prominent social and technological issues of the day such as technology and health care.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the specializations of the Communication professors at your school?
2. How did your professor get started in the field of Communication?
3. If you wanted to study some type of communication phenomenon, what would it be and why?
4. With the increasing emphasis on communication and information technologies, what kind of communication research do you think will happen in the future?
5. Why is knowing our history valuable for understanding the discipline?

Key Terms and People

- arrangement
- Aristotle
- audience analysis
- Aspasia
- Augustine
- canons of rhetoric
- Cicero
- classical period
- Corax
- delivery
- dialectic
- eclectic method of belletristic scholars
- enlightenment
- Francis Bacon
- invention
- Isocrates
- Laura Cereta
- medieval period
- memory
- neoclassism
- Petrus Ramus
- Plato
- psychological/epistemological school of rhetoric
- Quintilian
- renaissance
- rhetoric
- Socrates
- sophists
- style
- Tisias
- Vach

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Chapter 5 - Communication Theory

Chapter 5

Communication Theory

Chapter Objectives:

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

- Define theory and explain its functions.
- Demonstrate how theories are developed.
- Explain what makes a useful theory.
- Understand the idea of Theoretical Paradigms.
- Explain the Empirical Laws Paradigm.
- Explain the Human Rules Paradigm.
- Explain the Systems Theory Paradigm.
- Explain the Rhetorical Theory Paradigm.
- Explain the Critical Theory Paradigm.

H

ow did the universe begin? Where did it all come from? Scientists, theologians, and educators have been debating this topic for centuries. A common place for this debate occurs in school textbooks—should they teach creationism or the big bang theory? How you answer this question depends on the theoretical perspective you hold. In either case your theoretical perspective includes some common features—reasons to justify your theory, and evidence you use to prove that it is correct. Creationists cite the Bible or other religious texts as proof of their theoretical perspective. Advocates of the big bang theory argue that the earth emerged 13.7 billion years ago and cite the continued expansion of space (Hubble's Law) as verifiable proof that this theory is correct. But how do we know which theory is right? Let's apply this same reasoning to communication. Think about the many ways you develop, and try to answer, questions about the "right" ways to communicate. We want to leave the intricacies of the theoretical debate between creationism and the big bang theory to our colleagues in the physical sciences, religious studies, and philosophies. However, we'll use this chapter to explore theoretical issues relevant to the study of Communication. By the end of this chapter you should understand what communication theories are, their functions, how we evaluate them, and the five major theoretical paradigms shaping Communication study today. You'll also discover just how important communication theory is to your everyday life.

Defining Theory

W

hen we mention the word theory to our students, we often watch their eyes glaze over as if it is the most boring thing we could talk about. Students sometimes have the misperception that theory has absolutely no relevance in their lives. But, did you know that you use and test theories of communication on a daily basis? Really! Whether you know it or not, your theories guide how you actually communicate. For example, you may have a theory that attractive people are harder to talk to than less attractive people. If you believe this is true, you are probably missing opportunities to get to know entire groups of people. While our personal theories guide our communication, there are problems with them.

They generally are not complete or sophisticated enough to help us fully understand the complexities of the communication in which we engage. Therefore, it is essential that we go beyond personal theories to develop and understand ones that guide both our study and performance of communication. Before we get into what function theories perform for us, let's define what we mean by theory. Hoover (1984) defines **theory** as ***"a set of inter-related propositions that suggest why events occur in the manner that they do"*** (p. 38). Foss, Foss and Griffin (1999) define theory as, ***"a way of framing an experience or event—an effort to understand and account for something and the way it functions in the world"*** (p. 8). Take a moment to reflect on the elegant simplicity of these two definitions. Any thoughts or ideas you have about how things work in the world or your life are your personal theories. Your theories are essentially your framework for how the world works, and therefore guide how you function in the world. You can begin to see how important it is that your theories are solid. As you'll see, well-developed Communication theories help us better understand and explain the communicative behaviors of ourselves and others.

Functions of Communication Theory

While theories in many disciplines can be hard for some to understand, in a field like Communication, our theories are important to understand because they directly impact our daily lives. In this respect, they serve several functions in guiding our communication. The first function theories serve is that they help us organize and understand our communication experiences. We use theories to organize a broad range of experiences into smaller categories by paying attention to "common features" of communication situations (Infante, Rancer & Womack, 2003). For example, Deborah Tannen (2001) argues that men and women talk in significantly different ways and for significantly different reasons. As you well know, these differences cannot be applied to all men and women. We all have our own unique style of communication. But, theories on gender communication help us organize and understand the talk of the different genders in a more simplified context so we can understand general patterns of communication behavior. This helps us make appropriate decisions in gendered communication situations.

A second function of theories is that they help us choose what communicative behaviors to study. Theories guide where we choose to look, what we look at, and how we look at communicative phenomenon. Remember back to Chapter 1 where we defined communication study. Theories focus our attention on certain aspects of that definition. Let's look again at our example from above. If you find that Tannen's theories regarding how men and women talk differ from your own perceptions, you might choose to more closely study the talk of men and women to see if you can somehow rectify the difference in theoretical perspectives. We're sure you do this on a personal level almost every day. If you want to persuade someone to do something for you, you probably have a theory about what strategies you can use to get them to do what you want. Your theory guides how you approach your persuasive attempts, and what you look for to see if you were successful or not.

Communication Theory and You

Go to the self-help section of any bookstore, or type in a search at Amazon.com, and you'll find countless books explaining how men and women communicate. In cross-gendered romantic relationships, people have long been theorizing how communication should work in these relationships. These books come and go, some with greater popularity than others. But, they do have the impact of altering our "best representation" of how these relationships work. What are some of your theories about how to communicate in a cross-gendered romantic relationship? How confident are you that your perspectives are correct?

A third function of theories is that they help us broaden our understanding of human communication. Scholars who study communication share theories with one another through books, journal articles, and at conferences. The sharing of theories generates dialogue, which allows us to further the theories developed in this field. Again, using

Tannen's example above, she chose to write her theoretical conclusions for a non-academic audience in order to help dispel many of our common misperceptions (theories) about how men and women communicate. For many in the public, this was the first time they encountered theories that contrasted their own personal theories about the communication of men and women. Interestingly, Tannen received some criticism about her choice to take her theories to the "public," despite the tremendous benefit it has had for broadening the culture's perceptions of gendered communication. It's likely that you discuss your personal theories of communication with others on a regular basis to get their feedback.

A fourth function of theories is that they help us predict and control our communication. When we communicate, we try to predict how our interactions will develop so we can maintain a certain level of control. For example, you can use Tannen's theories of gendered communication to help you predict and control social situations in which people of different genders communicate. Imagine being at a party and you want to talk to someone of the opposite sex that you find attractive. You will use some sort of theory about how to talk to the opposite sex to approach this situation in order to make it more likely to be successful. As in all situations, the better your theoretical perspectives, the better chances for success when communicating. While theories do not allow us to predict and control communication with 100% certainty, they do help us function in daily interactions at a more predictable and controlled level.

A fifth function of theories is that they help us challenge current social and cultural realities and provide new ways of thinking and living. People sometimes make the mistake of assuming that the ways we communicate are innate rather than learned. This is not true. In order to challenge the communicative norms we learn, people use critical theories to ask questions about the status quo of human communication, particularly focusing on how humans use communication to bring advantage and privilege to particular people or groups. For example, Tannen argues that when men listen to women express their troubles, they listen with the purpose of wanting to provide a fix, or give advice. Tannen argues that many times, women are not looking for advice or a fix, but rather empathy or sympathy from their male conversational partners. With this understanding, it's possible to begin teaching men new strategies for listening in cross-gendered conversations that serve to build stronger communication ties. Critical theories challenge our traditional theoretical understandings, providing alternative communicative behaviors for social change. While theories serve many useful functions, these functions don't really matter if we do not have well-developed theories that provide a good representation of how our world works. While we all form our personal theories through examining our experiences, how are communication theories developed?

How We Develop Communication Theories

Now that you understand the functions of communication theories in our lives, you may wonder where these theories come from. We cannot completely rely on our personal theories for accurately understanding the complexities of human communication. Therefore, people like your professors form communication theories by starting with their own personal interests, observations, and questions about communication (Miller & Nicholson, 1976). Those of us who study communication are in a continual process of forming, testing, and reforming theories of communication (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005). There are three essential steps for developing Communication theories: 1) Ask important questions, 2) look for answers by observing communicative behavior, and 3) form answers and theories as a result of your observations (Littlejohn & Foss).

Asking important questions is the first step in the process of discovering how communication functions in our world. Tannen's work grew out of her desire to find out answers to questions about why men and women "can't seem to communicate," a commonly held theory by many. As a result of her line of questioning, she has spent a career asking questions and finding answers. Likewise, John Gottman has spent his career researching how married couples can be relationally successful. Many of his theories contradict common beliefs about long-term romantic relationships.

However, simply asking questions is not enough. It is important that we find meaningful answers to our questions in order to continue to improve our communication. In the field of Communication, answers to our questions have the potential to help us communicate better with one another, as well as provide positive social change. If you've ever questioned why something is the way it is, perhaps you're on your way to discovering the next big theory by finding meaningful answers to your questions.

When we find answers to our questions, we are able to form theories about our communication. Remember our definition of theories? Theories are "an effort to understand and account for something and the way it functions in the world" (Foss, Foss & Griffin, 1999). Answering our questions helps us develop more sophisticated ways of understanding the communication around us – theories! You may have a theory about how to make friends. You use this theory to guide your behavior, then ask questions to find out if your theory works. The more times you prove that it works, the stronger your theory becomes about making friends. But, how do we know if a theory is good, or not?

Developing Good Theories

Take a moment to compare Newton's theory of gravity to communication theories. Simply put, Newton theorized that there is a force that draws objects to the earth. We base our physical behaviors on this theory, regardless of how well we understand its complexities. For example, if you hold a pen above a desk and let go, you know that it will fall and hit the desk every time you drop it. In contrast, communication theories change and develop over time (Infante, Rancer & Womack, 2003; Kaplan, 1964; Kuhn, 1970). For example, you might theorize that smiling at someone should produce a smile back. You speculate that this should happen most of the time, but it probably would not surprise you if it does not happen every time. Contrast this to gravity. If you dropped a pen, and it floated, you would likely be very surprised, if not a little bit worried about the state of the world.

If Communication theories are not 100% consistent like theories in the physical sciences, why are they useful? This question initiates much debate among those of us who study communication. While there is no definitive answer to this question, there are a number of criteria we use to evaluate the value of communication theories. According to Littlejohn and Foss (2005), scope, parsimony, heuristic value, openness, appropriateness, and validity are starting places for evaluating whether or not a theory is good.

- **Scope** refers to ***how broad or narrow a theory is*** (Infante, Rancer & Womack 2003; Shaw & Costanzo,1970). If a theory is too broad, it may not account for specific instances that are important for understanding how we communicate. If it is too narrow, we may not be able to understand communication in general terms.
- **Parsimony** refers to the idea that, ***all things being equal, the simplest solution takes precedence over a more complicated one***. Thus, a theory is valuable when it is able to explain, in basic terms, complex communicative situations.
- **Heuristic Value** means that ***a theory prompts other theorists to engage in further study and theorizing about a given problem***. The Greeks used the term heurisko, meaning "I find" to refer to an idea, which stimulates additional thinking and discovery. This is an important criterion that facilitates intellectual growth, development, and problem solving.
- **Openness** is ***the quality that a theory allows for, and recognizes, multiple options and perspectives***. In essence, a good theory acknowledges that it is "tentative, contextual, and qualified" (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005, p.30) and is open to refinement.
- **Appropriateness** refers to ***the fit between the underlying theoretical assumptions and the research question***. Theories must be consistent with the assumptions, goals, and data of the research in question. Let's say you want to understand the relationship between playing violent video games and actual violence. One of your assumptions about human nature might be that people are active, rather, than passive agents, meaning we don't just copy what

we see in the media. Given this, examining this issue from a theoretical perspective that suggests people emulate whatever they see in the media would not be appropriate for explaining phenomenon.

- **Validity** refers to ***the worth and practical nature of a theory***. The question should be asked, "is a theory representative of reality?" If, according to Littlejohn and Foss, "no single theory will ever reveal the whole 'truth' or be able to totally address the subject of investigation," how do we know if a given theory is "right" for a given problem? (p. 17). There are three qualities of validity — value, fit, and generalizability. Is a theory valuable for the culture at large? Does it fit with the relationship between the explanations offered by the theory and the actual data? Finally, is it generalizable to a population beyond the sample size? In our example of the relationship between violent video games and actual violence, let's say we studied 100 boys and 100 girls, ages 12-15, from a small rural area in California. Could we then generalize or apply our theories to everyone who plays video games?

The above criteria serve as a starting point for generating and evaluating theories. As we move into the next section on specific theoretical paradigms, you will see how some of these criteria work. Let's now turn to look at ways to more easily conceptualize the broad range of communication theories that exist.

Theoretical Paradigms

One way to simplify the understanding of complex theories is to categorize multiple theories into broader categories, or paradigms. A paradigm is a collection of concepts, values, assumptions, and practices that constitute a way of viewing reality for a community that shares them, especially an intellectual community. According to Kuhn (1962), intellectual revolutions occur when people abandon previously held paradigms for new ones. For example, when Pythagoras in the 6th century B.C. argued the earth was a sphere, rather than flat, he presented a paradigm shift.

In the field of Communication there are numerous ways to categorize and understand theoretical paradigms. No single way is more valuable than another, nor is any paradigm complete or better in its coverage of Communication. Instead, paradigms are a way for us to organize a great number of ideas into categories. For our purposes, we've divided communication theories into five paradigms that we call the Empirical Laws, Human Rules, Rhetorical, Systems, and Critical Paradigms.

Empirical Laws Paradigm

Theories in the **Empirical Laws Paradigm** ***approach Communication from the perspective that there are universal laws that govern how we communicate***. Other names for Empirical Laws include: hard science, the positivist approach, the covering-laws approach, and the classical approach. Physical scientists look for universal laws to understand and explain our world. Using our example of gravity, we know that objects fall to the earth 100% of the time when we drop them. This is a universal law. As Chapter 2 showed, in the late 1950's scholars began studying human communication using approaches developed in the physical sciences (aka the Scientific Method). Thus, early proponents of Empirical Laws theories studied communication to see if there were universal communication laws similar to those in the physical world.

Communication Theory Now

The Environmental Paradigm Shift

Not long ago those concerned about environmental issues were considered minority or fringe groups and, as a result, many of their concerns were dismissed. Yet today environmental concerns have so infiltrated the mainstream that it is now “trendy” to be an environmentalist. Thanks to scientists asking difficult theoretical and practical questions about consumption of scarce resources, awareness about air and water quality, food safety, and global warming has become part of global public discourse and “environmentalism has caught on everywhere.” According to Jackson, “There's been a paradigm shift in society away from thinking of the Earth as an unending source of resources to instead looking at it as a wider living ecosystem that we are slowly killing. The shift is evident in everything from popular movies to eco-friendly products. From international political treaties regarding environmental policies to waste management strategies within small communities.”

Brian Jackson Oct. 22. 2006

Laws and Communication

Physical laws at work in our world influence every moment of our lives. Every time you fly in an airplane or cross a bridge you trust that the people who designed and built the plane and bridge followed the physical laws that allow a plane to fly and a bridge to span a distance without collapsing. Every time you press the brakes on a car you trust them to slow you down based on the laws explaining how long a mass, traveling at a certain speed, takes to stop. Even if you do not understand all of these laws, you live by them and believe the laws themselves hold true 100% of the time.

Are there laws you follow about communication with this kind of regularity? Are there laws of communication that are applicable 100% of the time, in all situations, and with all people? What happens if someone breaks one of these laws? Are the consequences similar to when you break physical laws? For example, is the consequence for calling someone by the wrong name comparable to that of hitting your brakes and them not working?

Those who approach communication from an empirical laws perspective believe there are laws that govern human communication. The premise of this approach can be stated as a simple equation of causation: If X, then Y. For example, if I greet a person with “Hi, how are you?” then I anticipate a response, “Fine, how are you?” It’s likely that you conduct much of your communication using this equation. But, does that mean that it works all of the time?

Communication Theory Then

The Empirical Revolution (1950–1970): Theory In A Test Tube

Speech departments in the 1950s promoted the ancient rhetorical wisdom that persuasive discourse was a matter of an ethical speaker using logical arguments—“the good man speaking well."11 But younger faculty with training in the social sciences were no longer willing to accept this “truth" by faith. Armed with a scientific skepticism and new methods to assess attitudes, they put rhetorical principles to the test…

Aristotle, for example, wrote that ethos was a combination of a speaker’s intelligence, character, and goodwill toward the audience. Empirically oriented speech researchers subsequently discovered that audience rankings of "communicator credibility" did indeed include factors of competence (intelligence) and trustworthiness (character).12 But they found no evidence that audiences regarded goodwill or positive intentions as traits separate from character.

Scholars interested in this kind of study adopted the media-effects term communication research to distinguish their work from the historical-critical textual analysis of rhetoricians. In 1950 a group of communication researchers founded what is now the International Communication Association (ICA) as a science-based professional organization to rival the Speech Association of America, which was grounded in the humanities. Traditional speech teachers of this era often accused communication researchers of succumbing to “the law of the hammer." This was a not-so-subtle dig at those who would pound away with newly acquired statistical tools no matter what the job required.

But irony did little to slow the radical transformation within the communication discipline….The empiricists continued to borrow their core ideas from other disciplines—especially social psychology. Indeed, five of the thirty-three communication theories in this book come from that specialized branch of psychology. Their common methodology and unity of world view gave social scientists in the communication field a greater impact than their numbers alone would indicate. In 1969, the SAA changed its name to the Speech

Communication Association (SCA). The term communication in the title was tacit evidence that the scientific approach now dominated the discipline. At the start of the 1960s few departments that taught speech had the word communication as part of their title. By the mid 1970s there were few that didn't.

www.afirstlook.com/archive/talkabout.cfm?source=archther

There are three characteristics that help us understand empirical laws theories: causation, prediction, and generalization (Infante, Rancer & Womack, 2003). **Causation** states that ***there is a "cause and effect" relationship for all actions***. In the physical world, if someone drops a pen it will fall. In human communication, if someone says "hello" to someone, that person responds. **Prediction** suggests that ***once someone determines a particular law is at work, he/she will use it to predict outcomes of communication situations***. Have you ever rehearsed how you will ask someone out on a date and tried to predict the outcome? What evidence did you use to make your prediction? In this example, you are using the "if X, then Y" equation to predict the outcome of the interaction. **Generalization** suggests that ***if a prediction shows that a behavior produces a certain outcome, we can generalize our predictions to include a wide variety of people, situations, and contexts***. We make generalization such as, "If I'm friendly to others, they will be friendly to me" based on our past experiences with this type of behavior.

In the physical sciences, laws are absolute. This is comforting because it allows us to make informed decisions based on what we know about the laws that govern the world around us. In our example of gravity, we know that dropping an object will produce the same result every time. We could spend the rest of our lives testing this theory, but we don't have to. We know what the result will be without having to continuously drop an object. Now, imagine what it would be like to always know what the outcome would be of every communication situation! Would that be comforting to you, or make your life boring?

Unlike the physical world, laws that govern human communication are not absolute and are most often bound by culture and context. Empirical laws theories are generally approached from the perspective of probability rather than absoluteness (Miller & Berger, 1978). **Probability** states that ***under certain conditions it is highly likely that we can predict communication outcomes***. For example, when you greet someone with "hello" it is probable, not absolute, they will respond back with a greeting of their own. If they do not, you might run through a variety of reasons why the other person did not respond in accordance with the "laws" that govern greetings in our culture. Even though empirical laws theories do not produce absolutes about communication, we still use them in our everyday interactions with one another. Businesses, advertisers, schools, and other organizations use this approach to predict consumer, educational, and behavioral habits of particular demographic groups. While their approaches never produce a 100% cause-effect relationship, the information they gather helps them determine what actions to take to be successful in their communicative behaviors.

Empirical Laws in Action

Empirical laws theories are a relatively new approach for understanding communication. We have only been developing empirical laws theories of communication for the past 100 years. To date, none of this research has come to the conclusion that, given a certain circumstance, a particular communicative behavior will ALWAYS produce a particular outcome. However, working under an empirical laws approach that accepts probability, we have many research examples that demonstrate probable laws that govern human communication.

Communication Theory Then

Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953) were some of the first to use empirical laws theories to explain communication. Their interests in mass communication and propaganda during World War II led them to study effective persuasion in mass communication and propaganda campaigns. They theorized that the more attractive a communicator, along with other traits, the more likely people would be persuaded. Their empirical laws theories still influence how a great deal of mass media is produced today. Think about movies, television shows, and advertisements you see. Are most of the people you watch in these mediums considered attractive and intelligent? Those who produce mass media use tremendous resources to research probabilistic empirical laws of human behavior before making decisions about what and who to include in their messages. On a smaller scale, we all use probabilistic empirical laws to govern, predict, and control our communication with others.

The area of leadership in group and organizational communication has a body of well-established empirical laws theories called the **trait approaches**. These theories suggest that ***there are certain physical, personality, and communicative characteristics that make one person more likely to be a leader over another*** (Northouse, 2004). Trait theories propose that people in western societies who are physically tall, charismatic, intelligent, white, and male are more likely to be leaders, be perceived as leaders, be placed in more leadership positions, and make better leaders than those who don't exhibit these characteristics. You may be thinking, "But what about people like Mother Theresa, Mohatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Jr., or Caeser Chavez?" This question brings up two important points. First, it shows that communication theories are not absolute. Second, it shows that some theoretical viewpoints may work to promote a certain worldview of those in positions of power, an idea we'll explore more thoroughly when we look at the Critical Theories Paradigm. Despite feeling uncomfortable with some of the assumptions of trait theories, if you look at those in the highest levels of leadership in the U.S., the vast majority have characteristics described in trait theories.

Strengths

A particular strength of empirical laws theories is that they helps us determine cause and effect relationships in our communication with others. Understanding communication using these theories helps us predict the outcomes of our interactions with others. While we know that not all outcomes can be determined with 100% reliability, prediction and control allows us to more easily navigate our encounters. Think about the number of encounters you have each day in which you quickly predict and control your interaction with others. While not 100% conclusive, its comforting that a great number of our interactions have a certain level of probable outcomes.

Communication Theory Now

Trait Theories of Female Leadership

What is the relationship between personality profiles and leadership styles? This is the central question Blema Steinberg takes up in her new book, Women in Power: The Personalities and Leadership Styles of Indira Gandhi, Golda Meir, and Margaret Thatcher. Using a mixture of politics and psychology she seeks to understand personality and leadership of the three prominent female leaders. According to Zamprelli's review of the book:

The three female leaders were categorized on the basis of 10 different personality traits and classified as "normal," "prominent," or "mildly dysfunctional." Those results were then crossed against five areas of behavior reflecting leadership styles – expressive behavior, interpersonal relationships, cognitive style, self-image and mood/temperament – allowing the analyst to understand how different scores in personality traits might translate into specific leadership behaviors. A leader who scores in the normal range on the "dominance" personality trait, for example, would exhibit expressive behavior that is assertive and strong-willed, while a leader who scores at the prominent level may get into the territory of being controlling and overbearing.

That dominant trait, it turned out, was particularly important to Steinberg's research, because all her subjects scored highest in that category. So how does a prominent dominant trait manifest itself in leadership style? "Individuals scoring high on this trait are tough and competitive," Steinberg said. "They are very controlling and, cognitively, what emerges is that they are inflexible in terms of their thinking. The implication of this kind of a trait is the view that one knows better than others. They pride themselves on being unsentimental and often it expresses itself in terms of being intimidating."

So does that mean there is only one successful mould for female politicians? Steinberg feels it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions since her sample was so small. "I do think that the notion that women speak in a different voice may well be true," she said, but conceded that "I don't think it applies to women leaders. Successful female leaders may be more dominant, and the reason these traits are more in evidence than in male leaders is that women have always had to prove themselves."

But make no mistake, these traits are innate – a woman without them seeking to fit this mould would have a hard time doing so. "It's not that they get a primer on how to be tough and controlling," Steinberg said. "It's because of the fact that in order to accomplish their political goals they need to be strong."

Pascal Zamprelli. "New book explores the impact of personalities in politics." McGill Reporter April 3. 2008 Vol. 40 N. 15

Weaknesses

A criticism of empirical laws theory is that while it is useful for understanding relatively simple interactions, it can oversimplify or fail to explain situations where a number of variables exist. Your classroom environment serves as a good example. While there are certain predictions you can make about how communication will occur in your classes, why is it that each classroom experience is unique? In your classrooms, it is impossible to predict, control, and generalize how a class will go with 100% accuracy because it is impossible to replicate classes in exactly the same ways. This approach does not account for the variety of human choices and behaviors that are brought into every communication context. It operates under the assumption that, given the same context, people bring the same things to the context each time. Obviously, this is not the case. Human behaviors are complex and cannot be predicted at a 100% accuracy rate. However, empirical laws theories work well for showing us patterns of behavior that guide our communication.

Human Rules Paradigm

Some Communication scholars believe that we cannot, and should not, try to study communication with an approach that will never work as accurately as it does in the physical sciences (Winch, 1958). Because they believed empirical laws theories could not explain communication effectively, scholars began developing theories around the idea of rules rather than laws. You are probably aware that we all follow rules that guide our communication. If we didn't, human communication would be total chaos and confusion. Theories in the **Human Rules Paradigm** ***approach communication from the perspective that we all follow shared rules of communication, not strict laws*** (Shimanoff, 1980; 1992). While Human Rules theories share similar assumptions with empirical laws, they promote a more adaptable approach to communication by suggesting that we follow general rules of communication rather than absolute laws that apply 100% of the time.

The Difference Between Rules and Laws

There is an old saying, "rules are meant to be broken." This simple statement highlights the fundamental difference between empirical laws and human rules approaches to communication. If you break a law in the physical world there is always a consequence. For example, no two objects can occupy the same space at the same time. A car accident is often a disastrous example of an attempt to break this law. If you break a rule, it likely does not have the same consequences as breaking a law. For example, your parents may have set a curfew for you when you were younger. Imagine you were on your way home at night but stopped to help a friend change a flat tire. Your parents may choose not to punish you after you explained to them the reason you violated the rule.

Those who approach communication using human rules theories believe that communication rules are created by people, and are thus always open to change. Put another way, empirical laws theories seek absolute "Truth" that we can discover through careful observation and testing. Human rules theories see "truth" as subjective and created by humans, not set by the universe in which we live.

Rules are dynamic, whereas laws are not. Rules are contextually and culturally dependant and change as we change. Take for example **Social Exchange Theory**, which theorizes that ***people participate in relationships when there is a fair exchange of costs and rewards*** (Roloff, 1981; Walster, Walster & Berscheid; 1978). When the rules of exchange are violated, participants may choose to terminate the relationship. For example, you've likely had a friend who began dating a new boyfriend or girlfriend. When this happens, you probably realized quite quickly that your friend suddenly, "did not have time for you anymore." If you were upset over this, you were most likely upset that your friend violated the rules of social exchange; in this case the exchange was time spent together. In this example, you may feel like the change in relationship results in you not having your needs met by your friend, while he/she is likely getting his/her needs met by the new relationship. Thus, a violation of social exchange has occurred.

Using human rules theories we are still able to predict how people might communicate, much like empirical laws theories. However, unlike empirical laws theories, rules are bound by context and not universal to all situations. For example, we predict that most people abide by posted speed limits on roadways. While we know that there are always exceptions to this (sometimes we are the exception!), we can predict a certain type of driving experience based on rules. Not all places approach speed limits from this perspective.

One of your authors had an exchange student who came to class one day extremely upset. When asked what was wrong, the student stated he had received a speeding ticket. To this student, the speeding ticket made no sense at all. In the U.S. we approach speed limits as a maximum speed, and risk a ticket when we exceed it. It's a law. However, this student stated that in his country, speed limits are considered guidelines for how fast to drive. The student went on to explain that police officers in his country are not interested in determining if people accidentally or purposefully drive above the posted speed limit. Instead, they let people make their own decisions regarding the guidelines of the posted speed limits. In this example, the U.S. approach to speed limits is one of law; break the law and there are consequences. The student's country approached speed limits from a rules perspective; there is flexibility to interpret and act according to the interpretation of the rules based on the current driving conditions, or context.

Think of rules you choose to follow or break every day. Sitting in a classroom, taking notes, listening to your instructor, and doing homework are all "rules" of how to communicate being a student. However, no one is really standing over your shoulder enforcing these rules. You can choose to follow them or not. If you choose to follow them, you probably do so for a variety of reasons. Each rule we choose to follow is a choice. As with all things, there are outcomes as a result of our choices, but unlike empirical laws theories, human rules theories suggest that our experiences are socially constructed in ways that make it easier to organize experience into collectives of general rules that we follow. That way, we are not overly surprised when our interactions do not produce predicted outcomes 100% of the time.

Strengths

One of the primary strengths of human rules theories is that they account for choice in communication behaviors. They suggest that we are not controlled by external laws when it comes to our communication. Instead, we develop rules to help facilitate and understand our interactions, while at the same time not being bound to abide by these rules at all times (remember, rules are sometimes meant to be broken). Thus, we can take comfort in following rules of communication to guide our interactions, but also know that we have flexibility to "play" with the rules because they are dynamic and contextual.

Weaknesses

The primary criticism with human rules theories is that they cannot fully predict behavior or outcomes. However, as of now all theories fail to do this when applied to human communication. Another criticism of human rules theories is that they are culturally and contextually bound. So, when we develop theories about something like communication anxiety as it relates to public speaking, we do so under the framework of our cultural perspective. These same theories often do not apply to other cultures.

Systems Theory Paradigm

The Systems Theory Paradigm represents a dramatic theoretical shift from empirical laws and human rules approaches for understanding communication. Systems thinking began in the social and physical sciences in the 19th century with Georg Hegel (Kaufmann, 1966), and was more fully developed by biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the 20th century. von Bertalanffy argued that everything is interconnected and therefore, we should study the interconnectedness as a means of understanding the world. This departs from empirical approaches that traditionally study phenomena by looking at individual components. Conversations surrounding global warming are among the most recognizable ideas of systems theory. In effect, those that warn us of global warming tell us that all of our actions have an impact on one another and our environment, and thus, we must be mindful of what we do, or we will continue to cause harm to everything on earth.

Case In Point

Bike and Surf California -- as written for www.Phoresia.org

It started off as a simple idea. My friend Mike and I wanted to go on a surf trip. Nothing strange about that! However, we have grown increasingly alarmed at how much we drive around looking for surf and the environmental impact this has. It's been much easier to recognize the amount of gas we burn as fuel prices have now pushed $5.00 a gallon in our area. As a result of our increasing awareness and concern, Mike and I wanted to do our trip with minimal environmental impact. How close to a zero-carbon footprint could we come?

I wondered if it would be possible to tow boards and gear behind bikes. We began to plan out all of the details of our trip, preparing to do the ride from Fort Bragg, CA to Santa Barbara, CA over a nine day period in May, 2008. All seemed perfectly simple as we began to put together the pieces for a successful trip. Then, at 4:00 a.m. on a February morning I woke up and thought, "I wonder if we can get sponsors?" We began a letter writing campaign to environmentally friendly gear manufacturers letting them know what we were doing, why we were doing it, and asked if they would like to donate sustainable gear to help us on our journey. While having new gear is great, it was our intent and promise to use the donated gear to educate others about our environmental impacts as consumers and sports enthusiasts, and to demonstrate the alternatives that are available. To our surprise, we received sponsorships from 22 organizations! Going back to systems theory, each of our sponsor's actions impacted Mike and me. We can never fully realize the full scope of our actions. We can only hope that our actions do more positive than negative. What we were seeing taking place was a real-world example of systems theory.

Systems theory is easily summed up with a simple definition: "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts." Put another way, anything we do as individuals impacts others around us, as well as the environment in which we exist. Discussions about global warming are, in reality, debates about a global version of systems theory. We are becoming increasingly aware that none of us truly exist as individuals without impacting others. Many cultures have long-recognized the importance of thinking from a collectivist perspective, looking out for the good of the whole rather than pursuing the good of the individual. For those of us born and raised in cultures that value the experience of the individual, we are beginning to learn the larger consequences of trying to exist outside the scope of systems theory. We can never fully realize the full scope of our actions. We can only hope that our actions do more positive than negative.

For more information see www.bikeandsurfcalifornia.com

When applied to communication, the Systems Theory Paradigm seeks to understand the interconnectedness of human communication rather than looking at just one part. The basic idea behind **Systems Theory** is, ***"The whole is greater than the sum of its parts."*** An easy example of this is baking a cake. If you were to lay out all of the ingredients of a cake, you would not have a cake. Instead, you would have the ingredients of cake. But, combine those ingredients in a particular way, you produce a cake. Not only that, you produce an experience surrounding the cake (think birthday, anniversary, wedding, etc.). What is produced by making a cake equals so much more than the simple combination of ingredients.

Another example is an automobile engine. If you have all the pieces of an automobile engine on a garage floor, you do not have an engine. You have parts of an engine. But, if you put the engine parts together in the right way, you get something much greater than the parts; you get a working engine that has the ability to transport you. These examples demonstrate the idea that, what makes a cake or automobile engine is the actual interaction or combination of their parts, not the simple sum of the parts themselves.

One area of communication study that utilizes systems theory extensively is the study of Organizational Communication. Scholars in this specialization are interested in the interaction of people to see how they create what we know as organizations (Bavelas & Segal, 1982; Katz & Kahn, 1966). For example, what makes Wal-mart different than Target? It's not simply their products or prices. Instead, these two mega-retail stores have a certain "personality" and way of functioning that is different from the other. Those who look at communication from a systems perspective believe that it is the interaction of the participants that makes organizations what they are.

One characteristic of the Systems Theory Paradigm is that systems are **teleological** (Infante, Rancer & Womack, 2003), meaning that ***they seek to achieve a particular goal or outcome***. The goal of combining the ingredients of a cake is to produce a cake and facilitate an occasion. The goal of a working automobile engine is transportation. The goal of having a family is love and support. The goal of a business is to produce products and profit. Communication researchers examine the interactions of those that make up systems to understand the systems' goals, as well as how they attempt to achieve goals.

Another characteristic of systems is they are always trying to achieve **homeostasis**, or ***balance***. Using the idea of a family, most families attempt to fit in with their neighbors, co-workers, friends, city, country, culture, etc. Systems are always in a process of trying to achieve a level of homeostasis with their environment that is acceptable to them. When changes occur in either the environment or a system, system participants will adapt in order to maintain balance. For example, if you moved away from your immediate family to attend college your move had an impact on the homeostasis of your family. As a result, everyone in your family had to adjust in some way to the change brought about by your move in order to create a new sense of homeostasis. Even though you are still part of the family system, the system changed as a result of your move, and must respond in order to adapt to the change.

The power of looking at communication from a systems perspective is that every communicative act impacts the system as a whole. When there is a change in one part of a system, it changes the entire system to some degree. Let's revisit our example of an automobile engine. One day, the truck of one of your author's started making a terrible noise. He shuddered at the idea of possibly paying hundreds of dollars to fix the problem. However, a mechanic quickly found that a small bolt had fallen out. Fifty-three cents later (tax included), and five minutes of time, the engine no longer made the terrible noise. Homeostasis was reached once again.

Like a car engine, we form systems with whom we interact. One of the reasons each of your college classes is unique is that each person (component) is unique, and thus, the interaction among the components is unique and cannot be duplicated. When we apply this approach to our communication exchanges we can learn many things about the impacts that our interactions have in the systems in which we interact. Think about systems you belong to like family, work, church, friends, etc. How do your communicative acts, whether big or small, impact the dynamics of these systems?

Strengths

A strength of the Systems Theory Paradigm is that instead of looking at isolated people or communication acts, it seeks to understand a more complete picture by examining multiple layers of communication as interconnected. This paradigm does not try to predict human behavior, but instead explain it in ways that highlight the interconnectedness of people and their communicative acts. Because much of our communication is culturally and contextually specific, this approach does not seek to make universal generalizations about human communication, but instead, explain the totality of our interactions.

Weaknesses

One of the primary criticisms of the Systems Theory Paradigm is that it can be too broad in its focus. If everything is interconnected, how do we know what to study? What do we focus on when trying to understand communication interactions? This can prove challenging considering the dynamic and changing nature of systems, particularly human systems built on changing relationships. It can be difficult to answer why things happen when we use this approach, making it problematic for generating further theories of human communication. Finally, because it is a relatively new approach for understanding communication, this paradigm has yet to produce a definitive body of research. Studies from this perspective tend to take significant time and money to accomplish.

Rhetorical Theories Paradigm

As you learned in the Chapter 4, rhetoric is the oldest tradition of the Communication field. An effective definition of **rhetoric** is, ***"any kind of human symbol use that functions in any realm—public, private, and anything in between"*** (Foss, Foss & Trapp, 2002, p. 7). Remember that one of our definitions for **theory** is, ***"a way of framing an experience or event—an effort to understand and account for something and the way it functions in the world"*** (Foss, Foss, & Griffin, 1999, p. 8). If we combine these two definitions, we can define the **Rhetorical Theories Paradigm** as, ***"a way to understand and account for the way any kind of human symbol use functions in any realm."*** Scholars have historically used rhetorical theories as a way to produce and evaluate messages.

Theories of Message Production

If you have taken a public speaking course, you were likely exposed to rhetorical theories of message production. In public speaking classes students are taught methods for organizing presentations, building credibility with audience members, making messages more entertaining, informative, and/or persuasive, etc. You probably intuitively understand that there are effective ways for putting together messages. How do you know what is truly effective or ineffective? Whether you are preparing a public presentation, an advertising campaign, or a persuasive appeal to a friend, rhetorical theories guide the ways you produce messages. When companies devote millions of dollars to putting together an advertising campaign, you can bet that significant research has gone into what messages will work the best. Audience analysis, context, goals, etc., are all considered before producing and delivering these messages.

Over the centuries Communication scholars have devoted entire careers to the study what it takes to produce effective messages. Aristotle gave us his ideas of ethos (credibility), logos (logic), and pathos (emotions) as fundamental components for constructing persuasive messages. Cicero gave us the five canons of rhetoric, or the five necessary steps for putting together an effective message. In the modern era, Stephen Toulmin (2003) developed the **Toulmin model** as a ***means for constructing persuasive arguments***. Toulmin's model of message production includes a claim, grounds, warrant, backing, modal qualifier, and rebuttal. A **claim** is ***the conclusion or argument being made***. The **grounds** are ***the data and facts offered to support the claim***. To ***logically connect the grounds to the claim***, a **warrant** is given. The **backing** is used to ***support the warrant*** and the **qualifiers** ***make a statement about the strength of the claim***. Words such as "possible," "certainly," and "definitely" are examples of qualifiers. Any exception to the claim is the rebuttal. Even if you are unfamiliar with rhetorical theories of message production, you likely have a good idea of what makes an effective message. For Toulmin, effectiveness was based on issues of practicality—to find a claim that is of interest to people and the ability to justify it. The greater understanding you have of rhetorical theories of message production, the greater potential you have for producing effective messages in a variety of contexts.

Theories of Message Evaluation

Super Bowl Sunday is a day that many people gather together to watch a big football game on television. It is also a day that many people give special attention to watching commercials. It has become a popular pastime for people to evaluate the quality of commercials shown during the Super Bowl. In fact, all of the commercials from the Super Bowl are put on the internet for people to watch and evaluate. Many people spend a considerable amount of time discussing the effectiveness of commercials. Those who engage in these conversations are, at a basic level, engaging in message evaluation. If you make a comment about these commercials such as, "that was funny" or "that was stupid" you are using some kind of criteria to come to those conclusions. A person approaching these messages using rhetorical theories would ask "why was that funny or stupid?" In other words, what works, or doesn't work, about certain messages?

There are many ways we can use rhetorical theories to evaluate messages. We might choose to use a feminist approach, an ideological approach, or a narrative approach to evaluate message effectiveness. For example, Kenneth Burke (1969) argues that we can evaluate messages by understanding them as a dramatic play. He contends that all messages contain acts, scenes, agents, purposes, and agencies. If you were to evaluate your relationships with your friends from this perspective, who are the agents, what is the scene, and what act of the play are you in? Jean Baudrillard (2003) states that we can evaluate messages from the perspective that messages are commodities that we exchange. Michel Foucault (2003) asserts that we can evaluate messages by looking at how power is enacted in them. Rhetorical theories give us different "lenses" for us to understand messages. No interpretation is right or wrong. Instead, each interpretation allows us to have a more comprehensive understanding of communication.

As with message production, we are constantly in the process of evaluating messages. The greater understanding you have of rhetorical theories for both putting together and evaluating messages, the greater potential you have to be an effective communicator in a variety of contexts. For rhetorical theorists, the message is the primary focus of inquiry when approaching the study of communication.

Strengths

The primary strength of the Rhetorical Theories Paradigm is its ability to help us produce and evaluate effective messages. Rhetorical theories provide a way for us to take context into consideration as we examine messages. Unlike empirical laws theories, rhetorical theories highlight the importance of considering context as essential for understanding messages. Finally, rhetorical theories provide a way for us to foster multiple perspectives in the evaluation and construction of messages.

Weaknesses

A primary weakness of rhetorical theories comes from one of its strengths. With such an intense focus on messages, it is possible to overlook alternative interpretations of messages. Also, some theories of message evaluation are not critical enough to reveal power dynamics at work in message exchanges. Finally, rhetorical theories are often not generalizable across a variety of communication contexts. While some rhetorical theories can be generalized, rhetorical theories are most often highly contextualized.

Critical Theories Paradigm

At this point you have learned about four different theoretical paradigms we use to understand communication. One criticism of these approaches is they often lack an explicit critique of the status quo of communication. Put another way, they serve as a general approach to understand communication norms rather than challenge them. We all realize that there are communication realities in the world that are hurtful and oppressive to particular people, and that there are people in the world that use communication to serve their own needs and interests. How do we bring these to the forefront of conversation and work to change communication practices that are hurtful?

The Need for Critical Theories

> **Communication Theory Now**
>
> *Byron Hurt is a modern theorist who uses film to critique how sexism impacts both men and women in our society. His cutting-edge film "Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes" looks at the Hip-Hop industry from a critical perspective, focusing on how it enables sexism against women while keeping men in narrowly defined gendered roles.*

The **Critical Theories Paradigm** helps us ***understand how communication is used to oppress, and provides ways to foster positive social change*** (Foss & Foss, 1989; Fay, 1975). Critical Theories challenge the status quo of communication contexts, looking for alternatives to those forms of oppressive communication. Critical theories differ from other theoretical approaches because they seek praxis as the overarching goal. **Praxis** is ***the combination of theory and action***. Rather than simply seeking to understand power structures, critical theories actively seek to change them in positive ways. Easily identifiable examples of critical approaches are Marxism, postmodernism, and feminism. These critical theories expose and challenge the communication of dominant social, economic, and political structures. Areas of inquiry include language, social relationships, organizational structures, politics, economics, media, cultural ideologies, interpersonal relationships, labor, and other social movements.

Cultural Studies focus on ***understanding the real-life experiences of people, examining communication contexts for hidden power structures, and accomplishing positive social change as a result of the revelation of hidden power structures*** (Dines and Humez, 2003; Kellner, 2003). According to Kellner, cultural studies involves three interconnected elements necessary for understanding, evaluating and challenging the power dynamics embedded in communication—political economy, textual analysis, and audience reception.

- **Political economy** focuses on ***the macro level of communication***. Specifically, this part of cultural studies looks at the way a media text, People magazine for example, is situated in a given cultural context and the political and economic realities of the cultural context. In the U.S., we would note that the political economy is one marked with gender, racial, and class inequities.

Case In Point

Today, Marxist thought influences critical theories in two ways. First, Marxist theory critiques power structures in media, focusing on how media owners construct media messages, as well as how media consumers interpret those messages (Grossberg, 1984; Croteau & Hoynes, 2003; Dines & Humez, 2003). In fact, the field of Communication has an entire journal devoted to the critical evaluation of the media entitled Critical Studies in Mass Communication. Second, Marxist theory examines how dominant cultural ideologies weaken other ideological perspectives in social institutions such as political organizations, schools and universities, religious institutions, and media organizations. For example, dominant ideology in the U.S. endorses heterosexual marriage. Critical perspectives challenge this ideological framework and argue that same-sex partners should have the same rights and benefits as cross-sex partners. At the time of writing this book, California just recognized same-sex marriage. This is an example of how critical theories can change the world around us.

- **Textual analysis** involves ***the process of deconstructing and analyzing elements of a media text***. So, if we were going to look at People magazine with a critical eye, we would pay attention to the visual elements (the pictures in the ads; the celebrity photos, and any other drawings, cartoons or illustrations), the verbal messages (the text of the ads, the copy, captions that accompany the photographs), and the relationship between the advertisements and the copy. For example is there an ad for Clinique eye shadow next to an article on the "hot new beauty tips for fall?" We would also pay attention to the representation of gender, race, and class identities as well. Are there any differences or similarities between the portrayal of white women and women of color? What sort of class identity is being offered as the one to emulate?
- **Audience reception** asks us to consider ***the role of the text for the audience that consumes it***. We would thus try to learn why people read People magazine—what purpose does it fill, what is the social function of this text?

Origins of Critical Theories in Communication

Marxism is one of the earliest origins of critical theory. In addition, postmodernism feminism, and postcolonialism have greatly influenced how critical theories have grown and expanded to challenge a greater number of social power structures. While each of these approaches examines a different area of oppression, all have used critical approaches to enact great social changes, not only in western societies, but in cultures worldwide.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Karl Marx's ideas challenged the status quo of newly emerging industrial societies. As societies moved from agrarian-based economies to ones based in industrial manufacturing, there became an increasing division between the rich and the poor. Marx, in two of his most well-known works, The Communist Manifesto and Capital, argued that working class laborers were being oppressed by those in power, specifically the owners of manufacturing plants.

In any discussion of **Postmodernism**, another critical theoretical perspective, the difficulty of defining the term is invariably part of the discussion. Part of that problem can be located in the entomology of the word itself. Modern refers to just now (from modo in Latin) and post means after. Thus, this term translates into "after just now"—an idea that can be difficult to wrap our heads around. How do you, for example, point to or mark the period after just now? (Covino & Jolliffe, 1995, p. 76). Some qualities that characterize postmodernism are that of fragmentation, nonlinearity, and instability. In discussing the postmodern condition, Lyotard (1984) explains the relationship between those who have and don't have social power: "The [decision makers] allocate our lives for the growth of power. In matters of social justice and scientific truth alike, the legitimation of that power is based on optimizing the system's performance—efficiency" (p. 27).

A third major influence on the development of the Critical Theories Paradigm comes from feminist theories. **Feminist theories** explore ***power structures that create and recreate gendered differentiations in societies*** (Foss & Foss, 1989; Dervin, 1987; MacKinnon, 1988). Critical feminist theories contend that gender relations are often oppressive to both men and women, and that they support an institution based on patriarchal values. Thus, critical feminist theories challenge dominant assumptions and practices of gender in ways that foster more equal and egalitarian forms of communication and social structures in society.

Communication Theory Now

Critical Theory Sucks Life From Pop Culture Classes - A Student's Perspective

The Phoenix (UBC Okanagan)

(CUP) KELOWNA, B.C. - As an English student with a focus on the contemporary, I've always looked to pop culture classes as a means to easier credit. There are a number of reasons for this: I feel like I might recognize the texts studied in pop classes. I'd rather study Toni Morrison and Timothy Findley than William Shakespeare. I can relate to characters and grasp thematic concepts more quickly. Perhaps, most importantly, I enjoy reading about places and things, and then connecting those places and things to Kevin Bacon, and eventually, to myself.

Unfortunately, pop culture study has a dark side. It has the potential to be downright excruciating. This happens when cultural texts are hammered into frames for literary, psychological, or sociological theories. Suddenly a film's mise en scene, a novel's mention of the colour red or a musical track's white space cease to exist as independent acts of creative expression and become expressions of a cultural theory. Interpreting text using the work of theorists like Foucault or Lacan (just to name two who seem fairly well used in academia) is neato. When a professor actually took the time to explain Lacan's ideas about lack to me, I felt really excited. Suddenly I had a new perspective that I could apply to things.

But, more often than not, there isn't time to explain - only to summarize books of innovative thought into three or four fatally reductive bullets on an overhead or handout. It's in these cases that I feel frustrated, because I'm being taught a Dummies version.

Teach it or don't. That's what I want. When a class on culture consists of little more than using bits of theory, I get the feeling that the professor is still trying to convince herself/himself that pop culture deserves to be studied.

The problem is that many theories merit entire courses, and cannot be crammed into the spaces between novels, film, or poems in an English class. Many professors only have time to present a vague, paint-by-number summary of one topic, one idea, out of context. For people like me, who are actually interested in learning more about these theorists, these incomplete forays into literature/critical theory are irritating because they are too specific and reductive to be useful outside of the course.

What do you think?

Mona Struthers June 12, 2007 The Brock Press

http://media.www.brockpress.com/media/storage/paper384/news/2007/06/12/Opinion/Critical.Theory.Sucks.Life.From.Pop.Culture.Classes-2914291.shtml

When discussing feminism and feminist theories we refer to a set of multiple and diverse theories. Feminist theories include a wide range of philosophical arguments, economic structures, and political viewpoints. Some of these include Marxist feminism, which focuses on the division of labor as a source of gender inequality, and liberal feminism, which asserts that men and women should have equal status in the culture—such as voting rights, educational and professional opportunities, and equal pay. Eco-feminism recognizes that all parts of the universe are interconnected and that oppression of women and other minorities is analogous to the oppression of the natural environment such as in the cutting down of natural forests to meet consumer demands for paper goods, or the killing of animals for the eating of meat.

Critical Theories in Action

Whether we listen to our ipod, watch TV, go to the movies, or read a magazine, most of us consume media. Have you ever stopped to think about who puts together those messages? Have you wondered what their goals might be and why they want to send the messages they do? One way we can use critical theories is to examine who owns what media to determine what they are trying to accomplish (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003). For example, why does General Electric want to own companies like RCA and NBC? Why does a company like Seagram's want to buy MCA (Universal Studios) and Polygram records? What world-views are these companies creating in the media they produce? These are all questions for which we might consider using theories from the Critical Theories Paradigm. Did you know that by 1996 two companies (Borders/Walden and Barnes & Noble) sold 1/3 of all books, five movie companies accounted for over 75% of box office ticket sales, five companies distributed 95% of all music sold in the U.S., and television was still dominated by only four major networks (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003)?

Other examples from the critical paradigm include works that examine gender, consumerism, advertising, and television. In her work, Who(se) Am I? The Identity and Image of Women in Hip-Hop, Perry (2003) examines the potential danger and damage to African-American women through their objectification in Hip-Hop videos. Carole A. Stabile (2003) examines the labor and marketing practices of Nike in her article, Nike, Social Responsibility, and the Hidden Abode of Production. Clint C. Wilson II and Felix Gutierrez (2003) discuss the portrayal of people of color in advertising in their article, Advertising and People of Color, while Jackson Katz (2003) explores violence in advertising with his piece, Advertising and the Construction of Violent White Masculinity: From Eminem to Clinique for Men. We use critical theories to reveal a vast range of possible ideological structures that create and foster dominant world-views, and to challenge and change those ideologies that oppress others.

Strengths

A significant strength of the Critical Theories Paradigm is that it combines theory and practice, seeking to create actual change from theoretical development. Rather than seeking prediction and control, or explanation and understanding, critical theories seek positive social change. The intent behind these theoretical perspectives is to help empower those whose world-views and ideological perspectives have not found equality in social contexts. At their best, critical theories have the potential to enact large-scale social change for both large and small groups of people.

Weaknesses

A potential weakness of critical theories is their dependence on social values. While empirical laws theories seek an objective reality, critical theories highlight subjective values that guide communication behaviors. When values conflict the question of, "whose values are better?" emerges. Because values are subjective, answering this question is often filled with much conflict and debate. The example of gay marriage highlights a current debate taking place over ideological values. How do we define marriage? And, whose definition is best?

Summary

Theories are lenses for understanding the world around us. It is possible to use multiple theories to examine our communication. Theories allow us to organize and understand communication experiences, select communication behavior to study, broaden our understanding of human communication, predict and control communication situations, challenge current social and cultural relationships, and offer new ways of thinking and living. Forming theories is a three step process of asking important questions, looking for answers through observation, and forming answers or theories as a result of observation.

Are all theories alike in their usefulness? Of course not. Evaluating the usefulness or value of a theory is important. Six qualities are crucial for evaluating theories—scope, parsimony, heuristic value, openness, appropriateness, and validity. As you recall, scope refers to the breadth of the theory, parsimony to its level of simplicity, and heuristic value is the theory's ability to generate other theories. When a theory is open this means that it recognizes other perspectives and options. Appropriateness refers to the fit between the research question and theory used to answer it. Finally, validity is the overall worth or practicality of a theory which includes value, fit, and generalizability. When these characteristics are present we can be confident of our choice of theory.

You have also learned five major paradigms for understanding, explaining, and changing the communication around you. It is important to recognize that no theoretical perspective is the right perspective, although most Communication scholars do favor particular theoretical approaches over others, and conduct communication research from their preferred perspectives. Those that believe there are universal laws which govern human communication conduct research from the empirical laws perspective. Those that think communication is a result of shared, adaptable rules utilize the human rules paradigm. The systems perspective recognizes the interconnectedness of people, relationships and communication. If the use of symbols for message creation and evaluation is the focus, then rhetorical theory is the corresponding paradigm. For scholars who are action oriented and desire social change as an outcome of their research, the critical perspective is the one of choice.

Discussion Questions

1. How does understanding communication theory help you in your daily life?
2. Pick a theoretical paradigm. Now pick a communication phenomenon. How does that paradigm help explain that phenomenon to you?
3. What would you focus on using critical theories? What questions would you try to answer?
4. Think of a system in which you are a member? What communicative action could you change that would change the system? What do you think the effect would be?
5. What criteria do you use for constructing or evaluating a good persuasive message? How did you establish these criteria?

Key Terms

- appropriateness
- audience reception
- causation
- critical theories
- cultural studies
- empirical laws
- explain
- feminist theories
- generalization
- heuristic value
- homeostasis
- human rules
- Marxism
- openness
- paradigm
- paradigm shift
- parsimony
- political economy
- postmodernism
- praxis
- prediction
- probability
- rhetoric
- rhetorical criticism
- rhetorical theories
- scope
- social criticism
- social exchange theory
- systems theory
- teleological
- textual analysis
- theory
- Toulmin’s model
- trait theory
- validity

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Chapter 6 - Communication Research

Chapter 6

Communication Research

Chapter Objectives:

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

• Understand what we consider as Communication research.

• Explain how Communication research is done.

• Identify motivational factors that influence Communication research.

• Explain the three broad approaches to Communication research as well as specific research methodologies.

I

f you have traveled on planes before, you have likely encountered some of the frustrations that go along with airline travel. One day, one of your authors wanted to see if he could fly first class without paying for it. He hypothesized that there were certain communicative actions he could perform to achieve this goal. When the day of his flight arrived, he showed up nicely dressed for his flight, spoke with kindness to the ticket agents (remember, they deal with irritated people throughout the day), stated his preference to sit toward the front of the plane in an aisle seat, and simply asked if any free upgrades were available. To his amazement, he got a free upgrade to first class! He flew first class on many other flights after the day of the initial experiment. While he doesn't get to fly first-class every time, this ongoing experiment indicates that there might be certain communicative actions that will result in a free upgrade. This is an example of informal Communication research that most of us do on a regular basis.

It's likely you have engaged in basic levels of Communication research. Remember out discussion in the last chapter that theory is, "a way of framing an experience or event—an effort to understand and account for something and the way it functions in the world" (Foss, Foss & Griffin, 1999, p. 8). Well, we generally don't understand how something functions in the world unless we've had some level of experience with it, and evaluate the outcome of that experience. Have you ever planned out what you would say and do to persuade your parents to give you money? Have you ever intentionally violated the communicative expectations (such as arriving late or forgetting to do a favor) of a friend, "just to see what would happen?" While we do not consider these to be examples of formal Communication research, they do reveal what Communication research is about. Remember our discussion in Chapter 1, those of us who study Communication are interested in researching "who says what, through what channels (media) of communication, to whom, [and] what will be the results?" (Smith, Lasswell & Casey, 1946, p. 121).

The term "research" often conjures up visions of a mad scientist dressed in a white lab coat working through the night with chemicals, beakers, and gases on his/her latest scientific experiment. But how does this measure up with the realities of researching human communication? Researching communication presents its own set of challenges and circumstances that must be understood to better conceptualize how we can further our understanding of the ways we communicate with one another.

Doing Communication Research

Students often believe that researchers are well organized, meticulous, and academic as they pursue their research projects. The reality of research is that much of it is a hit-and-miss endeavor. Albert Einstein provided wonderful insight to the messy nature of research when he said, “If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?” Because a great deal of Communication research is still exploratory, we are continually developing new and more sophisticated methods to better understand how and why we communicate.

Researching something as complex as human communication can be an exercise in creativity, patience, and failure. Communication research, while relatively new in many respects, should follow several basic principles to be effective. Similar to other types of research, Communication research should be systematic, rational, self-correcting, self-reflexive, and creative to be of use (Babbie, 1973; Bronowski, 1965; Buddenbaum & Novak, 2001; Copi, 1968; Peirce, 1957; Reichenbach, 1938; Smith, 1988).

Seven Basic Steps of Research

Seven Basic Steps of Research
1) Identify focus of research
2) Develop research question(s)
3) Define key terms
4) Select appropriate methodology
5) Establish a sample
6) Gather and analyze data
7) Interpret and share results

While research can be messy, there are steps we can follow to avoid some of the pitfalls inherent with any research project. Research doesn’t always work out right, but we do use the following guidelines as a way to keep research focused. Let’s look at seven basic steps that help us conduct effective research.

- **Identify a focus of research**. To conduct research, the first thing you must do is identify what aspect of human communication interests you and make that the focus of inquiry. Most Communication researchers examine things that interest them; communication phenomena that they have questions about and want answered. For example, you may be interested in conflict between romantic partners.
- **Develop a research question(s)**. Simply having a focus of study is still too broad to conduct research, and would ultimately end up being an endless process of trial and error. Thus, it is essential to develop very specific research questions. Using our example above, what specific things would you want to know about conflict in romantic relationships? If you simply said you wanted to study conflict in romantic relationships, you would not have a solid focus and would spend a long time conducting your research with no results. However, you could ask, “Do couples use different types of conflict management strategies when they are first dating versus after being in a relationship for a while? It is essential to develop specific questions that guide what you research.
- **Define key terms**. Using our example, how would you define the terms conflict, romantic relationship, dating, and long-term relationship? While these terms may seem like common sense, you would be surprised how many ways people can interpret the same terms and how a particular definition shapes the research. Take the term long-term relationship, for example, what are all of the ways this can be defined? People married for 10 or more years? People living together for five or more years? Those who self-identify as being monogamous? Important to consider are populations who would be included and excluded from your study based on a particular definition and the resulting generalizability of your findings. Therefore, it is important to identify and set the parameters of

what it is you are researching by defining what the key terms mean to you and your research.

Communication Research Then

Wilber Schramm – The Modern Father of Communication

Although many aspects of the Communication discipline can be dated to the era of the ancient Greeks, and more specifically to individuals such as Aristotle or Plato, Communication Research really began to develop in the 20th century. James W. Tankard Jr. (1988) states in the article, Wilbur Schramm: Definer of a Field that, "Wilbur Schramm (1907-1987) probably did more to define and establish the field of Communication research and theory than any other person" (p. 1). In 1947 Wilbur Schramm went to the University of Illinois where he founded the first Institute of Communication Research. The Institute's purpose was, "to apply the methods and disciplines of the social sciences (supported, where necessary, by the fine arts and natural sciences) to the basic problems of press, radio and pictures; to supply verifiable information in those areas of communications where the hunch, the tradition, the theory and thumb have too often ruled; and by so doing to contribute to the better understanding of communications and the maximum use of communications for the public good" (p. 2).

- **Select an appropriate research methodology**. A methodology is the actual step-by-step process of conducting research. There are various methodologies available for researching communication. Some tend to work better than others for examining particular types of communication phenomena. In our example, would you interview couples, give them a survey, observe them, or conduct some type of experiment? Depending on what you wish to study, you will have to pick a process, or methodology, in order to study it. We'll discuss examples of methodologies later in this chapter.
- **Establish a sample population or data set**. It is important to decide who and what you want to study. One criticism of current Communication research is that it often relies on college students enrolled in Communication classes as the sample population. One joke in our Field is that we know more about college students than anyone else. But in all seriousness, it is important that you pick samples that are truly representative of what/who you want to research. If you are concerned about how long-term romantic couples engage in conflict, (remember what we said about definitions) college students may not be the best sample population. Instead, college students might be a good population for examining how romantic couples engage in conflict in the early stages of dating.
- **Gather and analyze data**. Once you have a research focus, research question(s), key terms, a method, and a sample population, you are ready to gather the actual data that will show you what it is you want to answer in your research question(s). If you have ever filled out a survey in one of your classes, you have helped a researcher gather data to be analyzed in order to answer research questions. The actual "doing" of your methodology will allow you to collect the data you need to know about how romantic couples engage in conflict.
- **Interpret and share results**. Simply collecting data does not mean that your research project is complete. Remember, our research leads us to develop and refine theories so we have more sophisticated representations about how our world works. Thus, researchers must interpret the data to see if it tells us anything of significance about how we communicate. If so, we share our research findings to further the body of knowledge we have about human communication. Imagine you completed your study about conflict and romantic couples. Others who are interested in this topic would probably want to see what you discovered in order to help them in their research. Likewise, couples might want to know what you have found in order to help themselves deal with conflict better.

Communication Research Now

Communicating About Difficult Issues

Though it is scientifically proven that talking about STDs reduces their transmission, many people prefer to avoid the topic as communicating about STDs is difficult. A new website, Inspot.org, helps people minimize the discomfort and encourages communication with past sexual partners. At Inspt.org users can select and send (via their own email or anonymously) an ecard which notifies previous partners that they are in need of testing. The ecard also comes with local testing and treatment options.

Although these seven steps seem pretty clear on paper, research is rarely that simple. For example, one of your authors conducted research for his Master's thesis on issues of privacy, ownership and free speech as it relates to email at work. He had reached the step of sharing his results with a committee of professors, the last step before obtaining his Master's degree. The professors began debating the merits of the research findings. Two of the three professors felt that the research had not actually answered the research questions and suggested that your author re-write his two chapters of conclusions. The other professor argued that your author HAD actually answered his research questions, and suggested that an alternative to re-writing two chapters would be to re-write the research questions to more accurately reflect the original focus of the study. It was your author's first exposure to the reality that, despite trying to account for everything by following the basic steps of research, research is always open to change and modification, even toward the end of the process.

Motivational Factors for Research

W

e think it is important to discuss the fact that human nature influences all research. While some researchers might argue that their research is objective, realistically, no research is totally objective. What does this mean? Research is done by humans who have to make choices about what to research, how they will conduct their research, who will pay for their research, and how they will present their research conclusions to others. Many of these choices are determined by the motives and material resources of researchers. The most obvious case of this in the physical sciences is research sponsored by the tobacco industry that downplays the health hazards associated with smoking (Muggll, Forster, Hurt & Repace, 2001). In 2006, for example, the tobacco industry funded research that examined infertility. Their goal was to convince smokers that taking vitamin supplements would improve their chances of having children. The study failed to mention that any positive gains in fertility would be nullified by smoking. Intuitively, we know that certain motivations influence this line of research. Realistically though, all researchers are motivated by certain factors that influence their research.

We will highlight three factors that motivate the choices we make when conducting communication research: 1) The intended outcomes, 2) theoretical preferences, and 3) methodological preferences.

Intended Outcomes

One question researchers ask while doing their research project is, "What do I want to accomplish with this research?" The answer to this question is as varied as the people who ask it. We represent possible answers to this question in what we call the Continuum of Intended Outcomes.

A great deal of Communication research seeks **understanding** as the intended outcome of the research. As we gain greater understanding of human communication we are able to develop more sophisticated theories to help us understand how and why people communicate. For example, one of your authors researches the communication of registered nurses to understand how they use language to define and enact their professional responsibilities. He discovered that nurses routinely refer to themselves as "patient advocates" and state that their profession is unique, valuable, and distinct from being an assistant to physicians. One way to enact change with this research is to educate physicians and nurses about the impacts of their language choices in health care.

A second intended outcome of Communication research is **prediction and control**. Ideas of prediction and control are taken from the physical sciences (remember our discussion of Empirical Laws theories in the last chapter?). Many Communication researchers want to use the results of their research to predict and control communication in certain contexts. This type of research can help us make communicative choices from an informed perspective. In fact, when you communicate, you often do so with the intention of prediction and control. Imagine walking on campus and seeing an acquaintance approach. You predict that if you say "hi" to her, she will respond back with a greeting. As a result of your prediction, you decide to say "hi" in order to control the exchange at some level. This same idea motivates many Communication researchers to approach their research with the intention of being able to predict and control communication contexts. For example, research into those who are scared to give public speeches often has as its intended outcome the ability to predict when and how people get scared in order to develop (control) ways to help them cope with that (Harris, Sawyer & Behnke, 2006).

A third intended outcome of Communication research is positive **critical/cultural change** in the world. Scholars often perform research in order to challenge communicative norms and effect cultural and societal change. For example, research that examines health communication campaigns seeks to understand how effective campaigns are in changing our health behaviors such as using condoms to prevent sexually transmitted diseases or avoiding high fat foods. When it is determined that health campaigns are ineffective, researchers often suggest changes to health communication campaigns to increase their efficacy in reaching the people who need access to the information (Stephenson & Southwell, 2006).

Case In Point

Your Brain on Drugs

In 1987 an anti-drug campaign began to air on television (you can easily find this Public Service Announcement on YouTube). Wikipedia writes, "The first PSA, from 1987, showed a man who held up an egg and said, "This is your brain," before picking up a frying pan and adding, "This is drugs." He then cracks open the egg, fries the contents, and says, "This is your brain on drugs." Finally he looks up at the camera and asks, "Any questions?"

After careful examination, researchers quickly discovered that this ad campaign was not effective, as it actually made the frying of an egg appealing, especially to those people who were watching the ad that were hungry! Thus, in 1998, they revised the PSA to make it more dramatic.

Scholars who study health campaigns are interested in finding the most effective ways to help get accurate health information to people so they can act on that information.

As humans, researchers have particular goals in mind. Having an understanding of what they want to accomplish with their research helps them formulate questions and develop appropriate methodologies for conducting research that will help them achieve their intended outcomes.

Theoretical Preferences

Remember that theoretical paradigms offer different ways to understand communication. While it is possible to examine communication from multiple theoretical perspectives, it has been our experience that our colleagues tend to favor certain theoretical paradigms over others. Put another way, we all understand the world in ways that make sense to us.

Which theoretical paradigm(s) do you most align yourself with? How would this influence what you would want to accomplish if you were researching human communication? What types of communication phenomena grab your attention? Why? These are questions that researchers wrestle with as they put together their research projects.

Methodological Preferences

Communication Research Now

What Kinds of Questions Do We Ask?

You have learned that Communication researchers ask questions that are of interest to them, are motivated by social issues of the day, and fall into certain theoretical and methodological perspectives. But, what kinds of questions are being asked? Here are some examples of research questions being studied today:

1) How does YouTube.com change the way wired citizens are using and consuming mass media messages?

2) In this moment, how might we understand the relationship between ethics and feminist forms of ethnography?

3) Does the phonological acquisition of English as a foreign language in an institutional context effect bilingual proficiency on phonological competence in the third language?

As you've learned, ***the actual process of doing research*** is called the **methodology**. While most researchers have preferences for certain theoretical paradigms, most researchers also have "favorite" methodologies for conducting research. As with theories, there are a large number of methodologies available for conducting research. As we did with theories, we believe it is easier for you to understand methodologies by categorizing them into paradigms. Most Communication researchers have a preference for one research paradigm over the others. For our purposes, we have divided methodological paradigms into rhetorical methodologies, quantitative methodologies, and qualitative methodologies.

Rhetorical Methodologies

We encode and decode messages everyday. As we take in messages, we use a number of criteria to evaluate them. We may ask, "Was the message good, bad, or both?" "Was it effective or ineffective?" "Did it achieve its intended outcome?" "How should I respond to the message?" Think about the last movie you watched. Did you have a conversation about the movie with others? Did that conversation include commentary on various parts of the film such as the set design, dialogue, plot, and character development? If so, you already have a taste of the variety of elements that go into rhetorical research. Simply stated, rhetorical methods of research are sophisticated and refined ways to evaluate messages. Foss (2004) explains that we use rhetorical approaches as a way "of systematically investigating and explaining symbolic acts and artifacts for the purpose of understanding rhetorical processes" (p. 6).

Steps for Doing Rhetorical Research

We already outlined the seven basic steps for conducting research, but there are ways to vary this process for different methodologies. Below are the basic steps for conducting rhetorical research.

1. Determine a focus of study such as political speeches, television shows or genres, movies or movie genres, commercials, magazine texts, the rhetoric of social movement organizations, music lyrics, visual art, public memorials, etc.
2. Choose a rhetorical research method to evaluate and critique rhetorical acts and/or messages.
3. Analyze the message(s) of focus such as a Presidential address by using a particular rhetorical method.
4. Interpret the implications of the rhetorical act, as well as the rhetorical act itself. For example, a scholar might choose to rhetorically research television violence and provide interpretations regarding the implications of television violence on viewers.
5. Share the results of research. From sharing research comes the opportunity to improve our ability to create and evaluate effective messages. We can also use what we learn from rhetorical research to shape the ways messages are constructed and delivered.

Types of Rhetorical Methods

What do rhetorical methods actually look like? How are they done? While each rhetorical methodology acts as a unique lens for understanding messages, no one is more correct over another. Instead, each allows us a different way for understanding messages and their effects. Let's examine a few of the more common rhetorical methodologies including, 1) Neo-Aristotelian, 2) Fantasy-Theme, 3) Narrative, 4) Pentadic, 5) Feminist, and 6) Ideological.

- **Neo-Aristotelian**. In Chapter 2 you learned quite a bit about the rhetorical roots of our field, including a few of the contributions of Aristotle. The neo-Aristotelian method uses Aristotle's ideas to evaluate rhetorical acts. First, a researcher recreates the context for others by describing the historical period of the message being studied. Messages are typically speeches or other forms of oral rhetoric as this was the primary focus of rhetoric during the Classical Period. Second, the researcher evaluates the message using the canons of rhetoric. For example, the researcher may examine what types of logic are offered in a speech or how its delivery enhances or detracts from the ethos of the speaker. Finally, the researcher assesses the effectiveness of the message given its context and its use of the canons.
- **Fantasy Theme**. Fantasy Theme analysis is a more contemporary rhetorical method credited to Ernest G. Bormann (1972; 1985; 1990). The focus of this methodology is on groups rather than individuals, and is particularly well-suited for analyzing group messages that come from social movements, political campaigns, or organizational communication. Essentially, a fantasy is a playful way of interpreting an experience (Foss, 2004).

Fantasy theme research looks for words or phrases that characterize the shared vision of a group in order to explain how the group characterizes or understands events around them. Fantasy theme analysis offers names and meaning to a group's experience and presents outsiders with a frame for interpreting the group's rhetorical response.

- **Narrative**. Much of what you learned as a child was probably conveyed to you through stories (bedtime stories, fables, and fairy tales) that taught you about gender roles, social roles, ethics, etc. For example, fairy tales teach us that women are valued for their youth and beauty and that men are valued when they are strong, handsome, smart, and riding a white horse! Other stories you remember may be more personal, as in the telling of your family's immigration to the United States and the values learned from that experience. Whatever the case, narrative rhetorical research contends that people learn through the sharing of stories. A researcher using this method examines narratives and their component parts—the plot, characters, and settings—to better understand the people (culture, groups, etc.) telling these stories. This research approach also focuses on the effects of repeating narratives. Think about Hollywood romantic comedies such as When Harry Met Sally, You've Got Mail, Pretty Woman, and Maid In Manhattan. When you see one of these movies, does it feel like you've seen it before? For example, the movie Maid In Manhattan contains similar plot and social-class themes as the earlier released movie, Pretty Woman. Why does Hollywood do this? What is the purpose and/or effect of retelling these story lines over and over again? These are some of the concerns of researchers who use narrative analysis to research rhetorical acts.
- **Pentadic**. Kenneth Burke (1966; 1969; 1974) developed the idea of the pentad using the metaphor of drama. As in a dramatic play, the pentad contains five elements—the act, agent, agency, scene, and purpose. The act tells what happened, the agent is who performed the act, agency includes the tools/means the agent used to perform the act, the scene provides the context for the act, and the purpose explains why the act occurred. By using the elements of the pentad to answer questions of who, what, when, where, and why, a rhetorical researcher may uncover a communicator's motives for her or his rhetorical actions.
- **Feminist**. Most feminist perspectives share the basic assumptions that women are routinely oppressed by patriarchy, women's experiences are different then men's, and women's perspectives are not equally incorporated into our culture (Foss, 1996). We can use feminist rhetorical research to help us determine the degree to which women's perspectives are both absent and/or discredited in rhetorical acts. Thus, feminist rhetorical research, "is the analysis of rhetoric to discover how the rhetorical construction of gender is used as a means for oppression and how that process can be challenged and resisted" (Foss, p. 168). Although many think of "women" in reference to feminism, it is important to note that many men consider themselves feminists and that feminism is concerned with oppression of all forms—race, class, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and gender.

Case In Point

Rhetorical Methods In Action

In 2003, Mary M. Lay's article "Midwifery on Trial: Balancing Privacy Rights and Health Concerns after Roe v. Wade" was published in the Quarterly Journal of Speech. This article is an example of rhetorical research that analyzes the texts of court cases involving traditional midwifery. She explores ideas of power and resistance regarding traditional medical authority in the U.S. that have been largely granted to white-male physicians. Her research serves as a means for revealing the implications of policies governing privacy rights and health care, and as a mechanism to bring possible change to power dynamics in health care that oppress certain populations. On the continuum of intended outcomes then, Dr. Lay's research would be on the right, providing critical insight and potential cultural change.

In contrast, Dr. Stephen H. Brown's (2003) rhetorical criticism entitled, "Jefferson's First Declaration of Independence: A Summary View of the Rights of British America Revisited." explores Jefferson's Summary View of the Rights of British America to understand and demonstrate Jefferson's skill as a storyteller, and explain what Jefferson was trying to accomplish through a series of narratives. This piece demonstrates rhetorical research used as a means of understanding a historical rhetorical act in its particular context.

- **Ideological**. Ideology is a collection of values, beliefs, or ethics that influence modes of behavior for a group or culture. Rhetorical scholars interested in understanding a culture's values often use ideological methods. Ideologies are complex and multifaceted, and ideological methods draw from diverse schools of thought such as

Marxism, feminism, structuralism, deconstructionism, and postmodernism. This research often uncovers assumptions and biases in our language that provide insight into how dominant groups and systems are maintained rhetorically, and how they can be challenged and transformed through rhetoric. Artifacts of popular culture such as movies, television shows, etc. are often the focus of this research as they are the sites at which struggles about meanings occur in the popular culture.

Outcomes of Rhetorical Methodologies

What is the value of researching acts of communication from a rhetorical perspective? The systematic research of messages tells us a great deal about the ways people communicate, the contexts in which they communicate, the effects of communication in particular contexts, and potential areas to challenge and change messages to make society better.

Rhetorical research methodologies help us better determine how and why messages are effective or ineffective, as well as the outcomes of messages on audiences. Think about advertising campaigns. Advertising agencies spend millions of dollars evaluating the effectiveness of their messages on audiences. The purpose of advertising is to persuade us to act in some way, usually the purchasing of products or services. Advertisers not only evaluate the effectiveness of their messages by determining the amount of products sold, they also evaluate effectiveness by looking at audience response to the messages within the current cultural and social contexts.

Quantitative Methods

Steps for Doing Quantitative Research

IRhetorical research methods have been being developed since the Classical Period. As the transition was made to seeing communication from a social scientific perspective, scholars began studying communication using the methods established from the physical sciences. Thus, quantitative methods represent the steps of using the Scientific Method of research.

1. Decide on a focus of study based primarily on your interests. What do you want to discover or answer?

2. Develop a research question(s) to keep your research focused.

3. Develop a hypothesis(es). A hypothesis states how a researcher believes the subjects under study will or will not communicate based on certain variables. For example, you may have a research question that asks, “Does the gender of a student impact the number of times a college professor calls on his/her students?” From this, you might form two hypotheses: “Instructors call on female students less often then male students.” and “Instructors call on students of their same sex.”

4. Collect data in order to test hypotheses. In our example, you might observe various college classrooms in order to count which students professors call on more frequently.

5. Analyze the data by processing the numbers using statistical programs like SPSS that allow quantitative researchers to detect patterns in communication phenomena. Analyzing data in our example would help us determine if there are any significant differences in the ways in which college professors call on various students.

6. Interpret the data to determine if patterns are significant enough to make broad claims about how humans communicate? Simply because professors call on certain students a few more times than other students may or may not indicate communicative patterns of significance.

7. Share the results with others. Through the sharing of research we continue to learn more about the patterns and rules that guide the ways we communicate.

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The term **quantitative** refers to ***research in which we can quantify, or count, communication phenomena***. Quantitative methodologies draw heavily from research methods in the physical sciences explore human communication phenomena through the collection and analysis of numerical data. Let’s take a simple example from the physical sciences before applying it to communication. If we wanted to know how often gravity worked when we let go of a pen, we could set up an experiment where we would let go of a pen repeatedly until we determined that it falls 100% of the time. While this example is ridiculously simple, imagine applying this same methodology to researching human communicative behavior. What communicative acts do we count? How do we go about counting them? Is there any human communicative behavior that would return a 100% response rate like the falling pen? What can we learn by counting acts of human communication?

Suppose you want to determine what communicative actions illicit negative responses from your professors. How would you go about researching this? What data would you count? In what ways would you count them? Who would you study? How would you know if you discovered anything of significance that would tell us something important about this? These are tough questions for researchers to answer, particularly in light of the fact that, unlike laws in the physical sciences, human communication is varied and unpredictable.

Nevertheless, there are several quantitative methods researchers use to study communication in order to reveal patterns that help us predict and control our communication. Think about polls that provide feedback for politicians. While people do not all think the same, this type of research provides patterns of thought to politicians who can use this information to make policy decisions that impact our lives. Let's look at a few of the more frequent quantitative methods of communication research.

Types of Quantitative Methods

There are many ways researchers can quantify human communication. Not all communication is easily quantified, but much of what we know about human communication comes from quantitative research.

- **Experimental Research** is the most well-established quantitative methodology in both the physical and social sciences. This approach uses the principles of research in the physical sciences to conduct experiments that explore human behavior. Researchers choose whether they will conduct their experiments in lab settings or real-world settings. Experimental research generally includes a control group (the group where variables are not altered) and the experimental group(s) (the group in which variables are altered). The groups are then carefully monitored to see if they enact different reactions to different variables.

One of your authors was involved in a study that sought to determine if students are more motivated to learn by participating in a classroom game versus attending a classroom lecture. Our hypothesis was that students would actually be more motivated to learn from the game, but we wanted to be able to "prove" it. Our next question was, "do students actually learn more by participating in games?" We conducted an experiment to find out the answers to these questions. In a number of classes we had instructors give their normal lecture over certain content (control group), and in a number of other classes we had instructors use a game we developed to teach the same content (experimental group). We tested the students at the end of the semester to see which group retained the information better, and to find out which method most motivated students to want to learn the material. We determined that students were more motivated to learn by participating in the game, which proved our hypothesis. The other thing we learned was that students who participated in the game actually remembered more of the content at the end of the semester than those who listened to a lecture. While this was a simple study, it used an experiment to find out a little more about how college students learn (Hunt, Lippert & Paynton, 1998).

Case In Point

Quantitative Methods In Action

Wendy S. Zabada-Ford (2003) conducted survey research of 253 customers to determine their expectations and experiences with physicians, dentists, mechanics, and hairstylists. Her article, "Research Communication Practices of Professional Service Providers: Predicting Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty" researched the perceptions of customers' personalized service as related to their expectations in order to predict their satisfaction with the actual service they received. In this study, the goal was to be able to predict the behavior of customers based on their expectations before entering a service-provider context.

Michael T. Stephenson's (2003) article, "Examining Adolescents' Responses to Antimarijuana PSAs" examined how adolescents respond to antimarijuana public service announcements in the U.S. On the surface, this study may fit into the "understanding" part of the continuum of intended outcomes. However, this research can be used to alter and change messages, such as PSAs, to produce behavioral change in the culture. In this case, the change would be to either keep adolescents from smoking marijuana, or to get them to stop this behavior if they are currently engaged in it.

- **Survey Research** is used to ask people a number of questions about particular topics. Surveys can be mailed, handed out, or conducted in interview format. After researchers have collected survey data, they represent participants' responses in numerical form using tables, graphs, charts, and/or percentages. On our campus, anonymous survey research was done to determine the drinking and drug habits of our students. This research demonstrated that the percentage of students who frequently use alcohol or drugs is actually much lower than what most students think. The results of this research are now used to educate students that not everyone engages in heavy drinking or drug use, and to encourage students to more closely align their behaviors with what actually occurs on campus, not with what students perceive happens on campus. It is important to remember that there is a possibility that people do not always tell the truth when they answer survey questions. We won't go into great detail here due to time, but there are sophisticated statistical analyses that can account for this to develop an accurate representation of survey responses.
- **Content Analysis**. Researchers use content analysis to count the number of occurrences of their particular focus of inquiry. Communication researchers often conduct content analyses of movies, commercials, television shows, magazines, etc. They then count the number of occurrences of particular phenomena in these contexts to explore potential effects. For example, Harwood and Anderson (2002) used content analysis to show that minorities were largely underrepresented, while middle-aged, male, and white characters were overrepresented by comparison in prime-time dramas and comedies of the major networks. Fink and Kensicki (2002) did a content analysis to demonstrate that women are underrepresented, in comparison to men, in both Sports Illustrated and Sports Illustrated for Women. Content analysis is extremely effective for demonstrating patterns and trends in various communication contexts. If you would like to do a simple content analysis, count the number of times different people are represented in photos in your textbooks. Are there more men than women? Are there more Caucasians represented than other groups? What do the numbers tell you about how we represent different people?
- **Meta-Analysis**. Do you ever get frustrated when you hear about one research project that says a particular food is good for your health, and then some time later, you hear about another research project that says the opposite? Meta-analysis analyzes existing statistics found in a collection of quantitative research to demonstrate patterns in a particular line of research over time. Meta-analysis is research that seeks to combine the results of a series of past studies to see if their results are similar, or to determine if they show us any new information when they are looked at in totality. Kamhawi and Weaver (2003) performed a meta-analysis of the quantitative research done in mass communication to determine trends over a twenty-year period. In 2001, Sherry examined quantitative studies that examined the relationship between violent behavior and video games. This meta-analysis determined that violent video games have less impact on violent behavior than viewing violence on television. These studies highlight general patterns and trends of past research that may remain unnoticed to scholars who only read individual studies.

Outcomes of Quantitative Methodologies

Because it is unlikely that Communication research will yield 100% certainty regarding communicative behavior, why do Communication researchers use quantitative approaches? First, the broader U.S. culture values the ideals of quantitative science as a means of learning about and representing our world. To this end, many Communication researchers emulate research methodologies of the physical sciences to study human communication phenomena. Second, you'll recall that researchers have certain theoretical and methodological preferences that motivate their research choices. Those who understand the world from an Empirical Laws and/or Human Rules Paradigm tend to favor research methods that test communicative laws and rules in quantitative ways.

Even though Communication research cannot produce results with 100% accuracy, quantitative research demonstrates patterns of human communication. In fact, many of your own interactions are based on a loose system of quantifying behavior. Think about how you and your classmates sit in your classrooms. Most students sit in the same seats every class meeting, even if there is not assigned seating. In this context, it would be easy for you to count how many students sit in the same seat, and what percentage of the time they do this. You probably already recognize this pattern without having to do a formal study. However, if you wanted to truly demonstrate that students communicatively manifest territoriality to their peers, it would be relatively simple to conduct a quantitative study of this phenomenon. After completing your research, you could report that X% of students sat in particular seats X% of times. This research would not only provide us with an understanding of a particular communicative pattern of students, it would also give us the ability to predict, to a certain degree, their future behaviors surrounding space issues in the classroom.

Quantitative research is also valuable for helping us determine similarities and/or differences among groups of people or communicative events. Representative examples of research in the areas of gender and communication (Berger, 2003; Slater, 2003), culture and communication (McCann, Ota, Giles, & Caraker, 2003; Hylmo & Buzzanell, 2002), as well as ethnicity and communication (Jiang Bresnahan, Ohashi, Nebashi, Wen Ying, Shearman, 2002; Murray-Johnson, 2001) use quantitative methodologies to determine trends and patterns of communicative behavior for various groups. While these trends and patterns cannot be applied to all people, in all contexts, at all times, they help us understand what variables play a role in influencing the ways we communicate.

While quantitative methods can show us numerical patterns, what about our personal lived experiences? How do we go about researching them, and what can they tell us about the ways we communicate? Qualitative methods have been established to get at the "essence" of our lived experiences, as we subjectively understand them.

Qualitative Methods

Qualitative research methodologies draw much of their approach from the social sciences, particularly the fields of Anthropology, Sociology, and Social-Psychology. If you've ever wished you could truly capture and describe the essence of an experience you have had, you understand the goal of qualitative research methods. Rather than statistically analyzing data, or evaluating and critiquing messages, qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the subjective lived-experience of those they study. In other words, how can we come to a more rich understanding of how people communicate?

Steps for Doing Qualitative Research

Qualitative approaches break from traditional research ideals developed in the physical sciences. As a result, the steps for conducting qualitative research vary from the seven basic steps outlined above.

1. Planning is the first step for qualitative research. (Lindlof, 1995). One of your authors did a qualitative study of the communication of registered nurses. Obviously, the topic "the communication of registered nurses" is too large so careful planning in regards to who should be the focus of study, in what context, what research questions should be asked, etc. are all part of the initial planning of research.

2. Getting in is the second step of qualitative research (Lindlof, 1995). Because qualitative research usually focuses on human communication in real-world settings, researchers must gain access to the people and contexts they wish to study. For example, would you want an audio or video recording of your interaction with a physician as you tell him/her your medical problems (DiMatteo, Robinson, Heritage, Tabbarah, & Fox, 2003; Barry, 2002)?

3. Observing and learning make up the third step of qualitative research. For example, researchers must decide whether or not to reveal themselves to those they are studying. A researcher may choose to conduct interviews, look at communication artifacts, observe communication as it occurs, write field-notes, and/or audio or video record communication. Each of these choices has an impact on the outcomes of the research.

4. Analyze what you have observed. There are exhaustive methods for examining and analyzing qualitative data. Issues of right versus wrong ways of analysis can be addressed by recognizing that the goal of qualitative research is not to generalize findings to everyone, but to share the lived experiences of those who are researched.

5. Share conclusions of the research. Again, research should be shared with others so they can gain a greater understanding of the lived-experience of those researched.

In an attempt to define qualitative methods Thomas Lindlof (1995) states that qualitative research examines the "form and content of human behavior…to analyze its qualities, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformations" (p. 21). Anderson and Meyer (1988) state that qualitative methods, "do not rest their evidence on the logic of mathematics, the principle of numbers, or the methods of statistical analysis" (p. 247). Dabbs (1982) says that qualitative research looks at the quality of phenomena while quantitative methods measure quantities and/or amounts. In qualitative research researchers are interested in the, "what, how, when, and where of a thing….[looking for] the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things" (Berg, 2004, p. 2-3). Data collection comes in the form of words or pictures (Neuman, 1994, p. 28). As Kaplan (1964) provides a very simple way of defining qualitative research when he says, "if you can measure it, that ain't it" (p. 206).

Types of Qualitative Methods

While qualitative research sounds simple, it can be a "messy" process because things do not always go as planned. One way to make qualitative research "cleaner" is to be familiar with, and follow, the various established qualitative methods available for studying human communication.

- **Ethnography**. Ethnography is arguably the most recognized and common method of qualitative research in Communication. Ethnography "places researchers in the midst of whatever it is they study. From this vantage, researchers can examine various phenomena as perceived by participants and represent these observations" to others (Berg, 2004, p. 148). Ethnographers try to understand the communicative acts of people as they occur in their actual communicative environments. One way to think of this is the idea of learning about a new culture by immersing oneself in that culture. While there are many strategies for conducting ethnography, the idea is that a researcher must enter the environment of those under study to observe and understand their communication.
- **Focus Group Interviewing**. Researchers who use focus group interviewing meet with groups of people to understand their communication characteristics. (Berg, 2004). These interviews foster an environment for participants to discuss particular topics of interest to the group and/or researcher. While we are all familiar with the numbers that we encounter in political polls, every so often television news organizations will conduct focus group interviews to find out how particular groups actually feel about, and experience, the political process as a citizen. This is an applied version of focus group research techniques and provides insight into the ways various groups understand and enact their realities.

Communication Research and You

Developing the ability to perform research is becoming a necessary skill in both the world of academia as well as in today's competitive work force. With the move from the industrial age to the information age, many jobs center around the creation and dissemination of information. With so many online options for retrieving information, it is more important to have skills in gathering information rathering than memorizing facts and data. As it is vital to be able to access proper information when needed, many universities require a specific amount of research hours for both undergraduate and masters degree programs. A variety of career opportunities require research experience such as marketing agencies or health industries.

- **Action Research**. A qualitative method whose intended outcome is social change is action research. Action research seeks to create positive social change through "a highly reflective, experiential, and participatory mode of research in which all individuals involved in the study, researcher and subject alike, are deliberate and contributing actors in the research enterprise" (Berg, 2004, p. 196; Wadsworth, 1998). The goal of action research is to provide information that is useful to a particular group of people that will empower the members of that group to create change as a result of the research (Berg). An example of action research might be when researchers study the teaching strategies of teachers in the classroom. Typically, teachers involve themselves in the research and then use the findings to improve their teaching methods. If you've ever had a professor who had unique styles of teaching, it is likely that he/she may have been involved in research that examined new approaches to teaching students.

- **Unobtrusive Research**. Another method for conducting qualitative research is unobtrusive research. As Berg (2004) points out, "to some extent, all the unobtrusive strategies amount to examining and assessing human traces" (p. 209). We can learn a great deal about the behavior of others by examining the traces humans leave behind as they live their lives. For instance, in a research class offered at our university, students investigated the content of graffiti written in university bathrooms. Because our campus has an environmentally conscious culture, much of the graffiti in bathrooms reflects this culture with slogans written on paper towel dispensers that read, "Paper towels=trees." The students who conducted this research were using unobtrusive strategies to determine dimensions of student culture in the graffiti that was left behind in bathrooms.
- **Historiography**. Historiography is a method of qualitative research "for discovering, from records and accounts, what happened during some past period" (Berg, 2004, p. 233). Rather than simply putting together a series of facts, research from this perspective seeks to gain an understanding of the communication in a past social group or context. For example, the timelines in the history chapter of this text are an attempt to chronologically put together the story of the discipline of Communication. While there is no "true" story, your authors have tried to piece together, from their own research, the important pieces that make up what we believe is the story of the formation of Communication study.
- **Case Studies**. Case studies involve gathering significant information about particular people, contexts, or phenomena to understand a particular case under investigation. This approach uses many methods for data collection but focuses on a particular case to gain "holistic description and explanation" (Berg, 2004, p. 251). Those who use case study approaches may look at organizations, groups within those organizations, specific people, etc. The idea is to gain a broad understanding of the phenomena and draw conclusions from them. One example of a case study occurred surrounding the first space shuttle explosion as an example of what can happen as a result of group-think. Many people looked at this case as a way to understand how, why, and where communication broke down that led to this tragedy.

While there are other qualitative research methodologies, the methods one chooses to examine communication are most often decided by the researcher's intended outcomes, resources available, and the research question(s) of focus. There are no hard rules for qualitative research. Instead, researchers must make many choices as they engage in this process.

Outcomes of Qualitative Methodologies

Case In Point

Qualitative Methods In Actions

Vicki Mayer conducted a two-year ethnographic study to explore how Mexican-American girls incorporate, and talk about, Spanish-language soap operas (telenovelas) in their daily lives. Her article (2003) "Living Telenovelas/Telenovelizing Life: Mexican American Girls; Identities and Transnational Telenovelas" highlights the media consumption of Mexican-American girls in San Antonio, Texas and demonstrates how national, ethnic, gender and class tensions are represented both by the telenovelas as well as the girls who watch them. This piece was designed to gain understanding of another culture's ways of communicating.

John T. Warren's (2001) article, "The Social Drama of a 'Rice Burner': A (Re) Constitution of Whiteness" is a critical performance ethnography that explores the constitution of whiteness through performance in an introductory Communication classroom. Dr. Warren argues that race, particularly whiteness, is achieved through social communicative acts that communicators and receivers believe are meaningful. The goal of the research is to frame different ways of understanding racial (re)production. In this sense, the research is intended to produce social change in those that read it by challenging notions of doing culture and race.

What can we learn by using qualitative research methods for studying communication? Qualitative Communication researchers often believe that quantitative methods do not capture the essence of our lived experience. In other words, it is difficult to quantify everything about our lives and therefore, we need different strategies for understanding our world. Think of the various ways you experience and communicate in your relationships? It's highly unlikely that you spend the bulk of your communication quantifying your daily experiences. However, through methods like observation, interviewing, journaling, etc., we might be able to get a better understanding of the ways people experience and communicate their feelings.

Another value of qualitative research is that it resonates with readers who are able to identify with the lived-experiences represented in the research (Neuman, 1994). Statistical studies often seem detached from how we experience life. However, qualitative studies contain "rich description, colorful detail, and unusual characters; they give the reader a feel for social settings (Neuman, p. 317, emphasis added). It is this rich description that allows us to identify with the communication experiences of others, and learn through this identification.

Over the years, women scholars have demonstrated a greater frequency in the use of qualitative approaches (Grant, Ward & Rong, 1987; Ward & Grant, 1985), producing significant contributions to our understanding of human communication using these methods. From understanding to social change, feminist scholars demonstrate the importance of qualitative inquiry for strengthening the body of scholarship in our discipline. While researchers who use quantitative approaches tend to value prediction and control as potential outcomes of their research, those who use qualitative approaches seek greater understanding of human communication phenomena, or evaluate current pragmatic uses of human communication to help identify and change oppressive power structures.

Summary

Communication research is important because it focuses on a common goal—to enhance our interactions with others. In this chapter we highlighted how research is done and the basic steps that guide most research projects—identify the topic, write a research question, define key terms, select a methodology, establish a sample, gather and analyze the data, and finally, interpret and share the results. When conducting research, three factors motivate the choices we make: our intended outcomes, theoretical preferences, and methodological preferences. Depending on these factors, research may lead us to greater understanding, allow us to predict or control a communication situation, or create cultural change.

Conceptualizing Communication research can be done more easily by understanding the three broad methodological approaches/paradigms for conducting Communication research: Rhetorical Methodologies, Quantitative Methodologies, and Qualitative Methodologies. The rhetorical approach evaluates messages in various contexts such as political discourse, art, and popular culture. A variety of methods are available such as neo-aristotelian, fantasy theme, narrative, pentadic, feminist, and ideological criticism. Quantitative methods are characterized by counting phenomena and are useful for predicting communication outcomes or comparing cultures and populations. They include experimental research, surveys, content analysis, and meta-analysis. Qualitative methods offer the opportunity to understand human communication as it occurs in a "natural" context rather than a laboratory setting. This is accomplished through ethnography, focus groups, action research, unobtrusive research, historiography, and case studies. While these approaches share similarities, their focus and specific methods are quite different and produce different outcomes. No research methodology or method is better than another. Instead, approaches to Communication research simply reveal different aspects of human communication in action.

Discussion Questions

1. If you were going to conduct communication research, what topic(s) would be most interesting to you? What specific questions would you want to ask and answer? How would you go about doing this?
2. Of the three broad research methodologies, do you find yourself having a preference for one of them? If so, what specific type of research method would you want to use within the area you have a preference for?
3. If you were going to conduct research, what outcome would you want to gain from your research? Are you more interested in understanding, prediction/control, or creating social change? What is the value of each of these approaches?

Key Terms

- action research
- case studies
- content analysis
- continuum of intended outcomes
- control group
- critical/cultural change
- ethnography
- data
- experimental group
- experimental research
- fantasy theme
- feminist
- focus group interviewing
- historiography
- ideological
- key terms
- meta-analysis
- methodological preferences
- methodology
- narrative
- neo-Aristotelian
- pentadic
- prediction/control
- qualitative methodologies
- quantitative methodologies
- research
- research focus
- research questions
- rhetorical methodologies
- sample
- survey research
- theoretical preferences
- understanding
- unobtrusive research

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Chapter 7 - Rhetorical Criticism

Chapter 7

Rhetorical Criticism

Chapter Objectives:

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

• Define rhetoric.

• Identify key features of classical rhetorical theory.

• Identify the challenges that contemporary theorists are making to the study of rhetoric.

• Define rhetorical criticism.

• Explain the purpose and uses of rhetorical criticism.

• Explain the different models of rhetorical criticism.

• Understand how rhetorical theory and criticism are a current part of the communication discipline.

W

hat do you think of when you hear the word “rhetoric”? Do you have a positive association with the word? Perhaps it feels difficult to define. We often hear that rhetoric is connected to politics, or specifically, the speeches made by politicians, as in, “That campaign speech was just a bunch of empty rhetoric.” Sound familiar? As is often the case, the popular media has distorted the meaning of this word thus, making it difficult to understand. Another problem is that “rhetoric is not a content area that contains a definite body of knowledge, like physics; instead, rhetoric might be understood as the study and practice of shaping content” (Covino and Jolliffe 4). A third source of difficulty when it comes to defining this concept is that scholars themselves have been debating this term for thousands of years! In this chapter devoted to rhetorical theory and criticism, we will explore both of these separate but related fields of inquiry, briefly map out their history, discuss some of the major rhetorical theories and methods of doing rhetorical criticism, and finally, explain how this specialization contributes to the larger discipline of Communication. But, before going any further, let’s begin by highlighting the definitional and historical debate so we may begin with a common understanding of the term, “rhetoric.” Remember from Chapter 5 that we are defining **rhetoric** as ***“any kind of symbol use that functions in any realm”*** (Foss, Foss, and Griffin 7). One would think that after thousands of years people would finally come to an agreement about what rhetoric means. But as is the way with all symbols (words in this case) their meaning can and does change over time to reflect the ever-changing socio, political, religious, and cultural context in which they operate. More specifically, they change to reflect the needs, attitudes and beliefs of the people living and communicating within a particular context. Let us take a trip around the world and through time to explore the origin and meaning of rhetoric. As we tour the origins and various definitions of rhetoric we will also highlight the view or scope allowed by each, for “a way of seeing is also a way of not seeing” (Burke 49).

Rhetoric In Ancient Times

We will begin our tour in Ancient Greece with the “first four”—Aspasia of Miletus, Socrates, Palato, and Aristotle—who have come to be regarded as the foremother and forefathers of rhetoric and the Communication discipline as a whole. Although little is known about her because she vanished from history circa 401 BCE, **Aspasia of Miletus** was perhaps the foremother of classical rhetoric as she is rumored to have taught rhetoric and home economics to Socrates. Her social position was that of a hetaera, or companion who was “more educated than respectable women, and [was] expected to accompany men on occasions where conversation with a woman was appreciated, but wives were not welcome” (Carlson 30). Her specialty was philosophy and politics and she became the only female member of the elite Periclean circle that included the most prominent Sophists of the day. In the circle she made both friends and enemies as a result of her political savvy and public speaking ability.

As a student of **Socrates** (469-399 BCE), **Plato** (429-347 BCE) wrote about rhetoric in the form of dialogues wherein the main character is Socrates. Through this form the **dialectic** was born. While this term has been debated since its inception, Plato conceptualized it as ***a process of questions and answers that would lead to the ultimate truth and understanding***. Think for a moment about contemporary situations wherein this process is utilized. What about an in-class discussion wherein the professor questions the students about an interpretation or meaning of a poem? Or the role that a therapist takes by asking a series of questions to a patient to bring greater clarity in understanding one’s own thoughts, motives, and behavioral patterns? These are just two examples of the dialectic at work. What others can you think of? Ironic is the fact that while Plato contributed a great deal to classical rhetorical theory he was also very critical of it. In Georgias, for example, Plato argued that because rhetoric does not require a unique body of knowledge it is a false rather than true art.

While Plato condemned the art of rhetoric, his student, **Aristotle** (384-322 BCE) believed in the possibility of rhetoric as a means of creating community. The dialectical, or give and take approach, allows people to share and test ideas with one another with the goal of a more prosperous city-state. He defined rhetoric as the ability to see, in each particular case, the available means of persuasion. Two parts of this definition are particularly significant: the terms “in each particular case” and “persuasion.” The former suggests that Aristotle recognized the importance of context and audience; that a specific situation with a particular audience might direct the speaker, or rhetor, to create a message in a form that might look different in another context with another audience. He recognized the importance of **audience analysis**: that ***different things appeal to different people***. To put in contemporary terms, let us look at an example from the marketing and advertising world. Mattel, the company who makes Barbie has long been interested in selling the doll as well as her friends and accessories worldwide. (Currently, a Barbie is sold somewhere in the world every 2 seconds!) Researching the Japanese doll market, advertisers found that Japanese girls do not play with their dolls in the same was as American girls--dressing them, fixing their hair, and role-playing with them. Instead, Japanese girls might place the dolls on a shelf and admire them. To sell Barbie in Japan meant that Mattel must also “teach” Japanese girls how to play and use Barbie like American kids do. As a result, their Japanese television commercials are explicit in the verbal messages as well as the images of playing with (not looking at) Barbie. Mattel has taken the same message—sell Barbie—and constructed it differently depending on the context and their audience. This would be an example of creating the necessary appeals to persuade kids (to buy Barbie) in each particular case (America versus Japan).

The second part of his definition dealing with persuasion suggests that Aristotle conceptualized a very specific and limited scope for rhetoric. That rhetoric exists in contexts where a person or a group of people is engaged in the process of communicating for the purpose of changing another in some way. Change may come in the form of trying to influence a prospective voter in an upcoming election or convincing a jury on the guilt or innocence of a defendant in a murder trial. As we will discuss later in this chapter, the sole focus on persuasion is one of the critiques that contemporary theorists have when assessing rhetorical theory.

While much of the classical theorists were men and dealt with traditionally male roles, Pan Chao (c. 45 CE-115 CE) provides historical insight into Eastern rhetoric and the role of women in rhetoric. A strong believer in the benefits of education, she was one of the first people to argue for the education of girls and women. Writing on the four qualifications of womanhood (virtue, words, bearing, and work), she said of womanly words, they "need be neither cleaver in debate nor keen in conversation," but women should "…choose words with care; to avoid vulgar language; to speak at appropriate times; and to not weary others (with much conversation), [these] may be called the characteristics of womanly words" (Pan Chao 417). The role of women and other nondominant groups is another concern of contemporary theorists that will be discussed later in more detail.

Articulating a Classical Rhetorical Theory

Two other key figures in classical rhetoric are Cicero (106-43 BCE) and Quintillian (c. 35-95). They deserve recognition for combining much of what was known from the Greeks and Romans into more complete theoretical systems. Many of the concepts to emerge from this time are still relevant today, although they may have been transformed in some way to reflect a more contemporary context. You may, for example, recognize them in the setting of a public speaking course. In the classical system there were three types of public speeches—legal, political, and ceremonial. Eventually the genre of rhetorical discourse would include poetry, sermons, letters, songs; and with the advent of the technology, mass mediated discourse such as television, radio, and film. Another major contribution was the formation of the **five canons**: ***invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery***. All of these should be easily recognizable as the stages of speech preparation. First, the speechwriter must invent and formulate the arguments based on logos-- rational appeal or logic. Next, the speech is organized in the most effective manner. Aristotle thought the logical appeals should go in the main part or body of the speech and the appeals to ethos and pathos should fall in the introduction and conclusion. After the proper arrangement of the information, the writer must think about style—the particular language choices that will enhance the enjoyment, and thus acceptability of the argument, on the part of the audience. The forth step, memory, was vital in the classical period but is rarely a requirement in today's public speaking contexts. Notes, cue cards, and, teleprompters are all devices that have replaced this original forth canon. The final element, delivery, consists of the use of nonverbal gestures, eye contact and vocal variations when presenting the speech to an audience. Think back to the evaluation form that your professor used to evaluate your speeches in class; chances are you were evaluated in some manner on your ability to perform the five canons.

Rhetoric Loses Its Status, Then Rises Again

As the Roman Empire fell and the historical period known as the Middle Ages (400-1400) dominated, rhetoric fell from grace. It was no longer a valued and honored skill but instead was thought of as a pagan art. This view coincided with the Christian domination of the period as, "Christians believed that the rhetorical ideas formulated by the pagans of classical Greece and Rome should not be studied and that possession of Christian truth was accompanied by an automatic ability to communicate the truth effectively" (Foss, Foss, and Trapp 8). Ironically, it was a Christian, Augustine, who recognized and articulated the role for rhetoric in the church. Prior to his conversion to Christianity, Augustine was a teacher of rhetoric, thus, he knew skills in oratory and that the ability to move an audience was consistent with the duties of a preacher. As the world grew bigger, people needed a form of communication that would travel across distance—thus letter writing became popular and was now considered within the scope of rhetoric. As the Middle Ages ended, the Renaissance took its place from 1400-1600. During this period two intellectual trends—humanism and rationalism—shaped the study of rhetoric. **Humanism** is ***the study of history, moral philosophy, poetry, and rhetoric of classical antiquity***. These thinkers believed that the word was to be known and understood through language, rather that the natural or physical. **Rationalism**, however, ***privileged scientific and objective answers to life's questions and as such had little use for rhetoric***. In the modern period that followed three trends in rhetoric emerged—the epistemological, belletristic, and elocutionist.

Challenges To The Canon

While much of the classical rhetorical theories arose from the closely related context of public speaking, much of the theorizing that contributes to contemporary rhetoric comes from outside this context and, to some extent, outside the Communication discipline. While Aristotle and Augustine were chiefly concerned with questions of persuasive ability, contemporary theorists are concerned with relationships between power, knowledge, and discourse. Hopefully, you can see that this is a much broader set of questions and in turn the scope of rhetoric has also expanded. Below, we will discuss this expansion and the contributors.

Rhetoric In Contemporary Times

In addition to the broader set of concerns on the part of contemporary theorists, they specifically challenged certain assumptions and biases of the canon—that of rationalism and voice. Responding to the rational bias, are social constructionism and postmodernism. **Social Constructionism** often associated with Thomas Kuhn and Richard Rorty, ***questions the premise that scientific or philosophical knowledge can be assumed as fundamentally true***. This perspective "discounts the possibility that truth/reality/knowledge exists in an a priori state." [Instead,] it emphasizes what cultures regard as knowledge or truth" (Covino and Jolliffe 83). Meaning, that the "truth" is not "out there" (as X Files would have us believe). Rather, the truth is determined by our own personal and cultural experiences and how language is used to understand and explain those experiences. In any discussion of Postmodernism the difficulty of defining the term is invariably part of the discussion. Part of that problem can be located the entomology of the word itself. Modern refers to just now (from modo in Latin) and post means after. Thus, this term translates into "after just now"—an idea difficult to wrap our heads around you might say. How do you, for example, point to or mark the period after just now? (Covino and Jolliffe 76). Some qualities that describe postmodernism are that of fragmentation, nonlinearity, and instability. The film, Moulin Rouge, is an excellent example of a postmodern text as it exemplifies these qualities. The story is told not in a traditionally linear (or modern) form, but instead the dialogue is made up of a patchwork of pop songs from Elton John to Madonna to weave the tale of a 19th century romance.

Case In Point

Contemporary Rhetorical Theorists

Here is al list of contemporary theorists who have all challenged the canon in some way. To further your understanding of rhetorical theory explore the works of one or more of these rhetorical scholars to learn about their unique and important contributions.

Michael Bakhtin

Kenneth Burke

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell

Helene Cixous

Mary Daly

Jacques Derrida

Sonja K.Foss

Karen A. Foss

Michel Foucault

Sally Miller Gearhart

Julia Kristeva

Malcom X

Chaïm Perlman and Lucie Olbrects-Tyteca

I.A Richards

Stephen Toulmin

Virginia Woolf

The second major challenge to the rhetorical canon and to a rational paradigm has been that of voice; who gets to speak and whose rhetoric is considered significant (or even gets labeled as rhetoric). Going back to the classical period, you remember that public oratory was considered the scope of rhetoric. And you also know who traditionally hold positions of power that would grant them access to the public speaking contexts—primarily white, wealthy men. This obviously left out a lot of people: they had no voice. An Afrocentric and feminist perspective offer two responses to this challenge. An Afrocentric position seeks to include linguistic elements from African languages as well as the Black experience in America into the scope and understanding of rhetorical processes. A feminist perspective looks at the ways in which women and other groups have been similarly left of the scope of rhetorical discourse and attempts to uncover the patriarchal biases in language and restore them with more egalitarian principles.

Understanding Rhetorical Criticism

I

n the second half of this chapter we would like to discuss a close associate to rhetorical theory—rhetorical criticism. To explain this exciting subdiscipline we will discuss the scope of rhetorical criticism, the purpose of this method, the kinds of knowledge produced, and the relationship between rhetorical theory and criticism. We will conclude with examples of how rhetorical criticism seeks to answer contemporary socio and political concerns.

Rhetorical criticism is ***an epistemology or way of knowing many scholars find effective in coming to an understanding about the communication process and the artifact under study***. (An **artifact** or **text** is simply ***the thing that the critic wants to learn about***. Artifacts can be, for example, speeches, songs, sermons, films or works of art.) Think about a speech you have heard that was very moving and inspirational. At its conclusion perhaps you wondered, “I know that was a great speech, but why”? Or perhaps a visit to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. inspired the question, “How did the artist take a controversial subject (the war) and memorialize it in a way that diffuses the controversy”? Or maybe you are a fan of the show South Park. You recognize that there are jokes that make fun of particular groups of people such as ethnic and racial minorities that could be labeled “racist.” Yet, you do not believe that the overall point or message of this program is to espouse a racist agenda. So, what is going on with this show that allows it to contain some of its racial message? These are the types of questions that rhetorical criticism can answer.

- **Scope**

While there is general agreement among rhetorical scholars that criticism is an appropriate method of study, there are differing opinions about why and how it contributes to an overall understanding of rhetoric. Depending on the rhetorical critic, the assumptions about rhetorical criticism vary. As a way of uncovering some of the various assumptions scholars bring to this method of inquiry, we will look at the various definitions of criticism and rhetoric and what is considered within the scope of rhetorical criticism.

To Persuade? We can begin to see the relationship between rhetorical theory and criticism when we examine the beginnings of criticism. Pay attention to the shared qualities and assumptions. In an early (1925) essay on rhetorical criticism, the study of rhetoric was limited to that of speakers and speeches, and included a number of points to which the critic should attend: speaker's personality, speaker's public character, audience, speaker's leading ideas, motives, topics, proofs, judgment of human nature, questions considered, textual authenticity, arrangement, mode of expression preparation, delivery, style, effect on audience, influence on the time (Wichelns). With this broad agenda for critics, Wichelns failed to provide them with a method to accomplish these goals. His essay was influential in that it lead to an exclusive focus and assumption that criticism was to be centered on oral rhetoric. Hopefully, you can see how this parallels the focus of rhetoric in the classical period.

Other scholars tried to fill in some of the gaps of this early essay. Ewbank tried to broaden the scope in 1931 by performing "case studies" where the critic wrote from personal experience derived from witnessing the speech. He looked at the audience's immediate reactions and the effect of the speech on them. Hunt (1935) said the critic should be focused more on values and less on performance of a work. He wanted critics to make value judgments but gave no definition of such. Bryant (1937) was the first person to question the exclusive focus on "great" individuals. He wanted a focus on social forces or movements and thought forces and figures should be studied together. Booth expanded rhetoric to include novels, plays, editorials and songs.

Of the more recent critics, Cathcart says "rhetoric is used . . . to refer to a communicator's intentional use of language and other symbols to influence or persuade selected receivers to act, believe, or feel the way the communicator desires in problematic situations" (2). Of criticism he says it is "that special form of communication which examines how communication is accomplished and whether it is worthwhile. . . Criticism is thus the counterpart of creativity" (3). Imbedded in these definitions are Cathcart's assumptions that only messages that are intended are within the scope of study. Such messages are designed to change the listener or the situation in some way, presumably to solve the problematic situation. This implies that the rhetor knows how to solve the problem and believes that he or she has the best solution. The requirement of a "problematic situation" narrows the scope considerably as does Cathcart's examples of rhetoric—public discourse such as speeches, essays, interviews, and slogans (2). Thus, for Cathcart, a rhetor comes to the problematic speaking situation with his or her solution based on what he or she believes the audience needs to resolve the conflict. Criticism is used to assess weather the rhetor was successful in persuading the audience to accept the solution and the strategies used to gain such acceptance. Black in Rhetorical Criticism, defines rhetoric as, "discourse that aims to influence" (17). Criticism then, "is a discipline that, through the investigation and appraisal of the activities and products of men, seeks as its end the understanding of man himself. . . .rhetorical criticism is the criticism of rhetorical discourse" (9, 10). Here, Black offers and suggests a broader scope than Cathcart. Rhetoric is not limited to solely problematic situations; thus, it does not assume that the rhetor has a solution for the audience. Like Cathcart, he assumes the rhetorical goal is to influence and persuade and is concerned with the strategies that are most effective; scholars look at "what he says and how he says it" (17).

Many other critics assume the intent to persuade as the natural goal of rhetoric and focus on the strategies for doing so. Stewart says rhetorical criticism is "the study of man's past attempt to change the behavior of fellow man, primarily through verbal symbols" (1). Brock and Scott claim rhetoric may be defined as the human effort to induce cooperation through the use of symbols" (6). By reading about the various definitions and assumptions of rhetorical criticism we hope you can begin to see a relationship between some of the early definitions of rhetorical theory (as persuasion) and how that impacted the development of rhetorical criticism.

Or Not to Persuade? The definitions offered by Foss, however, suggest at least two different assumptions. She defines rhetoric as "the action humans perform when they use symbols for the purpose of communication with one another" (4). Like other theorists and critics, Foss is concerned with symbolic action, however, she does not assume that the sole propose of those symbols is to persuade others. Rhetoric may be intended to persuade, but it may also be "an invitation to understanding": an offer to others to see our world the way we do, not in the hope that they will change, but that they will understand (5). At other times rhetoric may be used for self-discovery, to bring people together, or entertainment. With the focus on communication as understanding rather than persuasion, Foss offers critics a broad scope for the study of rhetorical discourse.

Foss defines criticism as "the process of systematically investigating and explaining symbolic acts and artifacts for the purpose of understanding rhetorical processes" (7). Like other critics she wants to understand strategies or processes, but she does not assume that she can understand "man," rather she wants to understand rhetoric and how humans use it. From her definitions, we see that Foss approaches rhetorical criticism with two assumptions that differ from other scholars. First, she does not assume that the role of the rhetorical critic is to judge the effectiveness of the speaker or discourse: their purpose is to understand. Second, she does not believe that the critic must possess knowledge of the motives of the communicator. In her perspective, this is not necessary because, regardless of intent, a message has been transmitted and produces an effect upon the audience. The goal is to uncover the meanings that are produced; not necessarily the intended meaning.

- **Purpose**

While scholars debate the purpose of rhetorical criticism, the arguments fall into one of two categories: judgment and understanding. While, this may be an oversimplification in some cases, it is useful for our purpose here. Those who see rhetorical criticism as a means of judgment are concerned with articulating the effectiveness of a text or artifact and the strategies that contributed or detracted from its overall success. How effective was President Bush, for example, in persuading the American people and the world that we should go to war with Iraq in his Sate of the Union address in January 2003?

Those concerned with understanding may be concerned with comprehension and appreciation of the artifact itself and how that knowledge contributes to an understanding of rhetoric and rhetorical processes. A critic interested in this sort of project might ask a question such as, Does the 2003 film, Charlie's Angels II: Full Throttle, offer an empowering feminist voice or does it reinscribe a traditionally feminine image? Both questions can be answered by rhetorical criticism: they are just different kinds of questions. Currently, the collective opinion seems to be moving in the direction of understanding as the purpose of rhetorical criticism. We see that Foss is less concerned with judgment as she is with comprehension as suggested in her above definitions of rhetoric and criticism. She sees a direct and explicit correlation between the criticism of an artifact and an understanding of rhetorical theory: "the critic is interested in discovering what the artifact teaches us about the nature of rhetoric" (8). The overall goal is to contribute to our effectiveness as communicators. When we know and understand how rhetoric works we are able to critique the rhetorical choices of others and make effective rhetorical choices for our own communication. The aim for the individual is to be rhetorically effective in a given situation by understanding the communicative options available to him or her. Other specific purposes can include artistic, analytic, and ideological. Leff describes the artistic critic as one who sees the text as art and wants to foster an appreciation in the reader (224). The purpose is for the reader to understand and therefore, appreciate the art form. The analytic critic sees the text, (such as advertisements or political campaigns) as an object of study and seeks the means to comprehend. Wanderer talks of the ideological or advocate critic as looking at how a text may be oppressive, suppress the readers' interpretations, closes off other readings or possibilities (social protests, minorities.) Feminist and ideological criticism seek the emancipation of all human potential and exposes how that potential is being silenced by the existing ideologies.

What Can We Learn?

The value of rhetorical criticism comes from the insights it can provide about rhetorical communication and the artifact we study. Through these methodological process critics come to a greater aware ness about the variety of communication options open to us in a given situation. This awareness helps us to be effective communicators. Conversely, discovering what is ineffective in a discourse teaches us what not to do when we communicate with others. By uncovering hidden meanings in a text we learn how various messages are produced and their effects. This can help us decipher how we may want to respond in a given situation: "The value of both critical theory and textual criticism derives from the extent to which they inform discursive practice and advance our understanding of rhetorical communication" (Henry 220-221). Criticism also helps us learn about a specific text. When we can identify a text with pervasive effects, rhetorical criticism can inform us as to how and why that text is so effective. Thus, rhetorical criticism enables scholars to learn more about their own communication strategies, the study of rhetoric, and the specific artifacts that interest us.

The Relationship Between Theory and Criticism

Many critics are concerned with the relationship between theory and practice and how an understanding of one contributes to the other. In this way theory and criticism are mutually interdependent: the purpose for criticism is to unite theory and practice. Criticism must be informed by method so others can see why and how we reason about quality i.e. we need theory for criticism and criticism for theory (Farrell 4). Campbell says the purpose of criticism is to contribute to the modification and application of theory (18). Criticism helps us see gaps in theory and the limits of knowledge so we may ascertain social significance of discourse. If there is a gap in theory criticism helps us create a new one. Hart, however, claims that critics do not have to choose between studying texts and contributing to theory; productive criticism can do both, regardless of the critic’s intention. If you remember back to the chapter on theory at the beginning of the text we talked about theory as an idea of how something works. The “something” in this case is language or discourse; rhetorical theories provide models for how language functions as part of the human experience and rhetorical criticism is a way of testing and revising the particular theory with a real life case study.

Current Uses of Rhetorical Theory and Criticism

B

y now you should have a clear understanding of what rhetorical theory and criticism are and the uses they serve for the discipline as well as the world outside academia. We would like to conclude this chapter by detailing some of the current issues and questions occupying rhetorical scholars. As the examples are numerous, we will speak to three specific content areas: the study of social movements, political and campaign rhetoric, and studies of popular culture.

Social Movements

One of the exciting things about Communication is that is it has always been interested in the large sociopolitical issues facing society. Social change as it occurs through social movements is one such area of research. Think back to your history lessons concerning minority populations in the United States. Has the political status of women; African Americans; Asians; gays, lesbians, bisexual, and transgendered individuals always been what it is today? (We are not suggesting here that there is finally equality among people of various races, ethnicities, genders, or sexual orientations; only that it has been much worse.) How have those changes come about? Certainly laws and customs have changed in an attempt to provide more equal access to resources and opportunities. But prior to such legislative changes a change in attitude was necessary. Here is where social movement rhetoric played a vital role in changes our nation's history. The rhetoric of leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Caesar Chavez have all been influential in changing attitudes. Scholars interested in these issues study the discourse of the leaders (i.e. their speeches) as well as the rhetorical vision they create for their audience. Moreover, they also attempt to learn from the past about what sort of rhetorical strategies will be successful in contemporary and future movements. As Bowers, Ochs, and Jensen explain, "one of the goals of studying social movements is to make predictions" (141).

Public Address

Another area of research that falls within the scope of rhetorical theory and criticism is that of public address. This area is concerned with politics and political oratory. Some students of rhetoric may go onto careers in speech writing and campaign design on the behalf of political candidates. In this context they are able to utilize their skills in rhetoric and persuasion to answer the challenge of, how can I get people to vote for a particular candidate. Kathleen Hall Jamison is an example of such a person. She worked on the Dukakis presidential campaign and has authored several books in this area. Similarly, one might be in the business of analyzing political speeches and offering suggestions about what is effective and ineffective in a politician's rhetoric.

Popular Culture

The study and critique of popular culture is something that most, if not all, of us participate in at some level. Do you ever watch music videos with your friends and comment on the use of some of the images? Do you look forward to the commercials during the Super Bowl to see the latest and innovative advertising techniques? As you watch, critique, and analyze these images, you are beginning the process of rhetorical criticism. The only difference between you and the professional critic (beside lots of schooling) is that the professional critic has decided to make his or her analysis systematic. This is accomplished by employing one of the formal methods discussed earlier, such as the pentad or a feminist critique. As most people participate in some form of popular culture such as television, films, music, sports, or fashion, you can see the potential impact that popular culture messages and images have on a society. Thus, scholars of popular culture feel it is important to pay critical attention to them rather than dismiss them as trivial.

Summary

By now you have a more complex understanding of the term rhetoric and realize the distinction between the use of the term in the popular press and its meaning within the context of the Communication discipline. At a very basic level, you know that it refers to the process in which humans use symbols to communicate with one another. Moreover, you should know the contributions of classical and well as contemporary theorists to understanding human symbol use. As a way of knowing, rhetorical criticism provides scholars with a unique methodological tool for understanding communication. Through the contributions and paradigm shifts from classical to contemporary scholars, the scope of rhetorical criticism has been widened to include a variety of social events, acts, and artifacts that we encounter in our daily life. This method has a direct impact on our lives by informing us about the communicative options available to us when communicating with others in cultural, professional, personal and political contexts.

Discussion Questions

1. What specific contributions did classical theorists make to the study of rhetoric?
2. How have contemporary rhetorical theorists challenged the canon?
3. Compare and contrast classical rhetorical theories versus contemporary ones.
4. What idea has been at the center of most definitions of rhetoric?#Do you think rhetoric should refer only to persuasion? What are the limits and advantages to such an approach?
5. What role do you think the study of rhetoric can play in today's social world? The political context?
6. What are some examples of the use of classical rhetorical theory in contemporary rhetorical discourse?
7. What sort of research question would you, as a scholar interested in the rhetoric of popular culture, ask?
8. What might some of the limitations of rhetorical criticism as a method?
9. What are the elements of Burke's pentad? Give an example of how you would apply it to the study of a particular body of discourse.
10. What kind of research question would you want to ask using the method of feminist criticism?

Key Terms

- Afrocentric
- Aristotle
- Artifact
- Aspasia of Miletus
- Audience analysis
- Canons
- Cicero
- Dialectic
- Ethos
- Fantasy Theme Criticism
- Feminist Criticism
- Humanism
- Ideological Criticism
- Logos
- Narrative Criticism
- Neo-Aristotelian Criticism
- Pan Chao
- Pathos
- Pentadic Criticism
- Persuasion
- Plato
- Postmodernism
- Public Address
- Quintillian
- Rationalism
- Rhetoric
- Rhetorical Criticism
- Social Constructionism
- Socrates
- Types of speeches

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Chapter 8 - Mass Communication

Chapter 8

Mass Communication and the Media

Chapter Objectives:

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

• Define mass communication.

• Identify key functions of mass communication.

• Understand prominent theories of mass communication.

• Understand the role that media plays in your life.

• Describe pop culture.

• Identify several key elements of media literacy.

• Recognize your role in the global community.

Y

ou're sitting in a classroom reading the school paper and listening to your ipod when the clock hits the top of the hour. You take out your headphones and put the paper down when you hear the instructor begin talking. She is referring to a web page projected on the screen in front of class. She welcomes everyone to the start of the school year, but stops to wait for the guy next to you to put down the magazine he's reading. She explains that she will only provide an electronic version of the syllabus, pointing to the course web page. Everyone in the class is to go online and read the syllabus before the next class meeting. She explains that, besides lecture and discussion, you will need to watch CNN, read the Wall Street Journal, and watch several clips she's listed on YouTube to demonstrate and learn key concepts. Suddenly, from the back of the class a cell phone begins playing the latest Jay-Z song. The instructor stops mid-sentence and explains the class policy about turning off cell phones during class. Your classmate never answers the phone but reaches into his pocket and looks at the phone screen. Another student finishes text messaging and puts her phone away. The instructor explains that you will need to read chapter one of the textbook by next week. Included with your textbook is a pass-code that allows you to connect to an online database so you can access articles for your semester project. After she answers student questions, class is over.

As you head out the door you hear music coming from the building sound system playing the college FM radio station. You walk to the student union to grab lunch and watch Sports Center. On your drive home you turn on the satellite radio station to listen for scores, and check the weather and traffic. While driving, you notice the new billboard advertising Ford trucks. When you get home you sit down in front of your computer. You check a class web page to see if you have homework, check the day's current events and sporting scores, then check your email. You read several messages, delete the spam, and get irritated at the pop-up advertisements that keep jumping on your screen. Before shutting down your computer you update your Facebook page before sitting on the couch to watch a movie that you recorded on your DVR the night before. As you lean back on the couch, you clear away a stack of magazines to set down your drink.

The above example represents the amount of mass communication we are exposed to daily. In the U.S. we witness and understand a great deal of our world through mass communication. Remember from Chapter 2 that the early part of the 20th century communication scholars began to ask questions about the impact of media as more and more mass communication outlets were developed. Questions then and now include: To what degree does mass communication affect us? How do we use or access mass communication? How does each medium influence how we interpret messages? Do we play an active or passive role when we interact with media? This chapter explores these questions by examining the concept of mass communication, its evolution, its functions, its theories, and its place in society.

Defining Mass Communication

Littlejohn and Foss (2005) define **mass communication** as ***"the process whereby media organizations produce and transmit messages to large publics and the process by which those messages are sought, used, and consumed by audiences"*** (p. 273). McQuail (1994) states that mass communication is, ***"only one of the processes of communication operating at the society-wide level, readily identified by its institutional characteristics"***(p. 7). Simply put, mass communication is the public transfer of messages through media or technology driven channels to a large number of recipients from an entity, usually involving some type of cost or fee (advertising) for the user. "The sender often is a person in some large media organization, the messages are public, and the audience tends to be large and varied" (Berger, 2002, p.121). However, with the advent of outlets like YouTube, MySpace, FaceBook, and text messaging, notice that these definitions do not account for the increased opportunities individuals now have to send messages to large audiences through mediated channels.

Nevertheless, most mass communication comes from large organizations that influence culture on a large scale. Schramm (1963) refers to this as a "working group organized around some device for circulating the same message, at about the same time, to large numbers of people" (p. 115). Today the working groups that control most mass communication are large conglomerates such as Viacom, King World, Disney, ComCast, and Ruppert Murdock's group. An example of the power of these large conglomerates occurred in 2000 when Time-Warner, one of the largest media producers, merged with America Online (AOL) for $181.6 billion, making it one of the largest corporate mergers in history. Just the year before that, Viacom purchased CBS to add it to its lineup of MTV, Nickelodeon, and many others.

Remember our definition of communication study: "who says what, through what channels (media) of communication, to whom, [and] what will be the results" (Smith, Lasswell & Casey, 1946, p. 121)? When examining mass communication, we are interested in who has control over what content, for what audience, using what medium, and what are the results? Media critic Robert McChesney (1997) said we should be worried about the increasingly concentrated control of mass communication. He states that as a result of very few organizations controlling mass communication, "The implications for political democracy, by any standard, are troubling" (p. 23). Ben Bagdikian (2004) points out that over the past two decades, major media outlets went from being owned by 50 corporations to just five. For both McChesney and Bagdikian, there are great implications for having so few organizations control so much communication. Perhaps this is why outlets like MySpace, YouTube, and FaceBook have grown in popularity, because they provide alternative voices to the few that control most mass communication outlets.

To understand mass communication it is important to be aware of some of the key factors that distinguish it from other forms of communication. First, is the dependence on a media channel to convey a message to a large audience. Second, the audience tends to be distant, diverse, and varying in size depending on the medium and message. Third, mass communication is most often profit driven, and feedback is limited. Fourth, because of the impersonal nature of mass communication, participants are not equally present during the process.

Mass communication continues to become more integrated into our lives at an increasingly rapid pace. This "metamorphosis" is representative by the convergence occurring (Fidler, 1997) between ourselves and technology, where we are not as distanced from mass communication as in the past. Increasingly we have more opportunities to use mediated communication to fulfill interpersonal and social needs. O'Sullivan (2003) refers to this new use of mass communication to foster our personal lives as **"masspersonal communication"** where ***(a) traditional mass communication channels are used for interpersonal communication, (b) traditionally interpersonal communication channels are used for mass communication, and (c) traditional mass communication and traditional interpersonal communication occur simultaneously.*** Over time, more and more overlap occurs. "Innovations in communication technologies have begun to make the barriers between mass and interpersonal communication theory more permeable than ever" (O'Sullivan, 2003). Sites such as Myspace, Facebook, Xanga, Couchsurfing, YouTube, and Bebo are classic examples of masspersonal communication where we use mass communication to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships.

Perhaps we are turning into a **"global village"** through our interdependence with mass communication. Suddenly, "across the ocean" has become "around the corner." McLuhan (1964) predicted this would happen because of mass communication's ability to unify people around the globe. Are you a player in what Hagerman calls the "public sphere" that mass communication creates by posting information about yourself on public sites? If so, be careful about what you post about yourself as many employers are "googling" potential employees to look into their personal lives before making decisions about hiring them. As we continue our discussion of mass communication we want to note that mass communication does not include every communication technology. As our definition states, mass communication is communication that potentially reaches large audiences. We will deal with other communication technologies in the last chapter

Evolution of Mass Communication

Societies have long had a desire to find effective ways to report environmental dangers and opportunities; circulate opinions, facts, and ideas; pass along knowledge, heritage, and lore; communicate expectations to new members; entertain in an expansive manner; and broaden commerce and trade (Schramm, 1963). The primary challenge has been to find ways to communicate messages to as many people as possible. Our need-to-know prompted innovative ways to get messages to the masses.

Mass Communication Study Then

In 1949, Carl I. Hovland, Arthur A. Lumsdaine, and Fred D. Sheffield wrote the book Experiments on Mass Communication. They looked at two kinds of films the Army used to train soldiers. First, they examined orientation and training films such as the "Why We Fight" that were intended to teach facts to the soldiers, as well as generate a positive response from them for going to war. The studies determined that significant learning did take place by the soldiers from the films, but primarily with factual items. The Army was disappointed with the results that showed that the orientation films did not do an effective job in generating the kind of positive responses they desired from the soldiers. Imagine, people were not excited about going to war.

In this age of information overload, multiple news sources, high-speed connections, and high-tech gear, you probably can't imagine your life without mass communication. Can you relate to your grandparents' stories about laying in bed and listening to baseball games on AM radio, "watching" the radio with the family in the house, listening to the Jack Benny Show, talking on party telephone lines (multiple customers on one phone line), black and white televisions, computers as big as a classroom, offices without computers, or turn tables playing vinyl records? Obviously, mass communication has evolved quickly.

Before writing, humans relied on oral traditions to pass on information. "It was only in the 1920s-according to the Oxford English Dictionary-that people began to speak of 'the media', and a generation later, in the 1950s, of a 'communication revolution', but a concern with the means of communication is very much older than that" (Briggs & Burke, 2002, p. 1). Oral and written communication played a major role in ancient cultures. These oral cultures used stories to document the past and impart cultural standards, traditions, and knowledge. With the development of alphabets around the world over 5000 years ago, written language with ideogrammatic (picture-based) alphabets like hieroglyphics started to change how cultures communicated.

Still, written communication remained ambiguous and did not reach the masses until the Greeks and Romans resolved this by establishing a syllable alphabet representing sounds. But, without something to write on, written language was inefficient. Eventually, paper making processes were perfected in China, which spread throughout Europe via trade routes (Baran, 2002). Mass communication was not quick, but it was far-reaching (Briggs & Burke, 2002). This forever altered how cultures saved and transmitted cultural knowledge and values. Any political or social movement throughout the ages can be traced to the development and impact of the printing press and movable metal type (Steinberg, 1959). With his technique, Guttenberg could print more than a single page of specific text. By making written communication more available to larger numbers of people, mass printing became responsible for giving voice to the masses and making information available to common folks (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967). McLuhan (1962) argues that Gutenberg's evolution of the printing press as a form of mass communication had profound and lasting effects on culture.

With the transition to the industrial age in the 18th century, large populations headed to urban areas, creating mass audiences of all economic classes seeking information and entertainment. Printing technology was at the heart of modernization in this country that lead to magazines, newspapers, the telegraph, and the telephone. At the turn of the century (1900), pioneers like Thomas Edison, Theodore Puskas, and Nikola Tesla literally electrified the world and mass communication. With the addition of motion pictures and radio in the early 1900s, "for the first time in history, an entire population was able to participate in cultural communication" (Baran, 2002, p. 46). In the 1950s, television came of age, reaching 90% of homes by the 1960s. (Baran, p. 47). In the 1970s cable started challenging over-the-air broadcasting and traditional program distribution making the United States a wired nation. Today, over 70% of U.S. households are hooked up, having 500 channels at their finger tips with Pay-Per View (PPV) and Video on Demand (VOD).

The Information Age eventually began to replace the ideals of the industrial age. In 1983 Time magazine named the PC the first Machine of the Year. Just over a decade later PCs outsold televisions (Ebersole, 1995). Finally, in 2006, Time magazine named "you" as the person of the year for your use of technology to broaden communication.

Ebersole (1995) contends, "arguably the Web is just the latest in the parade of 'infotainment' technologies that promise a new age of opportunity. Immediate access to information, entertainment, consumer products, and participation in the democratic process are just a mouse-click away." Chances are that you, your friends, and family spend endless hours engaged in computer-mediated communication such as surfing the internet, emailing, texting, shopping, or participating in chat rooms. Romero (2003) points out that, "The Net has transformed the way we work, the way we get in contact with others, our access to information, our levels of privacy and indeed notions as basic and deeply rooted in our culture as those of time and space" (p. 88).

As more mass communication mediums develop, Marshall McLuhan (1964) states that we can understand media as either hot or cold depending on the amount of information available to the user, as well as the degree of participation. A **hot medium** ***"extends one single sense in high definition"*** (McCluhan, p. 22). Examples of hot media include photographs or radio because the message is mostly interpreted using one sense and requires little participation by participants. An audience is more passive with hot media because there is less to filter. Television is considered a **cold medium** because of the ***large amount of multi-sensory information***. The more sensory data available to multiple senses, the colder the media. We would consider the Internet a cold medium (Ebersole, 1995). Berg Nellis (2004) takes it another step. "Virtual reality, the simulation of actual environment complete with tactile sensory input, might be the extreme in cold media….This and other cutting edge technologies seem to point to increasingly cold media as we move into the digital communication future" (p. 256). Think about the online video games that people play. They have become so involved and realistic that they represent cold mediums because of the vast amount of sensory input and participation they require.

Since the printing press, mass communication has literally changed the ways we think and interact as humans. We take so much for granted as "new technologies are assimilated so rapidly in U.S. culture that historic perspectives are often lost in the process" (Fidler, 1997, p. 1). With all of this talk and research about mass communication, what functions does it serve for us?

Functions of Mass Communication

Wright (1960) characterizes seven functions of mass communication that offer insight into its role in our lives.

- **Surveillance**. The first function of mass communication is to serve as the eyes and ears for those of us seeking information about our world. When we want to find out the latest news about what's happening, we can turn on the television, surf the internet, or read a newspaper or magazine. We rely on mass communication for news and information about our daily lives such as the weather, stock reports, or the start time for a game. What was one of the first things you did after you heard about the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center? More than likely, you were glued to the Internet or your television waiting for details about the disaster. In fact, your authors' campus closed down to allow people to stay at home to collect information and be with loved ones, even though our campus is located on the other side of the country.
- **Correlation**. Correlation addresses how the media present facts that we use to move through the world. The information we get through mass communication is not objective and without bias. The grandmother of a friend of your authors stated that the information she heard on the radio, "had to be true" because it was on the radio. This statement begs the question, how credible are the media? Can we consume media without questioning motive and agenda? Someone selects, arranges, interprets, edits, and critiques the information we see. A friend of your authors' has a brother who edits for a major reality TV show. When asked if what we see if a fair representation of what really happens, the person who does the editing simply laughed and said "no."
- **Sensationalization**. There is an old saying in the news industry-"if it bleeds, it leads" that highlights the idea of sensationalization. Sensationalization is when the media puts forward the most sensational messages to titillate consumers. Elliot poses some interesting food for thought: "Media managers think in terms of consumers rather than citizens. Good journalism sells, but unfortunately, bad journalism sells as well. And, bad journalism-stories that simply repeat government claims or that reinforce what the public wants to hear instead of offering independent reporting -is cheaper and easier to produce" (2004, p.35).
- **Entertainment**. Mass media provide us with an escape from daily routines and problems by entertaining us (Zillmann & Bryant, 1986, p. 303). Media like People Magazine and E-TV keep us up to date on the doings of our favorite celebrities. We watch sports on television, go to the movies, play video games, and listen to our ipods and radios. Most mass communication simultaneously entertains and informs. We often turn to media in our leisure time to provide an escape from our boredom and relief from the predictability of our everyday lives. We rely on media to take us places we could not afford to go or imagine, acquaint us with bits of culture, and make us laugh or cry. Entertainment can have the secondary effect of providing companionship and/or catharsis through the media we consume.
- **Transmission**. Mass media is a vehicle to transmit cultural norms, values, rules, and habits. Consider how you learned about what is fashionable to wear or what music to listen to. Mass media plays a significant role in the socialization process. We look for role models to display appropriate cultural norms, but all too often, we do not recognize inappropriate or stereotypical behavior. We start shopping, dressing, smelling, walking, and talking like the person in the music video, commercial, or movies. Why would soft drink companies pay Christina Aguilera or Mariah Carey millions of dollars to sell their products? Have you ever bought a pair of shoes or changed your hairstyle because of something you encountered in the media? Obviously, culture, age, type of media, and other cultural variables factor into how mass communication influences how we learn and perceive our culture.

- **Mobilization**. Mass communication functions to mobilize people during times of crisis (McQuail, 1994). Think back to 9/11. Regardless of your political preferences, we mourned as a nation and rallied around national pride and patriotism during this time of crisis. Using our earlier example, your authors' campus decided to suspend classes to allow the campus community time to mourn the loss of fellow citizens. With instant access to media and information, we can collectively witness the same events taking place in real time somewhere else, thus mobilizing a large population of people around a particular event. The rising popularity of political websites such as moveon.org is another key example of the use of mass communication to mobilize people for political action.
- **Validation**. Mass communication functions to validate the status and norms of particular individuals, movements, organizations, or products. The validation of particular people or groups serves to enforce social norms (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1971). If you think about most television dramas and sitcoms, who are the primary characters? What gender and ethnicity are the majority of the stars? What gender and ethnicity are those that play criminals or those considered abnormal? The media validates particular cultural norms while diminishing differences and variations from those norms. A great deal of criticism focuses on how certain groups are promoted, and others marginalized by how they are portrayed in mass media.

Given the power of the various functions of mass communication, we need to be reflective about its presence in our lives (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967). We will now turn our attention to the study of mass communication by looking at what mass communication scholars study, and how they study it.

The Study of Mass Communication

C

ontinuing with the theme of this book, studying the role of mass communication heightens our awareness, helping us become media literate and strengthen our "ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate messages" (Baran, 2004, p. 374). Look around you. Mass communication's influence in contemporary society is pervasive, as we are all interlaced with it in our daily lives.

Mass Communication and Popular Culture

Culture is comprised of ***shared behaviors, values, beliefs, and attitudes that are learned through socialization***. As Brummett explains, "**popular culture** are those ***systems or artifacts that most people share or know about***" (2006, p. 27). Using Brummett's ideas, in order for mass communication to be popular all forms do not have to be consumed or used by everyone. Instead, its place in culture is so pervasive that we at least have some familiarity with it. You may not watch the shows like Survivor, Scrubs, or Lost but chances are you know something about them.

Case In Point

In 2002, a general manager at CNN Headline News instructed writers to insert slang words like "fly" (a sexually attractive person) into their televised graphics to resonate with younger viewers (Gordon, 2003; Sanders, 2003). Irvine (2002) points out that advertisers have been doing this for years. Abbreviations to speed up writing such as "lol" (laugh out loud) from chat rooms and e-mail are now becoming popular in daily conversation, and are even included in cell phone commercials advertising text messaging plans. Also, as new television genres replaced older ones, shows like "Survivor," "Dancing with the Stars" and "American Idol" demonstrated that viewers like watching people in "real" situations. Does media shape our culture or does our culture shape media? Which one reflects the other, or is it possible to tell which one came first? These questions point to the importance of, and need for, media theories to provide the answers.

In contrast to popular culture, **high culture** consists of those ***media that are generally not produced for the masses, require a certain knowledge base, and typically require an investment of time and money to experience them***. Examples of high culture include opera, poetry, theater, classical music, and the arts. While we generally do not use the term low culture, "Pop culture refers to mass-mediated kinds of 'low' art such as television commercials, television programs, most films, genre works of literature, and popular music" (Berger, 2002, p. 118).

Keep in mind that popular culture does not necessarily mean poor quality. Popular is not always bad and is often relative to the times. For example, think about baby boomers. Their parents said rock-n-roll music was going to ruin their generation. However, today that very same music is considered classic. In the 1950's it was said that comic books would corrupt children, and jazz was sinful. Regardless of how mass communication is perceived, it implants words, behaviors, trends, icons, and patterns of behaviors that show up in our culture. Or, as some ask, is it the other way around?

For example, in the 1980's, Wendy's aired the popular television commercial "where's the beef?" In the 1990s, Jerry Seinfeld's television show got us saying, "yada, yada, yada." And Saturday Night Live popularized the phrase, "I need more cow bell." Mass communication influences all aspects of society, including the language we use (Spitulnik, 2001). It is common for us to personalize words or phrases, especially if they're funny, and integrate them into our lives relative to our social contexts. The Seattle Times News Service (2003) reported that the 2003 version of the Oxford Dictionary of English now contains the catch phrase made famous by the HBO show The Sopranos-"bada bing" meaning an exclamation to emphasize that something will effortlessly and predictably happen. This dictionary now contains words implanted by popular culture such as "counterterrorism" and "bootylicious." Do you ever watch VH1? Maybe you've seen their version of a Pop Culture Dictionary. Certain words become a part of our shared understanding through media exposure. Think about other acronyms and language that are now commonplace that were not just a few years ago: MP3s, DVDs, DVRs, ipods, etc.

Grounding Theories of Mass Communication

Thirty years ago Osmo Wiio (1978) argued that mass communication does not accurately portray reality. Interesting that 30 years later we now have a large number of "reality tv" shows that continue to blur the lines of reality and fiction. Are you always able to tell the difference between fiction and reality in mass communication? Most people tend to rationalize that others are more affected by mass communication than they are (Paul, Salwen, & Dupagne, 2000). However, we are all susceptible to the influence of mass communication.

As we discussed in Chapter 5, theories are our best representations of the world around us. "Mass communication theories are explanations and predictions of social phenomena that attempt to relate mass communication to various aspects of our personal and cultural lives or social systems" (Baran, 2002, p. 374). We need to be discerning as we examine mass communication (Baran, 2002). "The beginning of the television age in the 1950s brought in visual communication as well as stimulated the rise of an interdisciplinary theory of the media. Contributions were made from economics, history, literature, art, political science, psychology, sociology and anthropology, and led to the emergence of academic departments of communication and cultural studies" (Briggs & Burke, 2002, p. 2). Mass communication theories explore explanations for how we interact with mass communication, its role in our lives, and the effect it has on us.

Let's look at five fundamental theories of mass communication: the magic bullet theory, two-step flow theory, multi-step flow theory, uses and gratification theory, and cultivation theory.

- **Magic Bullet Theory**. The magic bullet theory (also called the hypodermic needle theory) ***suggests that mass communication is like a gun firing bullets of information at a passive audience***. "Communication was seen as a magic bullet that transferred ideas or feelings or knowledge or motivations almost automatically from one mind to another" (Schramm, 1963, p. 8). This theory has been largely discredited by academics because of its suggestion that all members of an audience interpret messages in the same way, and are largely passive receptors of messages. This theory does not take into account intervening cultural and demographic variables such as age, ethnicity, gender, personality, or education that cause us to react differently to the media messages we encounter.

However, many people hold this assumption that media like television simply shoot out information. Those who believe reality television shows actually portray reality hold some assumptions of the magic bullet theory.

Mass Communication Study Now

One of the things that has occurred in mass communication during the Iraq war is the absence of images and coverage of American soldiers killed in action. The American government has asked that the media refrain from using these images in their publications. As we have talked about how individuals now have the ability to engage in mass communication, Paul Mcleary (2008) wrote an article for the Columbia Journalism Review entitled "Blogging the Long War." In it, he examines the rise of independent reporters using blogs to report events occurring in Iraq and Afghanistan that people may not be able to see in mainstream media. As a result of access to outlets like blogs, individuals, such as soldiers can do their own reporting, and others are able to access alternative sources of information. How do you think these new outlets impact our world view?

- **Two-Step Flow Theory**. After World War II, researchers began noticing that not all audiences react in the same ways to mass communication. It became apparent that the media appear to have less power and relatively less affect than previously assumed (Klapper, 1958). The two-step flow theory suggests that mass communication messages do not move directly from a sender to the receiver (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Instead, ***a small group of people, gatekeepers, screen media messages, reshape these messages, and control their transmission to the masses***. Opinion leaders initially consume "media content on topics of particular interest to them" and make sense of it based upon their own values and beliefs (Baran, 2002). In the second step, the opinion leaders filter and interpret the messages before they pass them along to individuals with shared ideologies who have less contact with the media, opinion followers. An example of this theory occurs during political campaigns. Research has shown that during an election, media influence your voting preferences (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944) through the information they choose to show about a candidate. So, conservatives often argue that they are marginalized by the "liberal media," while liberals argue that they are marginalized because wealthy conservatives own and control the media. Either way, research reveals that media dependency becomes increasingly important for the public especially during political campaigns (Jeffries, 1997).
- **Multi-step Flow Theory**. This suggests that ***there is a reciprocal nature of sharing information and influencing beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors*** (Troldahl, 1965; Troldahl & Van Dam, 1965). The idea is that opinion leaders might create media messages, but opinion followers might be able to sway opinion leaders. Thus, the relationship to media becomes much more complex. Some believe that the role of the opinion leader in our changing culture is diminishing (Baran, 2000; Kang, 2004). This word of mouth diffusion de-bunks the notion of an all powerful media but still recognizes that media have some effect on the audience.

Mass Communication Study and You

Do you do most of your research using search engines like google or yahoo? There had been an assumption that today's younger generation is the most web-literate. However, a new study carried out by the CIBER research team at the University College London states today's youth "rely heavily on search engines, view rather than read and do not possess the critical and analytical skills to assess the information that they find on the web." The same study showed that people of all ages who use the internet have a low tolerance for any delay in obtaining information. These researchers called on libraries and educational institutions to keep up with the digital age in order to provide people with quick access to information. They also stress the importance of having good research skills, rather than doing quick and simple google searches, without thinking critically about the information and its sources. Does your campus require an sort of "information literacy" training for you to graduate?

-The British Library

- **Uses and Gratification Theory**. The uses and gratification theory suggests that ***audience members actively pursue particular media to satisfy their own needs***. "Researchers focus their attention, then, on how audiences use the media rather than how the media affect audiences" (Berger, 2002, p. 127). The reciprocal nature of the mass communication process no longer sees the media user as an inactive, unknowing participant but as an active, sense-making participant that chooses content and makes informed media choices. We tend to avoid media that do not agree with our values, attitudes, beliefs, or pocketbooks. Schramm (1963) argued that we make media choices by determining how gratified we will be from consuming a particular media. Is it easier for you to read a newspaper or would you rather watch television or listen to the radio? Even with all the information on the internet, there are still some people who consider it too time consuming and complex. Yet, many of our students do not have television sets, but instead watch all television, movies, and videos online.

- **Cultivation Theory**. Cultivation theory ***questions how active we actually are when we consume mass communication***. For example, children view between three and five hours of television a day for an average of 21 hours per week (McDowell & Futris, 2001). According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, by age 18, the average American child will have watched 200,000 acts of violence on television. When violence is shown on television, rarely are the negative consequences of it acknowledged-47% of victims show no evidence of harm and 73% of perpetrators were not held accountable for their violent actions (Huston et al., 1998).

What kind of impact does all of this have? Is it possible to tell when the average viewer becomes desensitized to violent content, or does it serve as an outlet for normal aggression? Why doesn't all violent content affect every viewer in the same manner? Does too much consumption of violent media cause violent behavior from viewers? People who consume a lot of media see the world as a more violent and scary place because of the high levels of violence they see (Gerbner, 2003).

The theory has been extended to address the more general influences of media on human social life and personal beliefs (Lowery & DeFleur, 1995). Media present cultural realities such as fear of victimization (Sparks & Ogles, 1990), body image, promiscuity, religion, families, attitudes toward racism (Allen & Hatchett, 1986), sex roles, and drug use. Kilbourne (1999), states, "Advertising doesn't cause eating problems, of course, any more than it causes alcoholism. [However,] Advertising does promote abusive and abnormal attitudes about eating, drinking, and thinness" (p. 261). Gerbner (1990) developed the three B's which state that media blurs people's traditional distinctions of reality, blends people's realities into one common cultural mainstream, and bends the mainstream to fit its institutional interests and the interests of its sponsors.

Understanding some of the theories of mass communication, let's look at some skills that will help you become a better and more critical consumer of mass communication.

Media Literacy

Studying how we use and consume mass communication allows us to scrutinize the conflicts, contradictions, problems, or even positive outcomes in our use of mass communication. With so much to learn about mass communication, how informed are you? Our consciousness of our media consumption is vital to understanding its effects on us as members of society. Media Literacy is our awareness regarding our mediated environment or consumption of mass communication. It is our ability to responsibly comprehend, access, and use mass communication in our personal and professional lives. Potter (1998) states that we should maintain cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, and moral awareness as we interact with media. Stanley J. Baran (2002) suggests a number of skills we can develop in order to be media literate.

- **Understand and respect the power of mass communication messages**. An important skill for media literacy is to acknowledge just how dominant mass communication is in our lives and around the globe. Through mass communication, media shape, entertain, inform, represent, reflect, create, move, educate, and affect our behaviors, attitudes, values, and habits in direct and indirect ways. Virtually everyone in the world has been touched in some way by mass communication, and has made personal and professional decisions largely based on representations of reality portrayed though mass communication. We must understand and respect the power media have in our lives and understand how we make sense of certain meanings.
- **Understand content by paying attention and filtering out noise**. As we learned in Chapter 1, anything that hinders communication is noise. Much of the noise in mass communication originates with our consumption

behaviors. How often do you do something other than pay complete attention to the media that you're accessing? Do you listen to the radio while you drive, watch television while you eat, or text message a friend while you're in class? When it comes to mass communication we tend to multitask, an act that acts as noise and impacts the quality of the messages and our understanding of their meanings. We often turn ourselves into passive consumers, not really paying attention to the messages we receive as we perform other tasks while consuming media.

- **Understand emotional versus reasoned reactions to mass communication content in order to act accordingly**. A great deal of mass communication content is intended to touch us on an emotional level. Therefore, it's important to understand our emotional reactions to mass communication. Advertising often appeals to our emotions in order to sell products (Jhally, 1990). "Sex sells" is an old advertising adage, but one that highlights how often we make decisions based on emotional reactions, versus reasoned actions. Glance through magazines like Maxim or Glamour and you'll quickly realize how the emotions associated with sex are used to sell products of all kinds. Reasoned actions require us to think critically about the mass communication we consume before we come to conclusions simply based on our emotional responses.
- **Develop heightened expectations of mass communication content**. Would you consider yourself an informed consumer of mass communication? Do you expect a lot from mass communication? You may like a mystery novel because it's "fun," or a movie might take your mind off of reality for a few hours. However, Baran (2002) challenges us to require more from the media we consume. "When we expect little from the content before us, we tend to give meaning making little effort and attention" (p. 57). It depends upon you what you're willing to accept as quality. Your authors have noticed that we watch fewer and fewer mainstream movies because, as we like to put it, "they're stupid." More and more we look for foreign films, independent films, and documentaries as they seem like they are better quality than many of the popular movies released by Hollywood.
- **Understand genre conventions and recognize when they are being mixed**. All media have their own unique characteristics or "certain distinctive, standardized style elements" that mark them as a category or genre (Baran, 2002, p. 57). We expect certain things from different forms of mass communication. For example, most of us believe we are able to tell the difference between news and entertainment. But, are we? Television news shows often recreate parts of a story to fill in missing video of an event. Do you always catch the "re-enactment" disclaimer? Movies such as United 93 or Rendition effectively blur the lines between fact and fiction, and can have the effect of making us think we are watching "reality." Even eighty years ago, Walter Lippmann (1922) recognized that media are so invasive in our lives that we might have difficulty distinguishing between what is real and what is manipulated by the media. The "reality TV" genre is now blurring these lines even more. Another example is the election of Arnold Schwarzenegger as governor of California. He, and others, often refer to him as the "governator", a blurring of his fictional role as the Terminator and his real role as California's governor.

Case In Point

The Tao of Media Literacy

How do media affect us? Are we media literate? Werner Heisenberg (1958) in The Physicist's Conception of Nature relates a timeless, allegorical story about the role of technology in our lives and questions if our interactions are mindful or thoughtless in regards to change. In Heisenberg's analogy, the wise old, Chinese sage warns us about the delicate balance between humans, nature, and technology.

In this connection it has often been said that the far-reaching changes in our environment and in our way of life wrought by this technical age have also changed dangerously our ways of thinking, and that here lie the roots of the crises, which have shaken our times and which, for instance, are also expressed in modern art. True, this objection's much older than modern technology and science, the use of implements going back to our earliest beginnings. Thus, two and a half thousand years ago, the Chinese sage Chuang-Tzu spoke of the danger of the machine when he said: As Tzu-Gung was [traveling] through the regions north of the river Han, he saw an old man working in his vegetable garden. He had dug an irrigation ditch. The man would descend into the well, fetch up a vessel of water in his arms and pour it out into the ditch. While his efforts were tremendous the results appeared to be very [meager]. Tzu-Gung said, "There is a way whereby you can irrigate a hundred ditches in one day, and whereby you can do much with little effort. Would you not like to hear of it?" Then the gardener stood up, looked at him and said, "And what would that be?" Tzu-Gung replied, "You take a wooden lever, weighted at the back and light in front. In this way you can bring up water so quickly that it just gushes out. This is called a draw-well." Then anger rose up on the old man's face, and he said, "I have heard my teacher say that whoever uses machines does all his work like a machine. He who does his work like a machine grows a heart like a machine, and he who carries the heart of a machine in his breast loses his simplicity. He who has lost his simplicity becomes unsure in the strivings of his soul. Uncertainty in the strivings of the soul is something which does not agree with honest sense. It is not that I do not know of such things: I am ashamed to use them."

- **Think critically about mass communication messages, no matter how credible their source**. It is essential that we critically consider the source of all mass communication messages. No matter how credible a media source, we can't always believe everything we see or hear because all mass communication is motivated by political, profit, or personal factors. Publicists, editors, and publishers present the information from their perspective--informed by their experiences and agendas. Even if the motive is pure or the spin is minimal, we tend to selectively interpret meanings based on our own lived experiences. Audiences do not always hold similar perceptions regarding mediated messages.
- **Understand the internal language of mass communication to understand its effects, no matter how complex**. This skill requires us to develop sensitivity to what is going on in the media. This doesn't just refer to whether you can program a DVR or surf the internet. This means being familiar with the intent or motivation behind the action or message. "Each medium has its own specific internal language. This language is expressed in production values--the choice of lighting, editing, special effects, music, camera angle, location on the page, and size and placement of headline. To be able to read a media text, you must understand its language" (Baran, 2002, p. 58). What effect do these have on your interpretive or sense making abilities? For example, most news coverage of the Iraq war includes background symbols of American flags, eagles, as well as words like "Freedom," and "Liberation." What is the impact of using these symbols in "objective" coverage of something like war? Shows like CSI make editorial choices to glamorize and make forensic science "sexy." On the surface, we might not think that being a forensic scientist would be all that exciting, but shows like CSI make it appear so. Reality shows such as Extreme Makeover Home Edition have a distinct formula that we've come to anticipate and recognize each week.

Summary

Societies have always needed effective and efficient means to transmit information. Mass communication is the outgrowth of this need. If you remember our definition of mass communication as the public transfer of messages through media or technology driven channels to a large number of recipients, you can easily identify the multiple forms of mass communication you rely on in your personal, academic, and professional lives. These encompass print, auditory, visual, and interactive media forms. A relatively recent mass communication phenomenon known as masspersonal communication combines mass communication channels with interpersonal communication and relationships, where individuals are now gaining access to technology that allows them to reach large audiences. While mass communication is vital to the success of social movements and political participation it has seven basic functions. The first of which is surveillance, or the “watch dog” role. Correlation occurs when an audience receives facts and usable information from mass media sources. When the most outrageous or fantastic stories are presented we are witnessing the sensationalization function of media. Needing an escape from routines or stress we turn to media for its entertainment value. As a cultural institution, mass communication transmits cultural values, norms and behaviors, mobilizes audiences, and validates dominant cultural values. As media technology has evolved, so have the scholarly theories for understanding them. The five theories we discussed are different primarily in the degree of passivity versus activity they grant the audience. The magic-bullet theory assumes a passive audience while the two-step-flow and multi-step-flow theories suggest that there is a reciprocal relationship between the audience and the message. The theory of uses and gratification suggests that audiences pick and choose media to satisfy their individual needs. Gerbner’s cultivation theory takes a long-term perspective by suggesting that media is one of many cultural institutions responsible for shaping or cultivating attitudes. Because of mass communication’s unquestionable role in our lives, media literacy skills are vital for any responsible consumer and citizen. Specifically, we can become media literate by understanding and respecting the power of mass communication messages, understanding media content by paying attention, understanding emotional versus reasoned responses to mass communication, developing heightened expectations of mass communication content, understanding genre conventions and recognizing when they’re mixed, understanding the internal language of mass communication, and above all—thinking critically!

Discussion Questions

1. What is the role of the oral tradition in today’s society?
2. Does media directly influence individuals?
3. What determines what media an individual will use?
4. Is it the form of the media or its content that most deeply influences us?
5. Which mass communication theory do you feel most accurately portrays your media experiences? Why?
6. With constantly changing technology, what do you see as the future of mass communication?
7. How involved should the government be in protecting us from media effects? Where do you draw the line between free speech and indecency? Is censorship ever warranted?

Key Terms

- cold media
- correlation
- cultivation theory
- entertainment
- gatekeepers
- global village
- hot media
- magic bullet theory
- mass communication
- masspersonal communication
- media literacy
- mobilization
- multi-step flow theory
- opinion followers

- opinion leaders
- popular culture
- sensationalization
- surveillance
- transmission
- two-step flow theory
- uses and gratification theory
- validation

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Chapter 9 - Interpersonal Communication

Chapter 9

Interpersonal Communication

Chapter Objectives:

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

• Define interpersonal communication.

• Explain self-disclosure.

• Understand the role of communication climate on interpersonal communication.

• Be aware of the role of dialectical tensions in interpersonal communication.

• Understand the unique dynamics of friendship.

• Understand the unique dynamics of romantic relationships.

• Understand the unique dynamics of family.

• Understand the various ways of interpreting and responding to conflict in interpersonal communication.

Think about your relationships in the last few years. You may have just transitioned from high school to a community college or university. Perhaps you and your friends from high school went to different colleges and are now living far apart from each other. If you have recently been separated by distance from friends or family, you have noticed that it is more difficult to stay connected and share all of the little things that go on in your day. As you continue to grow and change in college, it is likely that you will create relationships along the way. Being away from your family, you will probably notice changes to your relationships with them. All of these dynamics, and many more, fall under the scope of interpersonal communication. Before going any further, let us define interpersonal communication. "Inter" means between, among, mutually, or together. The second part of the word, "personal" refers to a specific individual or particular role that an individual may occupy. Thus, **interpersonal communication** is ***communication between individual people***. We often engage in interpersonal communication in **dyads**, which means ***between two people***. It may also occur in small groups such as you and your housemates trying to figure out a system for household chores.

We believe it is important for you to know that the definition of interpersonal communication is not simply a quantitative one. What this means is that you cannot define it by merely counting the number of people involved. Instead, Communication scholars view interpersonal communication qualitatively; meaning that it occurs when people communicate with each other as unique individuals. It occurs when we communicate to "build knowledge of one another and create shared meanings" (Wood, 1999, p. 24). Thus, interpersonal communication is a process of exchange where there is desire and motivation on the part of those involved to get to know each other as individuals. We will use this definition of interpersonal communication to explore the three primary types of relationships in our lives—friendships, romantic relationships, and family relationships. Given that conflict is a natural part of interpersonal communication, we will also discuss multiple ways of understanding and managing conflict. But before we go into detail about specific interpersonal relationships, let's examine two important aspects of interpersonal communication: self-disclosure and climate.

Self Disclosure

Because interpersonal communication is the primary means by which we get to know others as unique individuals, it is important to understand the role of self-disclosure. Self-disclosure is the process of revealing information about yourself to others that is not readily known by them—you have to disclose it. In face-to-face interactions, telling someone “I am a white woman” would not be self-disclosure because that person can perceive that about you without being told. However, revealing, “I am an avid surfer” or “My favorite kind of music is hip-hop” would be examples of self-disclosure because these are pieces of personal information others do not know unless you tell them. Given that our definition of interpersonal communication requires people to “build knowledge of one another” to get to know them as unique individuals, the necessity for self-disclosure should be obvious.

There are degrees of self-disclosure, ranging from relatively safe (revealing your hobbies or musical preferences), to more personal topics (illuminating fears, dreams for the future, or fantasies). Typically, as relationships deepen and trust is established, self-disclosure increases in both breadth and depth. We tend to disclose facts about ourselves first (I am a Biology major), then move towards opinions (I feel the war is wrong), and finally disclose feelings (I’m sad that you said that). An important aspect of self-disclosure is the rule of reciprocity. This rule states that self-disclosure between two people works best in a back and forth fashion. When you tell someone something personal, you probably expect them to do the same. When one person reveals more than another, there can be an imbalance in the relationship because the one who self discloses more may feel vulnerable as a result of sharing personal information while the other person has not. One way to visualize self-disclosure is the Johari Window which comes from combining the first names of the window’s creators, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham. The window is divided into four quadrants: the arena, the blind spot, the facade, and the unknown (Luft, 1969).

	Known To Self	**Not Known To Self**
Known To Others	Arena/Open Self	Blind Self
Not Known To Others	Facade/Hidden Self	Unknown Self

The arena area contains information that is known to us and to others, such as our height, hair color, occupation, or major. In general, we are comfortable discussing or revealing these topics with most people. Information in the blind spot includes those things that may be apparent to others, yet we are unaware of it in ourselves. The habit of playing with your hair when nervous may be a habit that others have observed but you have not. The third area, the façade, contains information that is hidden from others but is known to you. Previous mistakes or failures, embarrassing moments, or family history are topics we typically hold close and reveal only in the context of safe, long-term relationships. Finally, the unknown area contains information that neither others, nor we, know about. We cannot know how we will react when a parent dies or just what we will do after graduation until the experience occurs. Knowing about ourselves, especially our blind and unknown areas, enables us to have a healthy, well-rounded self-concept. As we make choices to self-disclose to others, we are engaging in negotiating relational dialectics.

Relational Dialectics

One way we can better understand our personal relationships is by understanding the notion of relational dialectics. Baxter (1990) describes three relational dialectics that are constantly at play in interpersonal relationships. Essentially, they are a continuum of needs for each participant in a relationship that must be negotiated by those involved. Let's take a closer look at the three primary relational dialectics that are at work in all interpersonal relationships.

- **Autonomy-Connection** refers to our ***need to have close connection with others as well as our need to have our own space and identity***. We may miss our romantic partner when she or he is away but simultaneously enjoy and cherish that alone time. When you first enter a romantic relationship, you probably want to be around the other person as much as possible. As the relationship grows, you likely begin to desire fulfilling your need for autonomy, or alone time. In every relationship, each person must balance how much time to spend with the other, versus how much time to spend alone.
- **Novelty-Predictability** is the idea that ***we desire predictability as well as spontaneity in our relationships***. In every relationship, we take comfort in a certain level of routine as a way of knowing what we can count on the other person in the relationship. At the same time, too much routine gets boring so we like to mix it up a bit. Friends who get together every Saturday for brunch, and make a commitment to always try new restaurants, are balancing these opposing tensions; they have both novelty and predictability.
- **Openness-Closedness** refers to ***the desire to be open and honest with others while at the same time not wanting to reveal every thing about yourself to someone else***. One's desire for privacy does not mean they are shutting out others. It is a normal human need. We tend to disclose the most personal information to those with whom we have the closest relationships. However, even these people do not know everything about us. As the old saying goes, "We all have skeletons in our closet," and that's okay.

How We Handle Relational Dialectics

Understanding that these three dialectical tensions are at play in all relationships is a first step in understanding how our relationships work. However, awareness alone is not enough. Couples, friends, or family members have strategies for managing these tensions in an attempt to meet the needs of each person. Baxter identifies four ways we can handle dialectical tensions.

The first option is to **neutralize** the extremes of the dialectical tensions. Here, ***individuals compromise, creating a solution where neither person's need (such as novelty or predictability) is fully satisfied***. Individual needs may be different, and never fully realized. For example, if one person seeks a great deal of autonomy, and the other person in the relationship seeks a great deal of connection, neutralization would not make it possible for either person to have their desires met. Instead, each person might feel like they are not getting quite enough of their particular need met.

The second option is to ***favor one end of the dialectical continuum and ignore the other, or alternate between the extremes***. This strategy is called **separation**. A couple in a commuter relationship in which each person works in a different city may decide to live apart during the week (autonomy) and be together on the weekends (connection). In this sense, they are alternating between the extremes by being completely alone during the week, yet completely together on the weekends.

When people decide to ***divide their lives into spheres*** they are practicing **segmentation**. For example, your extended family may be very close and choose to spend religious holidays together. However, members of your extended family might reserve other special days such as birthdays for celebrating with friends. This approach divides needs according to the different segments of your life.

The final option for dealing with these tensions is **reframing**. This strategy requires creativity not only in managing the tensions, but understanding how they work in the relationship. For example, ***the two ends of the dialectic are not viewed as opposing or contradictory*** at all. Instead, they are understood as supporting the other need, as well as the relationship itself. A couple who does not live together, for example, may agree to spend two nights of the week alone or with friends as a sign of their autonomy. The time spent alone or with others gives each person the opportunity to develop themselves and their own interests so that they are better able to share themselves with their partner and enhance their connection.

In general, there is no one right way to understand and manage dialectical tensions. However, to always satisfy one need and ignore the other may be a sign of trouble in the relationship (Baxter, 1990). It is important to remember that relational dialectics are a natural part of our relationships and that we have a lot of choice, freedom, and creativity in how we work them out with our relational partners. It is also important to remember that dialectical tensions are negotiated differently in each relationship. The ways we self disclose and manage dialectical tensions contributes greatly to what we call the communication climate in relationships.

Communication Climate

D

o you feel organized, or confined, in a clean workspace? Are you more productive when the sun is shining than when it's gray and cloudy outside? Just as factors like weather and physical space impact us, so does the communication climate influence our interpersonal interaction. Communication climate is the "overall feeling or emotional mood between people" (Wood, 1999, p. 245). If you dread going to visit your family during the holidays because of tension between you and your sister, or you look forward to dinner with a particular set of friends because they make you laugh, you are responding to the communication climate—the overall mood that is created because of the people involved and the type of communication they bring to the interaction. Let's look at two different types of communication climates: Confirming and Disconfirming climates.

> **Interpersonal Communication Now**
>
> "Sticks and Stones Can Beak my Bones But Words Can Hurt Me Too"
>
> In a study published in the journal Science, researchers reported that the sickening feeling we get when we are socially rejected (being ignored at a party or passed over when picking teams) is real. When researchers measured brain responses to social stress they found a pattern similar to what occurs in the brain when our body experiences physical pain. Specifically, "the area affected is the anterior cingulated cortex, a part of the brain known to be involved in the emotional response to pain" (Fox, 2003). The doctor who conducted the study, Matt Lieberman, a social psychologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, said, "It makes sense for humans to be programmed this way. . .Social interaction is important to survival."

Confirming and Disconfirming Climates

Positive and negative climates can be understood along three dimensions—recognition, acknowledgement, and endorsement. We experience **confirming climates** when we receive ***messages that demonstrate our value and worth from those with whom we have a relationship***. Conversely, we experience **Disconfirming Climates** when we receive ***messages that suggest we are devalued and unimportant***. Obviously, most of us like to be in confirming climates because they foster emotional safety as well as personal and relational growth. However, it is likely that your relationships fall somewhere between the two extremes. Let's look at three types of messages that create confirming and disconfirming climates.

- **Recognition Messages**: Recognition ***messages either confirm or deny another person's existence***. For example, if a friend enters your home and you smile, hug him, and say, "I'm so glad to see you" you are confirming his existence. If you say "good morning" to a colleague and she ignores you by walking out of the room without saying anything, she is creating a disconfirming climate by not recognizing you as a unique individual.
- **Acknowledgement Messages**: Acknowledgement messages go beyond recognizing another's existence by ***confirming what they say or how they feel***. Nodding our head while listening, or laughing appropriately at a

funny story, are nonverbal acknowledgement messages. When a friend tells you she had a really bad day at work and you respond with, “Yeah, that does sound hard, do you want to go somewhere quiet and talk?”, you are acknowledging and responding to her feelings. In contrast, if you were to respond to your friend’s frustrations with a comment like, “That’s nothing. Listen to what happened to me today,” you would be ignoring her experience and presenting yours as more important.

- **Endorsement Messages**: Endorsement messages go one step further by ***recognizing a person’s feelings as valid***. Suppose a friend comes to you upset after a fight with his girlfriend. If you respond with, “Yeah, I can see why you would be upset” you are endorsing his right to feel upset. However, if you said, “Get over it. At least you have a girlfriend” you would be sending messages that deny his right to feel frustrated in that moment. While it is difficult to see people we care about in emotional pain, people are responsible for their own emotions. When we let people own their emotions and do not tell them how to feel, we are creating supportive climates that provide a safe environment for them to work though their problems.

Now that you understand that we must self-disclose to form interpersonal relationships, and that self-disclosure takes place in communication climates, we want to spend the rest of the chapter briefly highlighting some of the characteristics of the three primary interpersonal relationships in which we engage: Friendships, Romantic Relationships, and Family Relationships.

Developing and Maintaining Friendships

A common need we have as people is the need to feel connected with others. We experience great joy, adventure, and learning through our connection and interactions with others. The feeling of wanting to be part of a group and liked by others is natural. One way we meet our need for connection is through our friendships. Friendship means different things to different people depending on age, gender, and cultural background. Common among all friendships is the fact that they are interpersonal relationships of choice. Throughout your life, you will engage in an ongoing process of developing friendships. Bill Rawlins (1981) suggests that we develop our friendships through a series of six steps. One way to visualize these steps is through Frank Dance’s Helical Model of Communication (1967). While we may not follow these six steps in exact order in all of our relationships, these steps help us understand how we develop friendships.

The first step in building friendships occurs through **Role-Limited Interaction**. In this step, we ***interact with others based on our social roles***. For example, when your meet a new person in class, your interaction centers around your role as “student.” The communication is characterized by a focus on superficial, rather than personal topics. In this step we engage in limited self-disclosure, and rely on scripts and stereotypes. When one of your authors first met her best friend Robin, they interacted according to the roles they played in the context of their initial communication. They met at a health club and began a conversation because they were regulars at the same aerobics class. Their initial conversation was about how much they liked being members of the club and a participant in that particular aerobics class.

The second step in developing friendships is called **Friendly Relations**. This stage is characterized by ***communication that moves beyond initial roles as the participants begin to interact with one another to see of there are common interests, as well as an interest to continue getting to know one another***. As Robin and Laura shared their appreciation for their workout time they discovered a wealth of shared interests. Each of them was writing her dissertation at the time they met, and they discovered that going to an aerobics class allowed them a community of people with whom to engage in vigorous physical exercise. The development of this friendship occurred as they identified with each other as more than a workout partner. They saw each other as women of the same age, with similar goals, ambitions, and interests. Moreover, as one of them studied Communication and the other Psychology, they appreciated the differences as well as similarities in their collegiate pursuits.

The third step in developing friendships is called **Moving Toward Friendship**. In this stage, participants ***make moves to foster a more personalized friendship***. They may begin meeting outside of the setting in which the relationship started, and begin increasing the levels of self-disclosure. Self-disclosure enables the new friends to form bonds of trust. When Robin and Laura entered this stage it was right before Laura was leaving for a teaching job in China. As she was busy with travel preparations, she was also aware of this developing relationship. She was worried that since the relationship was so new, and that she would be away for months, the friendship might die out before it really began. As a way of getting close to Robin and including her in the travel preparations, Laura invited Robin to help her shop for needed items. They also talked of writing letters and emailing while she was away in China.

The fourth step in developing friendships is called **Nascent Friendship**. In this stage individuals ***commit to spending more time together***. They also may start using the term "friend" to refer to each other as opposed to "a person in my history class" or "this guy I work with." The interactions extend beyond the initial roles as participants work out their own private communication rules and norms. For example, they may start calling on a regular basis or reserving certain times and activities for each other such as going on evening runs together. While in China, Laura and Robin wrote once a week. When Laura returned, they quickly fell into a regular pattern of calling each other every afternoon to see how the dissertation writing was progressing and to make plans for meeting at the gym to work out.

The fifth step in developing friendships is **Stabilized Friendship**. In this stage, friends ***take each other for granted as friends, but not in a negative way***. Because the friendship is solid, they assume each other will be in their lives. There is an assumption of continuity. The communication in this stage is also characterized by a sense of trust as levels of self-disclosure increase and each person feels more comfortable revealing parts of him or herself to the other. This stage can continue indefinitely throughout a lifetime. When Robin and Laura became friends in 1997 they were both living in Ohio. After finishing school in 1998, they both left to take jobs—Laura moved to California and Robin to Virginia. While they were sad to move away from one another, they knew the friendship would continue. To this day they continue to be best friends.

The final step in friendship development is **Waning Friendship**. As you know, friendships do not always have a happy ending. ***Many friendships come to an end***. Perhaps the relationship is too difficult to sustain over large geographic distances. Or, sometimes people change and grow in different directions and have little in common with old friends. Sometimes friendship rules are violated to a degree beyond repair. We spoke earlier of trust as a component of friendships. One common rule of trust is that if we tell a friend a secret, he or she is expected to keep it a secret. If that rule is broken, and a friend continually breaks your trust by telling your secrets to others, you are likely to stop thinking of them as your friend.

Challenges for Friendships

While the above steps are a general path toward friendship, they are not always smooth. As with any relationship, challenges exist in friendships that can strain their development. Three of the more common challenges to friendships are gender, cultural diversity, and sexual attraction. As we emphasize throughout the book, factors such as our gender identities and cultural backgrounds always play a role in our interactions with others.

- **Gender**

Research suggests that both women and men value trust and intimacy in their friendships and value their time spent with friends (Mathews, Derlega & Morrow, 2006; Bell, 1981; Rose, 1985). However, there are some differences in the interactions that take place within women's and men's friendships (Burleson, Jones & Holmstrom, 2005; Coates, 1986; Harriman, 1985). It is quite common among female friends to get together simply to talk and catch up with one another. When calling her close friend, Antoinette might say, "Why don't you come over to my place so we can talk?" The need to connect through verbal communication is explicitly stated and forms the basis for the relationship. In contrast, among male friends a more common approach to interaction is an invitation to engage in an activity as a means of facilitating conversation. For example, John might say to his friend, "Hey, Mike, let's get out surfing this weekend." The explicit request is to engage in an activity (surfing), but John and Mike understand that as they engage in the activity, they will talk, joke around, and reinforce their friendship ties.

- **Culture**

Cultural values shape how we understand our friendships. In most Western societies that emphasize individualism (as opposed to collectivism), friendships are seen as voluntary in that we get to choose who we want in our friendship circle. If we do not like someone we do not have to be friends with him/her. Contrast this to the workplace, for example, where we may be forced to get along with colleagues even though we may not like them (Bell & Coleman, 1999). In many collectivist cultures, such as Japan and China, friendships carry certain obligations that are understood by all parties (Carrier, 1999). These may include gift giving, employment and economic opportunities, and cutting through so-called 'bureaucratic red tape.' Although these sorts of connections, particularly in business and politics, may be frowned upon in the United States because they contradict our valuing of individualism, they are a natural, normal, and logical result of friendships in collectivist cultures.

- **Sexual Attraction**

The classic film, When Harry Met Sally, highlights how sexual attraction can complicate friendships. In the movie Harry quotes the line, "Men and women can't be friends because the sex always gets in the way." Levels of sexual attraction or sexual tension may challenge friendships between heterosexual men and women, gay men, and lesbian women. This may arise from an internal desire of one of the friends to explore a sexual relationship, or if someone in the relationship indicates that he/she wants to be "more than friends." These situations might place strain on the friendship and require the individuals to address the situation if they want the friendship to continue. One approach has been the recent definition of friendships called, "Friends with Benefits." This term implies an understanding that two people will identify their relationship as a friendship, but will be open to engaging in sexual activity without committing to the other characteristics common in romantic relationships.

Developing and Maintaining Romantic Relationships

Like the other relationships in our lives, romantic relationships play an important role in fulfilling our needs for intimacy, social connection, and sexual relations. Like friendships, romantic relationships also follow general stages of creation and deterioration. Before we explore these stages, let's look at our definition of romantic relationships.

In many Western cultures, romantic relationships are voluntary. We are free to decide whom to date and form life-long romantic relationships. In some Eastern cultures these decisions may be made by parents, or elders in the community, based on what is good for the family or social group. Even in Western societies, not everyone holds the same amount of freedom and power to determine their relational partner. Parents or society may discourage interracial, interfaith, or interclass relationships. People whose relational preference is for the same sex suffer legal, political, economic, and social restrictions when making choices about marrying and having children. Given that much of the research on how romantic relationships develop is based on relationships in the West, we use Wood's definition to define **romantic relationships** as, ***"voluntary relationships between unique individuals that the partners assume will be primary and continuing parts of their lives"*** (p. 343).

Interpersonal Communication and You

How Do You Love?

The Greeks had six distinct words for love depending on the context, whereas we often use the single term "love" to describe many things. I love pizza. I love my mother. I love my dog. Look at the table below to see what Greek word for love you would use in these sentences.

<table>
<tr><td>-
| Ludus</td><td>-
| Storge</td><td>-
| Pragma</td><td>-
| Mania</td><td>-
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Think about your own romantic relationships for a moment. To whom are you attracted? Chances are they are people with whom you share common interests and encounter in your everyday routines such as going to school, work, or participation in hobbies or sports. In other words, self-identity, similarity, and proximity are three powerful influences when it comes to who we select as romantic partners. We often select others that we deem appropriate for us as they fit our self-identity; heterosexuals pair up with other heterosexuals, lesbian women with other lesbian women, and so forth. Social class, religious preference, and ethnic or racial identity are also great influences as people are more likely to pair up with others of similar backgrounds. Logically speaking, it is difficult (although not impossible with the prevalence of email and online dating services) to meet people outside of our immediate geographic area. In other words, if we do not have the opportunity to meet and interact with someone at least a little, how do we know if they are a person with whom we would like to explore a relationship? We cannot meet, or maintain a long term relationship, without sharing some sense of proximity.

We are certainly not suggesting that we only have romantic relationships with carbon copies of ourselves. Over the last few decades, there have been some dramatic shifts when it comes to numbers and perceptions of interracial marriage. From 1960-1990 the number of white-Asian couples increased tenfold, and the number of black-white couples quadrupled. According to Steve Sailer, "The reasons are obvious: greater integration and the decline of white racism. More subtly, interracial marriages are increasingly recognized as epitomizing what our society values most in a marriage: the triumph of true love over convenience and prudence" (1997).

Just like the steps we examined for developing friendships, there are general stages we follow in the development and maintenance of romantic relationships. Let's look at these six stages of growth in romantic relationships.

The first stage in the development of romantic relationships is **No Interaction**. As the name suggests, the initial stage of a romantic relationship ***occurs when two people have not interacted***. For example, you may see someone you are attracted to on the first day of class and think to yourself, "I really want to meet her." Our attraction for someone may motivate us to move beyond the no interaction stage to see if there is a possibility of developing a romantic relationship.

Interpersonal Communication and You

Dating Today

• According to the U.S. Census, 44% (100 million) of Americans are single.**

• Only one in eight will call for a second date after more than one day has passed since the first date.*

• 79% of men will decide how interested they are in a woman within the first 15 minutes of a date. Women take a little longer—about an hour.**

• 17% of people like dates set up by friends.*

• 40 million Americans use online dating services.**

• On average there are 86 unmarried men for every 100 unmarried women.**

- www.itsjustlunch.com
  - www.match.com

The second stage for developing romantic relationships is **Invitational Communication**. When we are attracted to someone, we may ***signal or invite him/her to interact with us***. For example, you can do this by asking them to dinner, to dance at a club, or even, "I really liked that movie. What did you think?" The significance here is in the relational level (how the people feel about each other) rather than the content level (the topic) of the message. As the poet, Maya Angelou, explains, "Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with shades of deeper meaning." The 'shades of deeper meaning' are the relational level messages that invite others to continue exploring a possible romantic relationship. Quite often, we strategize how we might go about inviting people into communication with us so we can explore potential romantic development.

The third stage of developing romantic relationships is **Explorational Communication**. When ***individuals respond favorably to our invitational communication*** we then engage in explorational communication. In this stage we share information about ourselves, looking for mutual interests, shared political or religious views, and similarities in family background. In this stage self-disclosure increases so we can give and receive personal information in a way that fosters trust and intimacy. Common dating activities in this stage include going to parties or other publicly structured events, such as movies or a concert, that foster interaction and self-disclosure.

The fourth stage of romantic relationships is **Intensifying Communication**. If we continue to be attracted (mentally, emotionally, and physically) to one another, we begin engaging in intensifying communication. ***This is the happy stage (the "relationship high") where we cannot bear to be away from the other person***. It is here that you might plan all of your free time together, and begin to create a private relational culture. Going out to parties and socializing with friends takes a back seat to more private activities such as cooking dinner together at home or taking long walks on the beach. Self-disclosure continues to increase as each person has a strong desire to know and understand the other. In this stage, we tend to idealize one another in that we down-play faults (or don't see them at all), seeing only the positive qualities of the other person.

Interpersonal Communication and You

Do you call each other "sweetie," "pooker," "honey," or "sweatpea"?

While these affectionate names may seem silly and can be embarrassing when uttered in a public setting, they are important in tying the individuals in a romantic relationship together. They are part of a couple's relational culture, "a private world of rules, understandings, meanings, and patterns of acting and interpreting that partners create for their relationship" (Wood, 1982, 1995). As part of a relational culture, couples work out how they will manage dialectics, signal attraction, and establish rituals.

The fifth stage of romantic relationship development is **Revising Communication**. When the "relational high" begins to wear off, couples begin to have ***a more realistic perspective of one another, and the relationship as a whole***. Here, people may recognize the faults of the other person that they so idealized in the previous stage. Also, couples must again make decisions about where to go with the relationship—do they stay together and work toward long-term goals, or define it as a short-term relationship? A couple may be deeply in love and also make the decision to break off the relationship for a multitude of reasons. Perhaps one person wants to join the Peace Corps after graduation and plans to travel the world, while the other wants to settle down in their hometown. Their individual needs and goals may not be compatible to sustain a long-term commitment.

Commitment is the sixth stage in developing romantic relationships. This occurs when a couple makes the ***decision to make the relationship a permanent part of their lives***. In this stage, the participants assume they will be in each other's lives forever and make joint decisions about the future. While marriage is an obvious sign of commitment it is not the only signifier of this stage. Gay and lesbian couples in the United States are legally prohibited from marrying in most states, so they may mark their intention of staying together in a commitment ceremony, or by registering as domestic partners. Likewise, not all heterosexual couples planning a future together legally marry. Some may lose economic benefits if they marry, such as the loss of Social Security for seniors or others may oppose the institution (and its inequality) of marriage.

Obviously, simply committing is not enough to maintain a relationship through tough times that occur as couples grow and change over time. Like a ship set on a destination, a couple must learn to steer though rough waves as well as calm waters. A couple can accomplish this by learning to communicate through the good and the bad. **Navigating** is when a couple continues to ***revise their communication and ways of interacting to reflect the changing needs of each person***. Done well, life's changes are more easily enjoyed when viewed as a natural part of the life cycle. The original patterns for managing dialectical tensions when a couple began dating, may not work when they are managing two careers, children, and a mortgage payment. Outside pressures such as children, professional duties, and financial responsibilities put added pressure on relationships that require attention and negotiation. If a couple neglects to practice effective communication with one another, coping with change becomes increasingly stressful and puts the relationship in jeopardy.

Case In Point

Legal Marriage for Same-Sex Couples

The Netherlands became the first country (4/1/01), and Belgium the second (1/30/03), to offer legal marriage to same sex couples. Since then Canada (6/28/05) and Spain (6/29/05) have also removed their country's ban against same-sex marriage. The state of Massachusetts (5/17/04) is the first U.S. state to do so and California passed a law in 2008 allowing for same-sex marriages.

Domestic Partnerships

The status of domestic partner along with benefits for same-sex couples is recognized in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greenland, Iceland, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and in parts of the United States (California, Hawaii, and Vermont).

For more on Marriage Traditions in Various Times and Cultures, see

www.buddybuddy.com/mar-trad.html

Getting Married In Canada

According to the Joint Advisory From Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund, National Center for Lesbian Rights, ACLU Lesbian & Gay Rights Project, and Freedom to Marry www.freedomtomarry.org/ftm_marriageadvisory.htm

June 10, the high court of Ontario, Canada's most populous province, ruled that the exclusion of same-sex couples from civil marriage infringes human dignity, harms families, and violates the constitution. The court ordered an immediate end to this cruel discrimination. Within hours, same-sex couples began marrying.

American couples, different-sex or same-sex, may go to Canada to marry. Canada, like the United States, has no residency requirement for marriage (though it does have a one-year residency requirement for divorce.) When couples that marry in Canada come home—although they might face uncertainties and discrimination -- they will be as married as any people on the planet. That means, for example, the couples will identify as married on applications/forms for jobs, apartments, credit, mortgages, insurance, medical treatment, and taxes.

While many marriages will be respected to varying degrees in various places, and even in surprising places, many married couples will also experience discrimination. Some but not all businesses, states, and others will refuse to honor these lawful marriages, along with the federal government. And couples with a member in the military, or on public assistance, or in the U.S. on a visa will face particular complexities. Couples must be prepared to live with a level of uncertainty while we continue our work to end marriage discrimination here.

Not only do romantic couples progress through a series of stages of growth, they also experience stages of deterioration. Deterioration does not necessarily mean that a couple's relationship will end. Instead, couples may move back and forth from deterioration stages to growth stages throughout the course of their relationship.

The first stage of deterioration, **Dyadic Breakdown**, occurs when ***romantic partners begin to neglect the small details that have always bound them together***. For example, they may stop cuddling on the couch when they rent a movie and sit in opposite chairs. Taken in isolation this example does not mean a relationship is in trouble. However, when intimacy continues to descrease, and the partners feel dissatisfied, this dissatisfaction can lead to worrying about the relationship.

The second stage of deterioration, the **Intrapsychic Phase**, occurs when ***partners worry that they do not connect with one another in ways they used to, or that they no longer do fun things together***. When this happens they may begin to imagine their life without the relationship. Rather than seeing the relationship as a given, the couple may begin to wonder what life would be like not being in the partnership.

The third stage of deterioration, the **Dyadic Phase**, occurs when ***partners make the choice to talk about their problems***. In this stage, they discuss how to resolve the issues and may seek outside help such as a therapist to help them work through the reasons they are growing apart. This could also be the stage where couples begin initial discussions about how to divide up shared resources such property, money, or children.

The fourth stage of deterioration, **Social Support**, occurs when ***termination is inevitable and the partners begin to look outside the relationship for social support***. In this stage couples will make the news public by telling friends, family, or children that the relationship is ending. As family members listen to problems, or friends offer invitations to go out and keep busy, they provide social support. The couple needs social support from outside individuals in the process of letting go of the relationship and coming to terms with its termination.

The fifth stage of deterioration, **Grave Dressing**, occurs when ***couples reach closure in a relationship and move on with life***. Like a literal death, a relationship that has ended should be mourned. People need time to go through this process in order to fully understand the meaning of the relationship, why it ended, and what they can learn from the experience. Going through this stage in a healthy way helps us learn to navigate future relationships more successfully.

You can probably recognize many of these stages from your own relationships or from relationships you've observed. Experience will tell you that we do not always follow these stages in a linear way. A couple, for example, may enter counseling during the dyadic phase, work out their problems, and enter a second term of intensifying communication, revising, and so forth. Other couples may skip some stages all together. Whatever the case, these models are valuable because they provide us with a way to recognize general communicative patterns and options we have at each stage of our relationships. Knowing what our choices are, and their potential consequences, gives us greater tools to build the kind of relationships we desire in our personal lives.

Case In Point

Divorce Rate: It's Not as High as You Think

By DAN HURLEY

The New York Times, April 19, 2005

How many American marriages end in divorce? One in two, if you believe the statistic endlessly repeated in news media reports, academic papers and campaign speeches.

The figure is based on a simple - and flawed - calculation: the annual marriage rate per 1,000 people compared with the annual divorce rate. In 2003, for example, the most recent year for which data is available, there were 7.5 marriages per 1,000 people and 3.8 divorces, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.

But researchers say that this is misleading because the people who are divorcing in any given year are not the same as those who are marrying, and that the statistic is virtually useless in understanding divorce rates. In fact, they say, studies find that the divorce rate in the United States has never reached one in every two marriages, and new research suggests that, with rates now declining, it probably never will.

The method preferred by social scientists in determining the divorce rate is to calculate how many people who have ever married subsequently divorced. Counted that way, the rate has never exceeded about 41 percent, researchers say. Although sharply rising rates in the 1970's led some to project that the number would keep increasing, the rate has instead begun to inch downward.

About 60 percent of all marriages that eventually end in divorce do so within the first 10 years, researchers say. If that continues to hold true, the divorce rate for college graduates who married between 1990 and 1994 would end up at only about 25 percent, compared to well over 50 percent for those without a four-year college degree.

"The government has dropped the ball on data collection," said Dr. David Popenoe, professor of sociology and co-director of the National Marriage Project at Rutgers University.

Joshua R. Goldstein, associate professor of sociology and public affairs at Princeton's Office of Population Research, said the loss of detailed government data, coming at a time when divorce rates were at their highest, might have distorted not only public perception, but people's behavior.

"Expectations of high divorce are in some ways self-fulfilling," he said. "That's a partial explanation for why rates went up in the 1970's."

As word gets out that rates have tempered or actually begun to fall, Dr. Goldstein added, "It could lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy in the other direction."

Family Relationships

The third primary type of interpersonal relationship we engage in is that of family. What is family? Is family created by legal ties, or the bond of sharing common blood? Or, can a family be considered people who share commitment to one another? In an effort to recognize the diversity of families we define **family** as, ***"an organized, relational transactional group, usually occupying a common living space over an extended time period, and possessing a confluence of interpersonal images that evolve through the exchange of meaning over time"*** (Pearson, 1993). Let's take a few moments to unpack this definition.

- **Families Are Organized**. All of us occupy and play fairly predictable roles (parent, child, older sibling) in our family relationships. Similarly, communication in these relationships can be fairly predictable. For example, your younger brother may act as the family peacemaker, while your older sister always initiates fights with her siblings.
- **Families Are a Relational Transactional Group**. Not only is a family made up of the individual members, it is largely defined by the relationships between the members. Think back to our discussion of Systems Theory in Chapter Five. A family that consists of two opposite-sex parents, an older sister, her husband and three kids, a younger brother, his new wife, and two kids from a first marriage is largely defined by the relationships among the family members. All of these people have a role in the family and interact with others in fairly consistent ways according to their roles.
- **Families Usually Occupy a Common Living Space Over an Extended Period of Time**. One consistent theme when defining family is recognizing that family members typically live under the same roof for an extended period of time. We certainly include extended family within our definition, but for the most part, our notions of family include those people with whom we share, or have shared, common space over a period of time. Even though you may have moved away to college, a large part of your definition of your family is the fact that you spent a great deal of your life sharing a home with those you call your family.
- **Families Possess a Mixture of Interpersonal Images that Evolve Through the Exchange of Meaning Over Time**. From our families, we learn important values concerning intimacy, spirituality, communication, and respect. Parents and other family members model behaviors that shape how we interact with others. As a result, we continually form images of what it means to be a family, and try to maintain that image of family in our lives. You may define family as your immediate family, consisting of your parents and a sibling. However, your romantic partner may see family as consisting of parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents. Each of you perform different communication behaviors to maintain your image of family.

Most of us in the U.S. citizens are involved in families that have parents and children. Olson and McCubbin (1983) discuss seven stages that families with children go through as they progress through life. Families without children will not follow all of these stages, and blended families, where one parent does not have primary custody of children, may experience less extreme shifts between stages. The first stage of family development is **Establishing a Family**. In this stage ***couples settle into committed or married life and make necessary changes in acknowledgement of their new legal, relational, and social status***. If they did not live together prior to marriage they may need to work out details of sharing space, money, and time. Often, this stage involved establishing a first home together as a couple.

The second stage of family development is **Enlarging a Family**. In this stage a couple decides to ***expand their family with the addition of children***. While a time of joy and celebration, this is also a period of great stress and change for parents as they figure out new roles as parents. Time for friends, work, and one another is often decreased as the demands of a new child become the primary concern and focus of the couple's attention and resources. In this stage, the relationship is no longer defined in terms of two people, but includes the children that are now part of the family.

The third stage of family development is **Developing a Family**. As children grow, their needs change from primarily physical (feeding, changing diapers, and sleep) to more cognitive and emotional ones. ***Parents become the primary source of instilling cultural and spiritual values, as well as fostering a child's individual personality***. This period takes a tremendous amount of time and commitment from parents as the children remain the focus of daily interactions. Think of the family that runs around taking children to soccer, baseball, piano lessons, church, and guiding their educational development. In this stage, the personal development of children is of high importance to the family.

The fourth stage of family development is **Encouraging Independence**. Around the teen years ***children begin the process of naturally pulling away from their parents as a means of establishing and securing an independent identity***. You might recall that this period contained periods of stress and frustration for your parents, as well as you. Children may feel their parents are being overly protective or nosy about their friends and activities, while parents may feel abandoned and concerned for their child's safety as they spend more time away from home. These are often referred to as the rebellious years in which children engage in behaviors for the purpose of establishing independence from their parents.

The fifth stage of family development is **Launching Children**. Over the course of raising children couples experience a relationship with one another where children are often the central focus rather than each other. In the Launching Children stage, ***each member of the couple must now relearn his/her roles as grown children eventually leave home for college, a career, or their own marriage and family***. If one of the parents gave up a career to raise children he/she may wonder what to do with the free time. While the empty nest syndrome can be stressful it is also a chance for new possibilities as parents have more time, money, freedom, and energy to spend on each other, hobbies, travel, and friends. For example, when one of your authors moved out of the house at age 18, his parents told him explicitly, "We will help you in any way we can, but you're not moving back in with us." While this may sound harsh, your author and his parents have a very close relationship. What his parents were expressing was their excitement about being able to focus on each other as a couple after 22 years of raising two children in the home.

The sixth stage of family development is **Post-Launching of Children**. Depending on how a couple handles stage five, the post-launching of children can be ***filled with renewed love, or can produce great strain on the marriage as a couple learns that they do not know how to relate with one another outside the context of raising children***. Some couples fall in love all over again and may renew their wedding vows as a signal of this new phase in their relationship. Some parents who may have decided to stay in a marriage for the sake of the children may decide to terminate the relationship after the children have left the family home. In the case of your author, his parents picked up new hobbies, traveled around the world, and maintained multiple "date days" each week. None of these behaviors occurred while children were in the house, but happened as they committed themselves to each other after the children left.

The seventh stage of family development is **Retirement**. Similar to the launching of children, ***freedom from work can be an opportunity for growth and exploration of new relationships and activities. Simply having more time in the day can facilitate travel, volunteer work, or continuing education***. Conversely, people in this stage might experience a reduction in income and the loss of identity that came with membership in a profession. The family may also experience new growth during this stage as grown children bring their own relational partners and grandchildren in as new members of the family.

Communication patterns within the family, and between a couple, are continually changed and revised as a family progresses through the above stages. The fact that a couple generally spends less time together during stages two and three, and more time together in stages five through eight, requires that they continually manage dialectical tensions such as autonomy/connection. Management of these tensions may manifest itself as conflict. All relationships have conflict. Conflict is natural. It's how we think about and manage conflict that is important.

Thinking About Conflict

hen you hear the word "conflict," do you have a positive or negative reaction? Are you someone who thinks conflict should be avoided at all costs? While conflict may be uncomfortable and challenging it doesn't have to be negative. Think about the social and political changes that came about from the conflict of the civil rights movement during the 1960's. There is no doubt that this conflict was painful and even deadly for some civil rights activists, but the conflict resulted in the elimination of many discriminatory practices and helped create a more egalitarian social system in the United States. Let's look at two distinct orientations to conflict, as well as options for how to respond to conflict in our interpersonal relationships.

Conflict as Destructive

When we shy away from conflict in our interpersonal relationships it could be that we do so because we conceptualize it as destructive to our relationships. As with many of our beliefs and attitudes, they are not always well-grounded and lead to destructive behaviors. Augsburger (1992) outlined four assumptions of viewing conflict as destructive. 1. Conflict is a destructive disturbance of the peace. 2. The social system should not be adjusted to meet the needs of members; rather, members should adapt to the established values. 3. Confrontations are destructive and ineffective. 4. Disputants should be punished.

When we view conflict this way, we believe that it is a threat to the established order of the relationship. Think about sports as an analogy of how we view conflict as destructive. In the U.S. we like sports that have winners and losers. Sports and games where a tie is an option often seem confusing to us. How can neither team win or lose? When we apply this to our relationships, it's understandable why we would be resistant to engaging in conflict. I don't want to lose, and I don't want to see my relational partner lose. So, an option is to avoid conflict so that neither person has to face that result.

Conflict as Productive

In contrast to seeing conflict as destructive, it is possible, even healthy, to view conflict as a productive natural outgrowth and component of human relationships. Augsburger described four assumptions of viewing conflict as productive. 1. Conflict is a normal, useful process. 2. All issues are subject to change through negotiation. 3. Direct confrontation and conciliation are valued. 4. Conflict is a necessary renegotiation of an implied contract—a redistribution of opportunity, release of tensions, and renewal of relationships.

From this perspective conflict provides an opportunity for strengthening relationships, not harming them. It is a chance for relational partners to find ways to meet the needs of one another, even when these needs conflict. Think back to our discussion of dialectical tensions. While you may not explicitly argue with your relational partners about these tensions, the fact that you are negotiating them points to your ability to use conflict in productive ways for the relationship as a whole, and the needs of the individuals in the relationship.

Types of Conflict

Understanding the different ways of valuing conflict is a first step toward engaging in productive conflict interactions. Likewise, knowing the various types of conflict that occur in interpersonal relationships also helps us to identify appropriate strategies for managing certain types of conflict. Cole (1996) states that there are five types of conflict in interpersonal relationships: Affective, Conflict of Interest, Value, Cognitive, and Goal.

- **Affective conflict**. Affective conflict arises when we have ***incompatible feelings with another person***. For example, if a couple has been dating for a while, one of the partners may want to marry as a sign of love while the other decides he/she wants to see other people. What do they do? The differences in feelings for one another are the source of affective conflict.

- **Conflict of Interest**. This type of conflict arises when people ***disagree about a plan of action or what to do in a given circumstance***. For example, Julie, a Christian Scientist, does not believe in seeking medical intervention, but believes that prayer can cure illness. Jeff, a Catholic, does believe in seeking conventional medical attention as treatment for illness. What happens when Julie and Jeff decide to have children? Do they honor Jeff's beliefs and take the kids to the doctor when they are ill, or respect and practice Julie's religion? This is a conflict of interest.
- **Value Conflict**. A ***difference in ideologies or values between relational partners*** is called value conflict. In the example of Julie and Jeff, a conflict of interest about what to do concerning their children's medical needs results from differing religious values. Many people engage in conflict about religion and politics. Remember the old saying, "Never talk about religion and politics with your family."
- **Cognitive Conflict**. Cognitive conflict is ***the difference in thought process, interpretation of events, and perceptions***. Marsha and Victoria, a long-term couple, are both invited to a party. Victoria declines because she has a big presentation at work the next morning and wants to be well rested. At the party, their mutual friends Michael and Lisa notice Marsha spending the entire evening with Karen. Lisa suspects Marsha may be flirting and cheating on Victoria, but Michael disagrees and says Marsha and Karen are just close friends catching up. Michael and Lisa are observing the same interaction but have a disagreement about what it means. This is an example of cognitive conflict.
- **Goal Conflict**. Goal conflict occurs when people ***disagree about a final outcome***. Jesse and Maria are getting ready to buy their first house. Maria wants something that has long-term investment potential while Jesse wants a house to suit their needs for a few years, and then plans to move into a larger house. Maria has long-term goals for the house purchase and Jesse is thinking in more immediate terms. These two have two different goals in regards to purchasing a home.

Strategies for Managing Conflict

When we ask our students what they want to do when they experience conflict, most of the time they say "resolve it." While this is understandable, it is important to understand that conflict is ongoing in all relationships, and our approach to conflict should be to manage it instead.

One way to understand options for managing conflict is by knowing five major strategies for managing conflict in relationships. While most of us probably favor one strategy over another, we all have multiple options for managing conflict in our relationships. Having a variety of options available gives us flexibility in our interactions with others. Five strategies for managing interpersonal conflict include dominating, integrating, compromising, obliging, and avoiding (Rahim, 1986; Rahim & Magner, 1995; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). One way to think about these strategies, and your decision to select one over another, is to think about whose needs will be met in the conflict situation. You can conceptualize this idea according to the degree of concern for the self and the degree of concern for others.

When a person selects the **dominating strategy**, or win-lose approach, he/she exhibits ***high concern for the self and low concern for the other person***. The goal here is to win the argument or debate. This approach is often characterized by loud, forceful, and interrupting communication. Again, this is analogous to sports. Too often, we avoid conflict because we believe the only other alternative is to try to dominate the other person. In relationships where we care about others, it's no wonder this strategy can seem unappealing.

The **obliging style** shows a ***moderate degree of concern for self and others, and a high degree of concern for the relationship itself***. In this approach the individuals are less important than the relationship as a whole. Here, a person may minimize the differences or a specific issue in order to emphasize the commonalities. The comment, "The fact that we disagree about politics isn't a big deal since we share the same ethical and moral beliefs," exemplifies an obliging style.

The **compromising style** is evident when ***both parties are willing to give up something in order to gain something else***. When environmental activist, Julia Butterfly Hill agreed to end her two-year long tree sit in Luna as a protest against the logging practices of Pacific Lumber Company (PALCO), and pay them $50,000 in exchange for their promise to protect Luna and not cut within a 20-foot buffer zone, she and PALCO reached a compromise. If one of the parties feels the compromise is unequal they may be less likely to stick to it long term. When conflict is unavoidable, many times people will opt for compromise. One of the problems with compromise is that neither party fully gets their needs met. If you want Mexican food and your friend wants pizza, you might agree to compromise and go someplace that serves Mexican pizza. While this may seem like a good idea, you may have really been craving a burrito and your friend may have really been craving a pepperoni pizza. In this case, while the compromise brought together two food genres, neither person got his/her desire met.

When one **avoids** a conflict they may suppress feelings of frustration or walk away from a situation. While this is often regarded as expressing a ***low concern for self and others*** because problems are not dealt with, the opposite may be true in some contexts. Take, for example, a heated argument between Ginny and Pat. Pat is about to make a hurtful remark out of frustration. Instead, she decides that she needs to avoid this argument right now until she and Ginny can come back and discuss things in a more calm fashion. In this case, temporarily avoiding the conflict can be beneficial. However, conflict avoidance over the long term generally has negative consequences for a relationship because neither person is willing to participate in the conflict management process.

Finally, **integrating** demonstrates a ***high level of concern for both self and others***. Using this strategy, individuals agree to share information, feelings, and creativity to try to reach a mutually acceptable solution that meets both of their needs. In our food example above, one strategy would be for both people to get the food they want, then take it on a picnic in the park. This way, both people are getting their needs met fully, and in a way that extends beyond original notions of win-lose approaches for managing the conflict. The downside to this strategy is that it is very time consuming and requires high levels of trust.

Summary

Interpersonal communication is communication between individuals that view one another as unique. Quite often, interpersonal communication occurs in dyads. In order for interpersonal communication to occur, participants must engage in self-disclosure, which is the revealing of information about oneself to others that is not known by them. As we self-disclose, we manage our relationships by negotiating dialectical tensions, which are opposing needs in interpersonal relationships. We use a variety of strategies for navigating these tensions, including neutralization, separation, segmentation, and reframing.

As we navigate our interpersonal relationships, we create communication climates. Communication climates are the overall feelings and moods people have for one another and the relationship. When we engage in disconfirming messages, we produce a negative relational climate, while confirming messages can help build a positive relational climate by recognizing the uniqueness and importance of another person.

The three primary types of interpersonal relationships we engage in are friendships, romantic relationships, and family relationships. Each of these relationships develop through a series of stages of growth and deterioration. Friendships and romantic relationships differ from family relationships in that they are relationships of choice. Each of these relationships requires commitment from participants to continuously navigate relational dynamics in order to maintain and grow the relationship.

Finally, all relationships experience conflict. Conflict is often perceived as an indicator that there is a problem in a relationship. However, conflict is a natural and ongoing part of all relationships. The goal for conflict is not to eliminate it, but to manage it. There are five primary approaches to managing conflict which include dominating, obliging, compromising, avoiding, and integrating.

Discussion Questions

1. Select an important person in your life and pay attention to your communication climate. How do you and this other person demonstrate recognition, acknowledgement, and endorsement?
2. Reflect on one of your important friendships and trace its development through Rawlins' six stages. How was it affected by important transitions in your life, sexual attraction, and diversity?
3. Reflect on a current or past romantic relationship. How did you communicate attraction, or needs for connection and separateness?
4. Does Pearson's definition of family fit your own? Why? Why not?
5. Interview one or both of your parents about how their communication has changed as they have moved along the family life cycle. How did their relational culture change? How did they manage relational dialectics?
6. How was conflict managed in your family while growing up? Was it viewed as positive or negative? How did those early messages and lessons about conflict shape your current attitudes?

Key Terms

- committed romantic relationships
- conflict
- content level of message
- domestic partners
- dyad
- dyadic breakdown
- dyadic phase
- family
- family life cycle
- grave dressing
- intrapsychic phase
- interracial marriage
- proximity
- relational culture
- relational level of message
- self-disclosure
- self-identity
- similarity
- social support

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Chapter 10 - Group Communication

Chapter 10

Group and Team Communication

Chapter Objectives:

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

- Define what constitutes a group and team.
- Understand cultural influences on groups.
- Explain how groups and teams form.
- Identify group roles and norms.
- Understand various approaches to leadership in groups.
- Recognize styles and options for decision making in groups.
- Explain the impact of computer-mediated communication on group communication.

Have you ever had this happen to you in a college class? At the beginning of the semester your professor hands out the syllabus and explains that a group project is part of the course requirements. You, and others in the class, groan at the idea of this project because you have experienced the difficulties and frustrations of working in a group, especially when your grade depends on the work of others. Does this sound familiar? Why do you think so many students react negatively to these types of assignments? The reality is that group work can be fraught with complications. But, the reality is, many companies are promoting groups as the model working environment.

Case In Point

Don't think knowing how to participate in groups or teams really matters outside of college? Think again. The Atlanta Business Chronicle reports that many companies are using group incentives and team-based pay to "reinforce and reward individuals who contribute to the success of the group as a whole." This kind of pay structure is meant to reward group outcome, not individual performance in a group. Next time you don't want to work in a group, remember you are practicing skills that may help you earn more money.

Chances are that a class assignment is not your first and only experience with groups. We are quite certain that you have already spent, and will continue to spend, a great deal of your time working in groups. You may be involved with school athletics in which you are part of a specialized group called a team. You may be part of a work or professional group. Many of you participate in social, religious, and/or political groups. The family in which you were raised, regardless of the configuration, is also a group. No matter what the specific focus—sports, profession, politics, or family—all groups share some common features.

While group communication is growing in popularity and emphasis, both at the academic and corporate levels, it is not a new area of study. The emergence of group communication study came about in the mid 1950s, following World War II and has been a focus of study ever since. Group communication is often closely aligned with interpersonal communication and organizational communication which is why we have placed it as a chapter in between these two areas of specialization. In your personal, civic, professional lives, you will engage in group communication. Let's take a look at what constitutes a group or team.

Group Communication Then

The first study that was published on group communication in the New School era of communication study was credited to Edwin Black in 1955. He studied the breakdowns in group interactions by looking at communication sequences in groups. However, it wasn't until the 1960s and 70s that a large number of studies in group communication began to appear. Between 1970 and 1978 114 articles were published on group communication and 89 more were published by 1990 (Salwen & Stacks, 1996, p. 360). Study in group communication is still important over a decade later as more and more organizations focus on group work for achieving their goals.

Defining Groups and Teams

To understand group and team communication, we must first understand the definition of a **group**. Many people think that a group is simply a collection of people, but that is only part of it. If you walk out your front door and pull together the first ten people you see, do you have a group? No! According to Wood (2003) a group must have, ***"three or more people who interact over time, depend on each other, and follow shared rules of conduct to reach a common goal"*** (p. 274). Gerald Wilson defines a group as, ***"a collection of three or more individuals who interact about some common problem or interdependent goal and can exert mutual influence over one another"*** (2002, p. 14). He goes on to say that the three key components of a group are, "size, goal orientation, and mutual influence" (p. 14). Interpersonal communication is often thought about in terms of dyads. That is, we often communicate interpersonally in pairs. Organizational communication might be thought of as a group that is larger than 12 people. While there are exceptions, for the most part, group size is often thought of in terms of 3-12 people. So, if the ten people you gathered outside of your front door were all neighbors working together as part of "neighborhood watch" to create safety in the community, then you would indeed have a group.

For those of you who have participated on athletic teams you'll notice that these definitions also fit the idea of a team. All of the qualities of groups hold true for teams, but teams have additional qualities not necessarily present for all groups. Wood explains that a **team** ***"is a special kind of group characterized by different and complimentary resources of members and by a strong sense of collective identity"*** (p. 275). While all members of a team share some athletic ability and special appreciation for a particular sport, members of a football team, for example, have highly specialized skills as indicated in the various positions on the team—quarterback, receiver, and running back. Research suggests that members of an organized team feel and exhibit a strong sense of belonging and commitment to one another (Lumsden & Lumsden, 1997) as a result of combining these specialized skills to achieve particular outcomes. Besides athletic teams, work and professional teams also share these qualities. Now that you know how to define groups and teams, let's look at characteristics of groups and teams, as well as the different types of groups and teams.

Characteristics of Groups

- **Interdependence**. Groups cannot be defined as a number of people simply talking to each other or meeting together. Instead, a primary characteristic of groups is that members of a group are dependent on the others for the group to maintain its existence and achieve its goals. In essence, interdependence is the recognition by those in a group of their need for the others in the group (Cragon & Wright, 1999; Harris & Sherblom, 2008; Lewin, 1951). Imagine playing on a basketball as an individual against the five members of another team. Even if you're considered the best in the world, it's highly unlikely you could win a game against five other people. You must rely on four other teammates to make it a successful game.
- **Interaction**. It probably seems obvious to you that there must be interaction for groups to exist. However, what kind of interaction must exist? Since we all communicate every day, there must be something that distinguishes the interaction in groups from other forms of communication. Cragon and Wright (1999) state that the primary

defining characteristic of group interaction is that it is purposeful. They go on to break down purposeful interaction into four types: problem solving, role playing, team building, and trust building (p. 7). Without purposeful interaction a true group does not exist. If you're put into a group for a class assignment, your first interaction probably centers around exchanging contact information, settings times to meet, and starting to focus on the task at hand. It's purposeful interaction to achieve a goal.

- **Synergy**. One advantage of working in groups and teams is that they allow us to accomplish things we wouldn't be able to accomplish on our own. Remember back to our discussion of Systems Theory in Chapter 5. Systems Theory suggests that "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts." This is the very idea of synergy (Morris, 1981; Harris & Sherblom, 2008). Think of an orchestra or band. Each person is there to perform in order to help the larger unit make music in a way that cannot be accomplished without each member working together.
- **Common Goals**. Having interaction and synergy would be relatively pointless in groups without a common goal. People who comprise groups are brought together for a reason or a purpose. While most members of a group have individual goals, a group is largely defined by the common goals of the group. Think of the example at the beginning of the chapter. Your common goal in a class group is to learn, complete an assignment, and earn a grade. While there may be differences regarding individual goals in the group (what final grade is acceptable for example), or how to achieve the common goals, the group is largely defined by the common goals it shares.
- **Shared Norms**. Because people come together for a specific purpose, they develop shared norms to help them achieve their goals. Even with a goal in place, random interaction does not define a group. Group interaction is generally guided by norms a group has established for acceptable behavior. Norms are essentially expectations of the group members, established by the group. Norms can be conscious and formal, or unconscious and informal. One example of norms that we often witness as professors is the expectation of our students' groups that all members show up at group meeting times. When members of a group violate this norm, we notice how frustrated the other group members get. We'll spend more time later in the chapter looking at group norms.
- **Cohesiveness**. One way that members understand of the idea of communicating in groups and teams is when they experience a sense of cohesiveness with other members of the group. When we feel like we are part of something larger, it creates a sense of cohesion or wholeness, a purpose that is bigger than our own individual desires and goals. It is the sense of connection and participation that characterizes the interaction in a group as different from the defined interaction among loosely connected individuals. If you've ever participated in a group that achieved its goal successfully, you are probably able to reflect back on your feelings of connections with the other members of that group.

Types of Groups

Not all groups are the same or brought together for the same reasons. Bilhart and Galanes (1998) categorize groups "on the basis of the reason they were formed and the human needs they serve" (p. 9). Let's take a look!

- **Primary Groups**. Primary groups are ones we form to help us realize our human needs like inclusion and affection. They are not generally formed to accomplish a task, but rather, to help us meet our fundamental needs as relational beings like acceptance, love, and affection. These groups are generally longer term than other groups and include family, roommates, and other relationships that meet as groups on a regular basis (Bilhart & Galanes).
- **Secondary Groups**. We form secondary groups to accomplish work, perform a task, solve problems, and make decisions (Bilhart & Galanes; Harris & Sherblom; Cragan & Wright). Larson and LaFasto (1989) state that secondary groups have "a specific performance objective or recognizable goal to be attained; and coordination of activity among the members of the team is required for attainment of the team goal or objective" (p. 19). Bilhart and Galanes divide secondary groups into four different types.
- **Activity Groups**. Activity Groups are ones we form for the purpose of participating in activities. I'm sure your campus has many clubs that are organized for the sole purpose of doing activities. One example on our campus is the campus group devoted to disc golf.

- **Personal Growth Groups**. We form Personal Growth Groups "to come together to develop personal insights, overcome personal problems, and grow as individuals from the feedback and support of others" (Bilhart & Galanes, p. 11). An example that is probably familiar to you is Alcoholics Anonymous. There are many personal growth groups available for helping us develop as people through group interaction with others.
- **Learning Groups**. Learning Groups "are concerned primarily with discovering and developing new ideas and ways of thinking" (Harris & Sherblom, p. 12). If you have ever been assigned to a group in a college class, most likely it was a learning group whose purpose was to interact in ways that that help those in the group learn new things about the course content.
- **Problem-Solving Groups**. These groups are created for the express purpose of solving a specific problem. The very nature of organizing people into this type of group is to get them to collectively figure out effective solutions to the problem they have before them. Committees are an excellent example of people who are brought together to solve problems.

After looking at the various types of groups, it's probably easy for you to recognize just how much of your daily interaction occurs within the contexts of the various types of groups. The reality is, we spend a great deal of time in groups, and understanding the types of groups you're in, as well as their purpose, goes a long way toward helping you function as a whole member.

The Importance of Studying Communication in Groups and Teams

One of the reasons communication scholars study groups and teams is because of the overwhelming amount of time we spend interacting in groups in professional contexts. More and more professional organizations are turning to groups and teams as an essential way of conducting business and getting things done. Even professions that are seemingly independent, such as being a college professor, are heavily laden with group work. Your authors spend a significant amount of time outside the classroom working on committees that make decisions about all aspects of the campus. The process of writing this book was a group effort as the authors worked with colleagues, then with a group from the publishing company to bring the book to you. Each of us had specific roles and tasks to perform to produce this textbook. Moreover, we were committed to each other and the project, making the decision to spend our weekends writing rather than hanging out with friends because we knew others were counting on us.

Another vital area of group communication concerns the study of social change or social movement organizations. Groups such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the National Organization of Women (NOW) are all groups bound together by a shared social and political commitment—to promote the rights of nonhuman animals, African-Americans, and women respectively. While individuals can be committed to these ideas, the social, political, and legal rights afforded to groups like these would not have been possible through individual action alone. It was when groups of like-minded people came together with shared commitments and goals, pooling their skills and resources, that change occurred.

The study of social movements reveals the importance of groups for accomplishing goals. Bowers and Ochs (1971) in The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control explain seven progressive and cumulative strategies through which movements progress as they move toward success. Three of the seven strategies focus explicitly on group communication—promulgation, solidification, and polarization. **Promulgation** refers to the ***"tactics designed to win social support for the agitator's position. [For N]o movement can be successful unless it attracts a sufficient number of members …"*** (p. 20). Without a sufficient group the actions of individual protestors are likely to be dismissed. The strategy of **solidification** ***"occurs mainly inside the agitating group" and is "primarily used to unite followers"*** (p. 23-4). The point is to unite group members and provide sufficient motivation and support. The communication that occurs through the collective action of singing songs or chanting slogans serves to unite group members. Because the success of social movements depends in part on the ability to attract a large number of followers, most employ the strategy of **polarization**, which is designed to ***persuade neutral individuals or "fence sitters" to join a group***. The essence of this strategy is captured in the quote from Eldridge Cleaver, "You are either part of the problem or part of the solution." Taken together these three strategies stress that the key to group success is the sustained effort of group members working together through communication.

Case In Point

The Power of Women's Groups

In the 1970s groups of women started gathering in private homes to discuss what they believed were shared personal frustrations. However, in the group setting they realized that their frustrations were shared by many and that the personal really had political and cultural roots; thus, the term "the personal is political" was born. Further, they came to understand that their "personal problems" were neither personal nor problems, but manifestations of living in a sexist culture. Together, they realized that collective action on the part of these "consciousness raising groups" all over the country could help transform a sexist society into a more egalitarian one. As a result, such consciousness raising groups became a hallmark of the 1970s women's movement or second wave feminism.

For more discussion on women's groups see Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future by Jennifer Baumgardgner and Amy Richards

Not only do Communication scholars focus on work and social movements, we are also interested in the role that one's cultural identity and membership plays in our communicative choices and how we interpret the communication of others. This focus sheds interesting insights when we examine membership and communication in groups and teams. One reason for this is that different cultures emphasize the role of individuals while other cultures emphasize the importance of the group. For example, **collectivist cultures** are ones that ***place high value on group work because they understand that outcomes of our communication impact all members of the community and the community as a whole, not just the individuals in the group***. Conversely, **individualistic cultures** are ones that ***place high value on the individual person above the needs of the group***. Thus, whether we view group work as favorable or unfavorable may stem from our cultural background. The U.S. is considered an individualistic culture in that we value the work and accomplishments of the individual because of ideals of being able to "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" and create success for yourself. However, you've probably encountered the influence of collectivist cultures like Japan that value the collective group. For example, many of the ways we work in groups within organizations are borrowed from Japanese organizations that have long-valued group-based work environments. Given the complexity of group interaction, it's short-sighted to try to understand group communication without looking at notions of power (think back to Critical Theories and Research Methods!). **Power** influences how we interpret the messages of others and determines the extent to which we feel we have the right to speak up and voice our concerns and opinions to others. Take a moment to reflect on the different ways you think about power. What images come to mind for you when you think of power? Are there different kinds of power? Are some people inherently more powerful than others? Do you consider yourself to be a powerful person? We highlight three ways to understand power as it relates to group and team communication. The word "power" literally means ***"to be able"*** and has many implications.

If you associate power with control or dominance, this refers to the notion of power as **power-over**. According to Starhawk (1987), "power-over ***enables one individual or group to make the decisions that affect others, and to enforce control***" (9). Control can and does take many forms in society. Starhawk explains that,

> *This power is wielded from the workplace, in the schools, in the courts, in the doctor's office. It may rule with weapons that are physical or by controlling the resources we need to live: money, food, medical care; or by controlling more subtle resources: information, approval, love. We are so accustomed to power-over, so steeped in its language and its implicit threats, that we often become aware of its functioning only when we see its extreme manifestations. (9)*

When we are in group situations and someone dominates the conversation, makes all of the decisions, or controls the resources of the group such as money or equipment, this is power-over.

Power-from-within refers to a more personal sense of strength or agency. Power-from-within manifests ***itself when we can stand, walk, and speak "words that convey our needs and thoughts***" (Starhawk, p. 10). In groups, this type of power "arises from our sense of connection, our bonding with other human beings, and with the environment" (p. 10). As Heider explains in The Tao of Leadership, "Since all creation is a whole, separateness is an illusion. Like it or not, we are team players. Power comes through cooperation, independence through service, and a greater self through selflessness" (p. 77). If you think about your role in groups, how have you influenced other group members? Your strategies indicate your sense of power-from-within.

Finally, groups manifest **power-with**, which is "***the power of a strong individual in a group of equals, the power not to command, but to suggest and be listened to, to begin something and see it happen***" (Starhawk, p. 10). For this to be effective in a group or team at least two qualities must be present among members: 1) All group members must communicate respect and equality for one another, and 2) The leader must not abuse power-with and attempt to turn it into power-over. Have you ever been involved in a group where people did not treat each others as equals or with respect? How did you feel about the group? What was the outcome? Could you have done anything to change that dynamic?

Obviously, communication is the central activity of every group because it is how we organize and maintain groups. While we can all tell positive and negative stories about being in groups, how are they formed in the first place?

Forming Groups

Sometimes we join a group because we want to. Other times, we might be assigned to work in groups in a class or at work. Either way, Lumsden and Lumsden (1986) give three reasons why we form groups. First, we may join groups because we share similar **interests or attractions** with other group members. If you are a certain major in college, chances are you share some of the same interests as others in your class groups. Also, you might find yourself attracted to others in your group for romantic, friendship, political, religious or professional reasons. On our campus, our majors have formed the Communication Club to bring together students in the major. A second reason we join groups is called **drive reduction**. Essentially, we join groups so our work with others reduces the drive to fulfill our needs by spreading out involvement. As Maslow (1970) explains, we have drives for physiological needs, security, love, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Working with others helps us achieve these needs thereby reducing our obligation to meet these needs ourselves. For example, if you accomplished a task successfully for a group, it's likely your group members complimented your work, thus fulfilling some of your self-esteem needs. If you had done the same work only for yourself, the building up of your self-esteem may not have occurred. A third reason we join groups is for **reinforcement**. We are often motivated to do things for the rewards they bring. Participating in groups provides reinforcement from others in the pursuit of our goals and rewards. Most groups go through a series of stages as they come together. These stages are called forming, storming, norming, and performing (Tuckman, 1965, 1977; Fisher, 1970; Harris & Sherblom, 2002). Groups formed to achieve a task often go through a fifth stage called termination that occurs after a group accomplishes its goal. Let's look at each of the stages of group formation and termination.

- **Forming**. Obviously, for a group to exist and work together its members must first form the group. During the forming stage, group members begin to set the parameters of the group by establishing what characteristics identify the members of the group as a group. During this stage, the group's goals are made generally clear to members, initial questions and concerns are addressed, and initial role assignments may develop. This is the stage when group norms begin to be negotiated and established. Essentially, norms are a code of conduct which may be explicit or assumed and dictate acceptable and expected behavior of the group.

- **Storming**. The storming stage might be considered comparable to the "first fight" of a romantic couple. After the initial politeness passes in the forming stage, group members begin to feel more comfortable expressing their opinions about how the group should operate and the participation of other members in the group. Given the complexity of meeting both individual goals as well as group goals, there is constant negotiation among group members regarding participation and how a group should operate. Imagine being assigned to a group for class and you discover that all the members of the group are content with getting a C grade, but you want an A. If you confront your group members to challenge them to have higher expectations, you are in the storming stage.
- **Norming**. Back to our romantic couple example, if the couple can survive the first fight, they often emerge on the other side of the conflict feeling stronger and more cohesive. The same is true in groups. If a group is able to work through the initial conflict of the storming stage, there is the opportunity to really solidify the group's norms and get to the task at hand as a cohesive group. Norming signifies that the members of a group are willing to abide by group rules and values to achieve the group's goals.
- **Performing**. Performing is the stage we most often associate as the defining characteristic of groups. This stage is marked by a decrease in tensions, less conscious attention to norm establishment, and greater focus on the actual work at hand in order to accomplish the group's goals. While there still may be episodes of negotiating conflict and re-establishing norms, performing is about getting to the business at hand. When you are in a weekly routine of meeting at the library to work on a group project, you are in the performing stage.
- **Terminating**. Groups that are assigned a specific goal and timeline will experience the fifth stage of group formation, termination. Think about groups you have been assigned to in college. We're willing to bet that the group did not continue once you achieved the required assignment and earned your grade. This is not to say that we do not continue relationships with other group members. But, the defining characteristics of the group established during the forming stage have come to an end, and thus, so has the group.

Group Communication Now

Technology is changing so many things about the ways we communicate. This is also true in group communication. One of the great frustrations for many people in groups is simply finding a time that everyone can meet together. However, computer technology has changed these dynamics as more and more groups "meet" in the virtual world, rather than face-to-face. But, what is the impact of technology on how groups function? For example, Flanagin, Tiyaamornwong, O'Connor, and Seibold (2002) examined how men and women communicated in computer mediated groups where each person was anonymous, and therefore, participants did not know one another's gender. We have a lot to learn about the ways communication technologies are changing our notions of working in groups and individual communication styles.

Now that you understand how groups form, let's discuss the ways in which people participate in groups. Since groups are comprised of interdependent individual people, one area of research that has emerged from studying group communication is the focus on the roles that we play in groups and teams. Having an understanding of the various roles we play in groups can help us understand how to interact with various group members.

Groups Roles

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ake a moment to think about the individuals in a particular group and the role each of them played. You may recall that some people were extremely helpful, organized and made getting the job done easy. Others may have been more difficult to work with, or seemed to disrupt the group process. In each case, the participants were performing roles that manifest themselves in most groups. An early study on group communication reports 25 commonly played roles in groups (Benne & Sheats, 1948) that can be divided into three types—group task roles, group building and maintenance roles, and individual roles. In later research, Ketrow (1991) uses only two categories of group roles—task and social/emotional roles, while Jensen and Chilberg (1991) describe thirty-four roles in groups. To simplify, we provide an overview of some of the more common roles. As you study group roles, remember that we usually play more than one role at a time, and that we do not always play the same roles from group to group.

We organize group roles into four categories—task, social-emotional, procedural, and individual. Task roles are those that help or hinder a group's ability to accomplish its goals. Social-emotional roles are those that focus on building and maintaining relationships among individuals in a group. The focus is on how people feel about being in the group. Procedural roles are concerned with how the group accomplishes its task. People occupying these roles are interested in following directions, proper procedure, and going through appropriate channels when making decisions or initiating policy. The final category, individual roles, includes any role "that detracts from group goals and emphasizes personal goals" (Jensen & Chilberg, p. 97). When people come to a group to promote their individual agenda above the group's, they do not communicate in ways that are beneficial to the group. Let's take a look at each of these categories in more detail.

- **Task Roles**. While there are many task roles a person can play in a group, we want to emphasize five common ones. The **Task Leader** is ***the person that keeps the group focused on the primary goal or task by setting agendas, controlling the participation and communication of the group's members, and evaluating ideas and contributions of participants***. Your associated students president probably performs the task leader role. **Information Gatherers** are those people who ***seek and/or provide the factual information necessary for evaluating ideas, problem solving, and reaching conclusions***. This is the person who serves as the liaison with your professor about what he/she expects from a group project. **Opinion Gatherers** are those that ***seek out and/or provide subjective responses about ideas and suggestions***. They most often take into account the values, beliefs, and attitudes of members. If you have a quiet member of your group, the opinion gatherer may ask, "What do you think?" in order to get that person's feedback. The **Devil's Advocate** is the person that ***argues a contrary or opposing point of view***. This may be done positively in an effort to ensure that all perspectives are considered, or negatively as the unwillingness of a single person to participate in the group's ideas. The **Energizer** is the person who ***functions as the group's cheer-leader, providing energy, motivation, and positive encouragement***.
- **Social-Emotional Roles**. Group members play a variety of roles in order to buil**d and maintain relationships in groups. The Social-Emotional Leader** is the person who is ***concerned with maintaining and balancing the social and emotional needs of the group members and tends to play many, if not all, of the roles in this category***. The **Encourager** practices good listening skills in order to ***create a safe space for others to share ideas and offer suggestions***. **Followers** are group members that do what they are told, ***going along with decisions and assignments from the group***. The **Tension Releaser** is the person that ***uses humor, or can skillfully change the subject in an attempt to minimize tension and avoid conflict***. The **Compromiser** is the one who ***mediates disagreements or conflicts among members by encouraging others to give in on small issues for the sake of meeting the goals of the group***. What role do you find yourself most likely to enact in groups? Or, do you find you switch between these roles depending on the group?
- **Procedural Roles**. Groups cannot function properly without having a system of rules or norms in place. Members are responsible for maintaining the norms of a group and play many roles to accomplish this. The **Facilitator** acts like a traffic director by ***managing the flow of information to keep the group on task***. **Gatekeepers** are those group members that attempt to ***maintain proper communicative balance***. These people also serve as the points of contact between times of official group meetings. The **Recorder** is the person responsible for ***tracking group ideas, decisions, and progress***. Often, a written record is necessary, thus, this person has the responsibility for keeping, maintaining, and sharing group notes. If you're the person who pulls out a pen and paper in order to track what the group talks about, you're the recorder.
- **Individual Roles**. Because groups are made of individuals, group members often play various roles in order to achieve individual goals. The **Aggressor** engages in ***forceful or dominating communication to put others down or initiate conflict with other members***. This communication style can cause some members to remain silent or passive. The **Blocker** is the person that fusses or ***complains about small procedural matters, often blocking the***

group's progress by not letting them get to the task. They worry about small details that, overall, are not important to achieving the group's desired outcome. The **Self-Confessor** uses the group as a setting to ***discuss personal or emotional matters not relevant to the group or its task***. This is the person that views the group as one that is there to perform group therapy. The **Playboy or Playgirl** ***shows little interest in the group or the problem at hand*** and does not contribute in a meaningful way, or at all. This is the person who does essentially no work, yet still gets credit for the group's work. The **Joker or Clown** uses ***inappropriate humor or remarks that can steer the group from its mission***.

While we certainly do not have the space to cover every role you might encounter in a group, we're sure you can point to your own examples of people who have filled the roles we've discussed. Perhaps you can point to examples of when you have filled some of these roles yourself. It's important for group members to understand what kinds of roles they play in groups in order to engage in positive roles that help the group along. One dynamic that these roles contribute to in the process of group communication is leadership in groups. Let's briefly examine how leadership functions in groups.

Leadership In Groups

While we've examined roles we can play in groups, the role that often gets the most attention is that of the leader. Like defining communication, many people have an idea of what a leader is, but can't really come up with a good definition for the term as there are many ways to conceptualize the role of leader. One way to do this is to think of leaders in terms of their leadership styles. Let's look at three broad leadership styles to better understand the communication choices leaders can make, as well as the outcome of such choices, in a group.

First, let's visualize leadership styles by seeing them as a continuum. The position to the left (Laissez-faire) indicates a leader who exerts little to no control over a group, while the position on the right (Authoritarian) indicates a leader who seeks complete control. The position in the middle (Democratic) is one where a leader maintains a moderate level of control or influence in a group with the group's permission.

- **Laissez-faire** is a French term that literally means "let do." This leadership style is one in which the leader ***takes a laid back or hands-off approach***. For a variety of reasons a leader may choose to keep her/his input at a minimum and refrain from directing a group. What do you think some reasons may be for selecting this leadership style? Perhaps a person feels uncomfortable being a leader. Perhaps a person does not feel that she/he possesses the skills required to successfully lead the group. Or, perhaps the group is highly skilled, motivated, and efficient and does not require much formal direction from a leader. If the latter is the case then a laissez-faire approach may work well. However, if a group is in need of direction then a laissez-faire style may result in frustration and inefficiency.
- An **authoritarian leadership style** is one in which a leader attempts ***to exert maximum control over a group***. This may be done by making unilateral decisions rather than consulting all members, assigning members to specific tasks or duties, and generally controlling group processes. This leadership style may be beneficial when a group is in need of direction or there are significant time pressures. Authoritarian leaders may help a group stay efficient and organized in order to accomplish its goals. However, group members may be less committed to the outcomes of the group process than if they had been a part of the decision making process. One term that you may have heard on your campus is "shared-governance." In general, faculty do not like working in groups where one person is making the decisions. Instead, most faculty prefer a system where all members of a group share in the leadership process. This can also be called the democratic style of leadership.
- The **democratic style of leadership** falls somewhere in the middle of laissez-faire and authoritarian styles. In these situations, ***the decision-making power is shared among group members, not exercised by one individual***.

In order for this to be effective, group members must spend considerable time sharing and listening to various positions and weighing the effects of each. Groups organized in this fashion may be more committed to the outcomes of the group, be more creative, and be more participatory. However, as each person's ideas are taken into account, this can extend the amount of time it takes for a group to accomplish its goals.

While we've certainly oversimplified our coverage of the complex nature of group leaders, you should be able to recognize that there are pros and cons to each leadership style, and that there is not one right way to be a leader for every group. An effective leader is able to adapt his or her style to fit the needs of the group. Furthermore, as a group's needs and members change over time, leadership styles can accommodate natural changes in the group's life cycle. Take a moment to think of various group situations in which each leadership style may be the most and the least desirable. What are examples of groups where each style of leadership could be practiced effectively?

Group Norms

Every group we participate in has a set of norms like we talked about in the "norming" stage of groups. Each group's rules and norms are different, and we must learn them to be effective participants. Some groups formalize their norms and rules, while others are less formal and more fluid. Norms are the recognized rules of behavior for group members. **Norms** ***influence the ways we communicate with other members, and ultimately, the outcome of group participation***. Norms are important because, as we highlighted in the "norming" stage of group formation, they are the defining characteristics of groups. Brilhart and Galanes (1998) divide norms into two categories. **General norms** ***"direct the behavior of the group as a whole"*** (p. 130). Meeting times, how meetings run, and the division of tasks are all examples of general norms that groups form and maintain. These norms establish the generally accepted rules of behavior for all group members. The second category of norms is role-specific norms. **Role-specific norms** ***"concern individual members with particular roles, such as the designated leader"*** (p. 130). Not only are there norms that apply to all members of a group, there are norms that influence the behaviors of each role. Consider our brief discussion on leadership. If a group's members are self-motivated, and do not need someone imposing structure, they will set a norm that the group leader should act as a laissez-faire or democratic leader rather than an authoritarian leader. Violation of this norm would most likely result in conflict if the leader tries to impose his/her will. A violation like this will send a group back to the "storming" stage to renegotiate the acceptable norms of the group. When norms are violated, group members most often will work to correct the violation to get the group back on task and functioning properly. Have you ever been in a group in which a particular group member did not do the task that was assigned to him/her? What happened? How did the group handle this situation as a whole? What was the response of the person who did not complete the task? In hindsight, would you have handled it differently? If so, how?

As groups progress through the various stages, and as members engage in the various roles, the group is in a continual process of decision making. Since this is true, it makes sense to ask the question, "How is it that groups make decisions?"

Decision Making In Groups

When groups need to get a job done they should have a method in place for making decisions. The decision making process is a norm that may be decided by a group leader, or by the group members as a whole. Let's look at four common ways of making decisions in groups. To make it simple we will again use a continuum as a way to visualize the various options groups have for making decisions. On the left side are those methods that require maximum group involvement (consensus and voting). On the right are those methods that use the least amount of input from all members (compromise and authority rule).

The decision-making process that requires the most group input is called **consensus**. To reach consensus ***group members must participate in the crafting of a decision and agree to adopt it***. While not all members may support the decision equally, all will agree to carry it out. In individualistic cultures like the U.S., where a great deal of value is placed on independence and freedom of choice, this option can be seen by group members as desirable, since no one is forced to go along with a policy or plan of action to which they are opposed. Even though this style of decision making has many advantages, it has its limitations as well—it requires a great deal of creativity, trust, communication, and time on the part of all group members. It is often difficult to reach consensus, therefore, groups may opt for the next strategy which does not require buy-in from all or most of the group.

> **Group Communication and You**
>
> Okay, you're a Communication major and this whole idea of working in groups really appeals to you and seems to come naturally. But perhaps you're not a Communication major and you're thinking to yourself that your future career isn't really going to require group or team work. Well, you're probably wrong about that. The College of Engineering at Michigan State University created a webpage called "top ten things engineering employers want you to do." Among them are: "Make a contribution to the company the minute you arrive," "Show us you are a leader," "Be able to clearly express your thoughts (verbally & in writing)" "Demonstrate you are a Team Player" and "Be goal oriented."
>
> Even non-Communication majors need to develop effective group communication skills to succeed at work.

Voting by majority may be as simple as having 51% of the vote for a particular decision, or may require a larger percentage, such as two-thirds or three-fourths, before reaching a decision. Like consensus, voting is advantageous because everyone is able to have an equal say in the decision process (as long as they vote). Unlike consensus, everyone may not be satisfied with the outcome. In a simple majority, 49% of voters may be displeased and may be resistant to abide by the majority vote. In this case the decision or policy may be difficult to carry out and implement. For example, one of your authors was involved at a campus where a department was voting on whether or not they wanted to hire a particular person to be a professor. Three faculty voted yes for the person, while two faculty voted no. Needless to say, there was a fair amount of contention among the professors who voted. Ultimately, the person being considered for the job learned about the split vote and decided that he did not want to take the job because he felt that the two people that voted no would not treat him well. Toward the right of our continuum is **compromise**. This method often carries a positive connotation in the U.S. because it is perceived as fair since ***each member gives up something, as well as gains something***. Nevertheless, this decision making process may not be as fair as it seems on the surface. The main reason for this has to do with what is being given up and obtained. There is nothing in a compromise that says these two factors must be equal (that may be the ideal, but it is often not the reality). For individuals or groups that feel they have gotten the unfair end of the bargain, they may be resentful and refuse to carry out the compromise. They may also foster ill will toward others in the group, or engage in self-doubt for going along with the compromise in the first place. However, if groups cannot make decisions through consensus or voting, compromise may be the next best alternative. At the far right of our continuum is decision by **authority rule**. This decision-making process ***requires essentially no input from the group, although the group's participation may be necessary for implementing the decision***. The authority in question may be a member of the group who has more power than other members, or a person of power outside the group. While this method is obviously efficient, members are often resentful when they feel they have to follow another's orders and feel the group process was a façade and waste of valuable time. During the decision making process, groups must be careful not to fall victim to groupthink. **Groupthink** happens when ***a group is so focused on agreement and consensus that they do not examine all of the potential solutions available to them***. Obviously, this can lead to incredibly flawed decision making and outcomes. Groupthink occurs when a group overestimates its power and morality, becomes closed-minded, and group members are pressured to conform and not raise serious objections to decisions being proposed (Brilhard & Galanes, 1998). Many have argued that the Bush administration's decision to go to war with Iraq is an example of groupthink. In fact, the United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence: Report on pre-Iraq War Intelligence concluded that many of the decisions used to support the war in Iraq were a result of "collective group think."

As with leadership styles, appropriate decision making processes vary from group to group depending on context, culture, and group members. There is not a "one way fits all" approach to making group decisions. When you find yourself in a task or decision-making group it is best to first take stock of the task at hand before deciding as a group the best ways to proceed.

Group Work and Time

By now you should recognize that working in groups and teams has many advantages. However, one issue that is of central importance to group work is time. When working in groups time can be both a source of frustration, as well as a reason to work together. One obvious problem is that it takes much longer to make decisions with two or more people as opposed to just one person. Another problem is that it can be difficult to coordinate meeting times when taking into account people's busy lives of work, school, family, and other personal commitments. On the flip side, when time is limited and there are multiple tasks to accomplish, it is often more efficient to work in a group where tasks can be delegated according to resources and skills. When each member can take on certain aspects of a project, this limits the amount of work an individual would have to do if he/she were solely responsible for the project.

For example, when one of your authors bought her first house the yard was a mess—the lawn needed to be mowed and trimmed, trees needed to be pruned, and flower beds needed to be weeded and replanted. The thought of doing this alone was daunting in terms of the required labor and time. Hiring professionals was too expensive to consider. What to do? A friend suggested a "yard warming party" as an alternative to a traditional house warming party. Instead of bringing gifts each person brought a new plant or some sort of garden tool, came over in their work clothes, and donated a Saturday afternoon to cleaning up the yard. After only four hours of collective work the trees were trimmed, the lawn was neatly mowed, and the group of friends had planted fresh new daisy bushes. The group had set out on a task, divided work according to skill, and accomplished a huge project in a fraction of the time it would have taken a single person. The best part was being able to look at the yard as a reminder of one's community and the power of people working together. On the flip side, your other author chaired a committee in which a report had to be written and presented to the campus community. The committee took several multi-hour meetings to write a report that could have been written by your author in less than two hours. However, the final report by the committee was much better and more detailed than your author could have written on his own. When deciding whether or not to work in groups, it is important to consider time. Is the time and effort of working in a group worth the outcome? Or, is it better to accomplish the task as an individual?

Groups and Technology

If you haven’t done so already, it is likely that you will use technology at some point to communicate in a group. There is no doubt that technology is rapidly changing the ways we communicate in a variety of contexts, and group communication is no exception. Many organizations use technologies such as computers and cell phones as a primary way to keep groups connected given their ease of use, low cost, and asynchronous nature. In fact, when your authors set up course web pages for students, they also set up “group forums” for class groups to deal with the complexities of finding times to meet. Using these forums our students have live chats online, transfer documents back and forth, and form discussion “threads” to achieve the group’s goals, all without ever having to meet in person. As you enter the workforce, you’ll likely find yourself participating in virtual groups with people who have been brought together from a variety of geographical locations. While communication technologies can be beneficial for bringing people together and facilitating groups, they also have drawbacks. When we lack face-to-face encounters, and rely on asynchronous forms of communication, there is greater potential for information to be lost and messages to be ambiguous. The face-to-face nature of traditional group meetings provides immediate processing and feedback through the interaction of group members. When groups communicate through email, threads, discussion forums, text messaging, etc., they lose the ability to provide immediate feedback to other members. Also, using communication technologies takes a great deal more time for a group to achieve its goals due to the asynchronous nature of these channels. Nevertheless, technology is changing the ways we understand groups and participate in them. We have yet to work out all of the new standards for group participation introduced by technology. Used well, technology opens the door for new avenues of working in groups to achieve goals. Used poorly, technology can add to the many frustrations people often experience working in groups and teams.

Summary

We participate in groups and teams at all stages and phases of our lives, from play groups, to members of an athletic team, to performing in a band, or performing in a play. We form groups based on personal and professional interests, drive reduction, and for reinforcement. Through group and team work we can save time and resources, enhance the quality of our work, succeed professionally, or accomplish socio-political change. As you recall, a group is composed of three or more people who interact over time, depend on each other, and follow shared rules and norms. A team is a specialized group which possesses a strong sense of collective identity and compatible and complimentary resources. There are five general types of groups depending on the intended outcome. Primary groups are formed to satisfy our long-term emotive needs. Secondary groups are more performance based and concern themselves with accomplishing tasks or decision making. Personal growth groups focus on specific areas of personal problem solving while providing a supportive and emotionally positive context. Learning groups are charged with the discovery and dissemination of new ideas while problem solving groups find solutions. Once a group comes together they go through typical stages (forming, storming, norming, performing, and terminating) to develop roles, create a leadership strategy, and determine the process for decision making. While numerous specific group roles exit, the four categories of roles include: task, social-emotional, procedural, and individual roles. It is likely that members will occupy multiple roles simultaneously as they participate in groups. There are three broad leadership styles ranging from least to most control—laissez faire, democratic, and authoritarian. Also related to power and control are options for decision making. Consensus gives members the most say, voting and compromise may please some but not others, and authority rule gives all control to the leader. None of the options for leadership styles and decision making are inherently good or bad—the appropriate choice depends on the individual situation and context. It is important for groups not to become victims of groupthink as they make decisions. New technologies are continually changing how we engage in group communication. The asynchronous nature of communication technologies can facilitate group processes. However, they also have the potential to slow groups down and make it more difficult to accomplish group goals.

Discussion Questions

1. Compare and contrast the definition of “team” vs. “group.” Are there other differences you can think of?
2. In a local, state, national, or international newspaper, find a recent story of group or teamwork. (Do not use a sport or athletic team for this example.) How do you think communication was relevant for this group?
3. Given the fact that there are both advantages and disadvantages to working in a group, how would you decide if a particular situation was best served by working in a group versus working as an individual?
4. Compare and contrast the three types of power. What might be some advantages and disadvantages of each in a group setting?
5. Reflect back on a recent group or team experience. What roles did you play? How would you feel if you had to take on a new role or responsibility? How would your communication change or stay the same?
6. Watch a feature length film and pay attention to the styles of leadership. (Whale Rider works well for this.) Does one person lead? Or, is leadership shared among group members? What styles of leadership do you notice? What are the suggested implications of a given style?
7. How were/are decisions made in your family? Has the process changed over time? What kinds of communication surround the decision making?

Key Terms

- activity groups
- aggressor
- authoritarian
- authority rule
- blocker
- cohesiveness
- collectivist
- common goals
- compromise
- consensus
- democratic
- devil’s advocate
- drive reduction
- encourager
- energizer
- facilitator
- followers
- forming
- gatekeepers
- general norms
- group
- individualistic
- individual roles
- information gatherers

- interaction
- interdependence
- interests/attraction
- joker/clown
- laissez-faire
- leadership
- learning groups
- norming
- norms
- opinion gatherers
- performing
- personal growth groups
- playboy/playgirl
- polarization
- power
- power-from-within
- power-over
- power-with
- primary groups
- problem solving groups
- procedural roles
- promulgation
- recorder
- reinforcement
- role-specific norms
- secondary groups
- self-confessor
- shared norms
- social-emotional roles
- social-emotional leader
- solidification
- storming
- synergy
- task leader
- task roles
- team
- tension releasers
- terminating
- voting

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Chapter 11 - Organizational Communication

Chapter 11

Organizational Communication

Chapter Objectives:

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

• Describe the importance and pervasiveness of organizations in our society.

• Define organizations and organizational communication.

• Explain how the study of organizational communication developed and what makes this specialization of communication study unique.

• Explain the five theoretical perspectives for understanding organizational communication.

• Understand the challenges and future directions of organizational communication.

I

f you have ever worked a part time job during the school year, worked a full time summer job, volunteered for a non-profit, or belonged to a social organization, you have experienced organizational communication. It's likely that you been a job seeker, an interviewee, a new employee, a co-worker, or maybe a manager? In each of these situations you make various choices regarding how you choose to communicate with others.

We participate in organizations in almost every aspect of our lives. In fact, you will spend the bulk of your waking life in the context of organizations (March & Simons, 1958). At the center of every organization is this phenomenon we've been studying throughout this book – Communication! Organizational communication is a broad and ever-growing specialization in the field of Communication. For the purpose of this chapter, we will provide a brief overview of the field, highlighting what organizational communication is and how it is studied.

What Is An Organization?

B

efore we define organizational communication let's look at what an organization is, and how pervasive they are in today's society. Amitai Etzioni (1964) states, "We are born in organizations, educated by organizations, and most of us spend much of our lives working for organizations" (p. 1). Simply put, from birth to death, organizations impact every aspect of our lives (Deetz, 1994).

Stephen P. Robbins (2001) defines an **organization** as a ***"consciously coordinated social unit composed of two or more people, that functions on a relatively continuous basis to achieve a common goal or set of goals"*** (p. 4). We organize together to achieve what we cannot accomplish individually. Organizing happens through communication. When we study organizational communication our focus is primarily on corporations, manufacturing, the service industry, and for profit businesses. However, organizations also include not-for-profit companies, schools, government agencies, small businesses, and social or charitable agencies such as churches or a local humane society.

We organize together for common social, personal, political, or professional purposes. When people form organizations they establish rules, hierarchies, structures, divisions of labor, designated/negotiated roles, and interdependent relationships. Organizations are complicated, dynamic organisms that take on a personality and culture all their own. Think back to our discussion in Chapter 5 on Systems Theory. Organizations can be thought of as systems of people (Goldhaber, 1993) who are in constant motion in which change is inevitable (Redding, 1972). Organizations are social systems (Thayer, 1968, Katz & Kahn, 1966) that rely on communication to cope with uncertainty and perform with some degree of efficacy. Simon (1957) puts it quite simply: "Without communication, there can be no organization" (p. 57).

What Is Organizational Communication?

Like defining many aspects of communication study, many of the definitions of organizational communication share common elements. Stanley Deetz (2001) argues that one way to enlighten our understanding of organization communication is to compare different approaches. However, for the purpose of this text, we want to define organizational communication so you have a frame of reference for understand this chapter. Our definition is not definitive, but creates a starting point for understanding this specialization of communication study.

We define **organizational communication** as ***the sending and receiving of messages among interrelated individuals within a particular environment or setting to achieve individual and common goals.*** Organizational communication is highly contextual and culturally dependent, and is not an isolated phenomenon. Individuals in organizations transmit messages through face-to face, written, and mediated channels.

Organizational communication largely focuses on building relationships, or repeated interpersonal interactions, with internal organizational members and interested external publics. Goldhaber (1990) identified a number of common characteristics in the variety of definitions of organizational communication -- Organizational communication 1) occurs within a complex open system which is influenced by, and influences its internal and external environments, 2) involves messages and their flow, purpose, direction, and media, 3) involves people and their attitudes, feelings, relationships, and skills.

Organizational communication helps us to 1) accomplish tasks relating to specific roles and responsibilities of sales, services, and production; 2) acclimate to changes through individual and organizational creativity and adaptation; 3) complete tasks through the maintenance of policy, procedures, or regulations that support daily and continuous operations; 4) develop relationships where "human messages are directed at people within the organization-their attitudes, morale, satisfaction, and fulfillment" (Goldhaber, 1990, p. 20); and 5) coordinate, plan, and control the operations of the organization through management (Katz & Kahn, 1966; Redding, 1972; Thayer, 1968). Organizational communication is how organizations represent, present, and constitute their organizational climate and culture—the attitudes, values and goals that characterize the organization and its members.

For organizations to be successful, they must have competent communicators. Organizational communication study shows that organizations rely on effective communication and efficient communication skills from their members. A number of surveys (Davis & Miller, 1996; Holter & Kopka, 2001; Maes, Weldy, & Icengole, 1997; Verespej, 1998; Gaut & Perrigo, 1994) identify effective oral and written communication as the most sought after skills by those who run organizations. The U.S. Department of Labor reported communication competency as the most vital skill necessary for the 21st century workforce to achieve organizational success (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, 1992). The Public Forum Institute (2001) maintained that employees need to be skilled in public presentation, listening, and interpersonal communication to flourish in an organization (www.publicforuminstitute.org).

Organizations seek people like you who can follow and give instructions, accurately listen, provide useful feedback, get along with coworkers and customers, network, provide serviceable information, work well in teams, and creatively and critically solve problems and present ideas in an understandable manner. Developing organizational communication awareness and effectiveness is more than just having know-how or knowledge. Efficient organizational communication involves knowing how to create and exchange information, work with diverse groups or individuals, communicate in complicated and changing circumstances, as well as having the aptitude or motivation to communicate in appropriate manners.

How the Field of Organizational Communication Developed

As you now know, communication study is deeply entrenched in the oral rhetorical traditions of ancient Rome and Greece. Similar to the many of the early concepts that shaped the discipline, some of the founding principles of organizational communication originated in the East. As early as the fourth century, Chinese scholars concentrated on the "problems of communicating within the vast government bureaucracy as well as between the government and the people" (Murphy, Hildebrandt & Thomas, 1997, p. 4). Ancient eastern scholars focused on information flow, message fidelity, and quality of information within their governmental bureaucracy (Krone, Garrett & Chen, 1992). These still remain areas of focus for organizational communication that you will learn in your classes today.

Like most of our field's specializations, organizational communication began in the mid 20th century with the work of P. E. Lull and W. Charles Redding at the University of Purdue (Putnam & Cheney, 1985). Prior to this, individuals like Chester Barnard and Mary Parker Follett were setting the cornerstones for organizational communication by acknowledging the role of communication as key to organizational practices. During the industrial age, the focus of organizational communication was on worker productivity, organizational structure, and overall organizational effectiveness. The main outcomes to be achieved were higher profits and managerial efficiency. Follett is often referred to as the first management consultant in the United States (Stohl, 1995). She focused specifically on message complexity, appropriate channel choice, and worker participation in organizations. Bernard (1938) placed communication at the heart of every organizational process, arguing that people must be able to interact with each other for an organization to succeed.

As a specialization in our field, organizational communication can arguably be traced back to Alexander R. Heron's 1942 book Sharing Information With Employees that looked at manager-employee communication (Redding & Tompkins, 1988). Putnam and Cheney (1985) stated that the specialization of "organizational communication grew out of three main speech communication traditions: public address, persuasion, and social science research on interpersonal, small group, and mass communication" (p. 131). Along with public-speaking training for corporate executives as early as the 1920's (Putnam & Cheney, 1985), early works like Dale Carnegie's How to Win Friends and Influence People in 1936 focused on oral presentation and written communication skills for managers to succeed in organizations.

Redding and Thompkins (1988) identify three periods in the development of organizational communication. During the **Era of Preparation** (1900 to 1940) much of the groundwork was laid for the discipline that we know today. Scholars emphasized the importance of communication in organizations. ***The primary focus during this time was on public address, business writing, managerial communication, and persuasion.*** The **Era of Identification and Consolidation** (1940-1970) ***saw the beginnings of business and industrial communication, with certain group and organizational relationships being recognized as important.*** During the **Era of Maturity and Innovation** (1970-present), ***empirical research increased, "accompanied by innovative efforts to develop concepts, theoretical premises, and philosophical critiques"*** (Redding & Thompkins, 1988, p. 7).

As with other specializations, over the last century, the organizational communication has evolved dramatically as the dialogue between business and academics continued. Redding and Thompkins (1988) conclude that "by 1967 or 1968, organizational communication had finally achieved at least a moderate degree of success in two respects: breaking from its 'business and industrial' shackles, and gaining a reasonable measure of recognition as an entity worthy of serious academic study" (p. 18).

What Organizational Communication Studies and Teaches Today

By now, you have a fair idea of some the different content that is covered in organizational communication. As communication evolves, research continues to develop, and this specialization continues to redefine itself. In the early stages, the emphasis was on the organizational leaders giving public presentations. More recently emphasis has focused on all levels of interaction in organizations. Because interpersonal relationships are a large part of organizational communication, it makes sense that a great deal of research focuses on how interpersonal relationships are conducted within the framework of organizational hierarchies. Thus, the communication in superior-subordinate relationships is a focal point for many organizational researchers (Stohl & Redding, 1987; Putnam & Cheney, 1985).

Putnam and Cheney (1985) summarized modern organizational communication research by identifying four primary domains of this specialization: 1) Communication channels, 2) Communication climate, 3) Network analysis and, 4) Superior-subordinate communication. Since the 1980s, this specialization has expanded to include work on organizational culture, power and conflict management, and organizational rhetoric. In a recent analysis of 23 introductory organizational communication textbooks (Aust, Limon, & Lippert, 2002), commonalities occurred in the coverage of multiple approaches and topics. The nine topics that appeared most frequently include: 1) leadership, 2) conflict and conflict management, 3) communication networks, 4) decision making and problem solving, 5) morals, ethics, or values, 6) communication technology, 7) human resources perspective, 8) human relations perspective and, 9) classic management theory. If you were take an organizational communication course at your campus, it's likely that much of the time would be spent focusing on developing your skills in organizational socialization, interviewing, individual and group presentations, work relationships, performance evaluation, conflict resolution, stress management, decision making, and communicating with external publics.

Studying Organizational Communication

Looking back to Chapter Six, we looked at three primary ways Communication scholars conduct research. When we study organizational communication we can look to quantify date to predict behaviors, or qualify data to understand behaviors. We can also use qualitative methods to study communication in the natural environment of organizations in order to understand organizational cultures and how they function. These approaches emphasize the study of meanings and subjective aspects of organizational life as we experience them in our daily lives (Putnam, 1983; Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983).

Critical approaches view organizations as "sites of domination" (Miller, 2003, p. 116) where certain individuals are marginalized or disadvantaged by oppressive groups or structures. Most often the focus of this line of research involves gender or ethnicity as they are manifest in organizations. Eisenberg and Goodall (2001) state that a critical theorist "gathers interpretive cultural data about language, motives, and actions and makes judgments about the power relationships that exist in the organization" (p. 160). The critical researcher uses interpretative research techniques similar to cultural studies. When looking at something like a company pamphlet or the organization's employee handbook, a critical researcher will expose any anti-social or political meanings detrimental to certain individuals.

Chronological Progression of Perspectives for Understanding Organizational Communication

Now that you have a better understanding of the concept of organizational communication, let’s look at five different perspectives for understanding organizational communication that have developed over time.

Classical Management Perspective

The original perspective for understanding organizational communication can be described using a machine metaphor. At the beginning of the industrial age, where people thought science could solve almost every problem, American Frederick Taylor, Frenchman Henri Fayol, and German Max Weber tried to apply scientific solutions to organizations. They wanted to determine how organizations and workers could function in an ideal scientific manner. Organizations during the industrial revolution wanted to know how they could maximize their profits so the classical management perspective focused on worker productivity.

> **Case In Point**
>
> McDonalds
>
> Richard and Maurice McDonald owned such a restaurant. After running it successfully for 11 years, they decided to improve it. They wanted to make food faster, sell it cheaper and spend less time worrying about replacing cooks and car hops. The brothers closed the restaurant and redesigned its food-preparation area to work less like a restaurant and more like an automobile assembly line.
>
> Their old drive-in had already made them rich, but the new restaurant - which became McDonald's - made the brothers famous. Restaurateurs traveled from all over the country to copy their system of fast food preparation, which they called the Speedee Service System. Without cars, Carl and Maurice would not have had a drive-in restaurant to tinker with. Without assembly lines, they would not have had a basis for their method of preparing food.
>
> Being a short-order cook took skill and training, and good cooks were in high demand. The Speedee system, however, was completely different. Instead of using a skilled cook to make food quickly, it used lots of unskilled workers, each of whom did one small, specific step in the food-preparation process.
>
> Instead of being designed to facilitate the preparation of a variety of food relatively quickly, the kitchen's purpose was to make a very large amount of a very few items.
>
> When you visit different restaurants belonging to the same fast-food chain, the menu and food are pretty much the same. There's one reason for this uniformity in fast food - it's a product of mass-production.
>
> [1]

The machine metaphor of classical management suggests that three basic aspects should exist in organizations: Specialization, Standardization, and Predictability (Miller, 2001). Those who advocated this perspective argued that every employee should have a specialized function. This being the case, essentially any individual could perform a job if they are properly trained. Thus, if one individual fails to do the job, he/she is replaceable with another person since people are seen as machine parts.

Frederick Taylor forged the beginnings of his **Theory of Scientific Management** from his early days as a foreman in a machine shop. Little did he know how drastically he was going to influence organizations and our notions of working life. Taylor could not understand why organizations and individuals would not want to maximize efficiency. In Frank Copley’s biography (1923) about Taylor he reveals a man who was driven by perfection: “The spectacle of a [man] doing less than [his] best was to him morally shocking. He enthusiastically believed that to do anything less than your best is to add to the sum of the world’s unrighteousness” (p. 207). However, workers were not always as enthusiastic about efficiency and quality as Taylor, especially given the significant difference in status and pay between management and labor. For the common laborer during the industrial revolution, this new approach to employment meant possibly losing your job if a “scientific” formula showed that fewer workers could do the same job.

Organizational Communication Then

Frederick Taylor

In today's world, fast food chains are good examples of classical management. Next time you buy that Whopper or Big Mac, you can thank the influence of American businessman Frederick Taylor. Literally using a stopwatch, Taylor's used his time and motion studies to prove that for every job, there is one best way to perform it in the shortest amount of time. This meant properly selecting, training, and rewarding the appropriate worker with the right task (Taylor, 1947). Peek into the kitchen the next time you order that burger, fries, and coke. It is likely that you will see employees separated by station and task, doing their specific part to fulfill your order. Likewise, the design of hard plastic seats and bright colors in fast food restaurants is done with intention to get customers in and out of the restaurant in an efficient and expedient manner.

During this time, Weber was also developing his ideas about **bureaucracy**. He was fascinated on what the ideal organization should look like, and believed that effective hierarchies helped organizations operate effectively. ***Precise rules, a division of labor, centralized authority, and a distinctly defined hierarchy should be driven by rational thought void of emotion and outside influence*** (Weber, 1947). This way, organizations could operate in a somewhat predictable manner, employees knew what to expect and who was in charge, and management could make decisions based on familiar, relevant information rather than irrational feelings. Think about the bureaucracy of your college campus. There are divisions of labor, rules, policies, and procedures to follow on your campus. Registering for classes, tracking transcripts, obtaining financial aid, living in campus housing, etc., are all part of the time you spend navigating the bureaucracy on your campus. But, imagine a campus without bureaucracy. What if you couldn't easily access your transcripts? What if no one kept track of your progress through college? How would you know what to do and when you were done? What if there was no process for applying for financial aid? While bureaucracies can be slow, tedious, and often inefficient, they provide structure we have come to rely on to accomplish personal and professional goals.

Fayol's (1949) theory of classical management focused on how management worked, specifically looking at what managers should do to be most effective. For Fayol, it should be clear who is in charge, and each individual should know his/her role in an organization. He argued that organizations should be grouped in precise hierarchy that limits the flow of communication to top-down communication, and the number of employees directly under the supervision of one manager.

Theory X is an example of a classical management theory where ***managers micro-manage employees by using reward-punishment tactics, and limiting employee participation in decision making*** (McGregor, 1960). This theory sees employees as apathetic, unconcerned about organizational goals, resistant to change, and basically lazy or unmotivated. Because of this, managers should closely supervise their workers. Because the classical management perspective viewed employees as interchangeable parts of a machine, employees were as disposable parts of the machine. This allowed for management to mistreat and abuse their employees, ultimately lowering the very thing they were after, greater productivity.

Organizations you use this approach can still be found today. Have you ever had a boss or manager who treated you like an interchangeable part of a machine who had little value? If so, you've experienced aspects of the classical management perspective at work. While notions of science were an interesting starting point for determining how to communicate in organizations during the initial stages of the industrial revolution, the classical management approach fell short in many ways. Thus, development and refinement continued to occur regarding ways to understand organizational communication.

Human Relations Perspective

Because of the overly mechanical nature of the classical management perspective, organizational scholars wanted to focus on the human elements that make up organizations. The human relations perspective emerged out of the deficiencies of classical management where managers neglected employees' needs and treated them as pieces of a machine rather than unique individuals. The **human relations approach** focuses on how ***organizational members relate to one another, and how individuals' needs influence their performance in organizations***. In 1924 Elton Mayo and his team of Harvard scientists began a series of studies that were initially interested in how to modify working conditions to increase worker productivity, decrease employee turnover, and change the overall poor organizational effectiveness at the Hawthorne Electric Plant near Chicago (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939).

Mayo's team discovered that, no matter what changes they made to the work environment (such as adjusting lighting and temperature levels, work schedules, and worker isolation), worker productivity increased simply due to the presence researchers themselves. This research pointed to the fact that simply paying attention to workers and addressing their social needs yielded significant changes in their productivity. This is where the term "The Hawthorne Effect" developed. Mayo's work provided an impetus for a new way of looking at workers in organizations.

Maslow's hierarchy suggests that human beings are motivated to satisfy their personal needs. Maslow (1957) contends that humans are motivated by a series of basic physical and psychological needs divided into lower and higher order categories. His theory is still of interest to us today as we try to comprehend the relevance of human relations in the workplace. Daniels, Spiker, and Papa's (1997) describe McGregor's contributions: "As management theorists became familiar with Maslow's work, they soon realized the possibility of connecting higher-level needs to worker motivation. If organizational goals and individual needs could be integrated so that people would acquire self-esteem and, ultimately, self-actualization through work, then motivation would be self-sustaining" (p. 33). Remember that Theory X managers do not trust their employees because they think workers shy away from work, change, and responsibility. At the other end of the managerial spectrum, Theory Y managers (those that take a human relations perspective to employees) assume that workers are self motivated, seek responsibility, and want to achieve success. As a result of this changing perspective, managers began to invite feedback and encourage a degree of participation in organizational decision making, thus focusing on human relationships as a way to motivate employee productivity.

Human Resources Perspective

The Human Resources perspective picks up where human relations left off. The primary criticism of the previous approach was that it was still primarily concerned with productivity, and tried to achieve worker productivity simply by making workers happy. The idea that a happy employee would be a productive employee makes initial sense. However, happiness does not mean that we will be productive workers. As a matter of fact, an individual can be happy with a job and not work very hard. Another reason scholars tried to improve the human relations perspective was because manipulative managers misused it by inviting participation from employees on the surface, but not really doing anything with the employees' contributions. Imagine your boss encouraging everyone to put their ideas into a suggestion box but never looking them. How would you feel?

Human Resources attempts to truly embrace participation by all organizational members, viewing each person as a valuable human resource. ***Employees are valuable resources that should be fully involved to manifest their abilities and productivity***. Using this approach, organizations began to encourage employee participation in decision making.

An example of the human resources perspective is William Ouchi's (1981) Theory Z. Ouchi believed that traditional American organizations should be more like Japanese organizations. Japanese culture values lifetime employment, teamwork, collective responsibility, and a sound mind and body. This contrasts with many traditional American values such as short-term employment, individualism, and non-participation. In the 1980's movie Gungho, Michael Keaton played an automotive plant manager that struggles as a Japanese company purchases his American automotive plant. The comedy of the movie relies on the incongruency between the two cultures as the American work force attempted to adjust to the Japanese management team.

Ouchi did not think that American organizations should function exactly like Japanese organizations. Many U.S. companies implemented Japanese organizational concepts such as quality circles (QC), quality of work life (QWL) programs, management by objectives (MBO), and W. E. Deming's (1982) notion of total quality management (TQM). Each of these approaches was designed to flatten hierarchies, increase participation, implement quality control, and utilize teamwork. Brady (1989) states sums up the human resources perspective when he stated that it is all about "achieving high productivity or performance by getting organizational participants meaningfully involved in the important decisions that regulate the enterprise" (p. 15).

Systems Perspective

Collectively, individuals in organizations achieve more than they can independently (Barnard, 1838; Katz & Kahn, 1966; Redding, 1972; von Bertalanffy, 1968). The **systems perspective** for understanding organizations is ***"concerned with problems of relationships, of structure, and of interdependence rather than with the constant attributes of objects"*** (Katz & Kahn, 1966, p.18). An organization is like a living organism, and must exist in its external environment in order to survive. Organizations are not isolated, and must interact with other organizations within their environments to survive. Without this interaction an organization remains what we call closed, and withers away (Buckley, 1967).

Case In Point

The Future of Outsourcing: How it's transforming whole industries and changing the way we work

Globalization has been brutal to midwestern manufacturers like the Paper Converting Machine Co. For decades, PCMC's Green Bay (Wis.) factory, its oiled wooden factory floors worn smooth by work boots, thrived by making ever-more-complex equipment to weave, fold, and print packaging for everything from potato chips to baby wipes. But PCMC has fallen on hard times. First came the 2001 recession. Then, two years ago, one of the company's biggest customers told it to slash its machinery prices by 40% and urged it to move production to China. Last year, a St. Louis holding company, Barry-Wehmiller Cos., acquired the manufacturer and promptly cut workers and nonunion pay. In five years sales have plunged by 40%, to $170 million, and the workforce has shrunk from 2,000 to 1,100. Employees have been traumatized, says operations manager Craig Compton, a muscular former hockey player. "All you hear about is China and all these companies closing or taking their operations overseas." But now, Compton says, he is "probably the most optimistic I've been in five years." Hope is coming from an unusual source. As part of its turnaround strategy, Barry-Wehmiller plans to shift some design work to its 160-engineer center in Chennai, India. By having U.S. and Indian designers collaborate 24/7, explains Vasant Bennett, president of Barry-Wehmiller's engineering services unit, PCMC hopes to slash development costs and time, win orders it often missed due to engineering constraints -- and keep production in Green Bay. Barry-Wehmiller says the strategy already has boosted profits at some of the 32 other midsize U.S. machinery makers it has bought. "We can compete and create great American jobs," vows CEO Robert Chapman. "But not without offshoring."

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All organizations have basic properties. **Equifinality** means that ***a system (organization) can reach its goals from different paths***. For example, each professor that teaches public speaking does so in a different way but, the end result is that the students in each of the classes as completed a course in public speaking. **Negative entropy** is ***the ability of an organization to overcome the possibility of becoming run down***. Any steps your campus takes to keep its curriculum up to date, and its facilities maintained is considered negative entropy. **Requisite variety** means that ***organizations must be responsive to their external environment and adjust when needed***. On the campus of your authors, there were not enough students attending. So, the campus did a marketing study to figure out how to reach potential students. **Homeostasis** points to ***an organization's need for stability in a turbulent environment***. As gas prices have gone up, organizations impacted by these rising costs take steps to ensure their survival and profitability. **Complexity** states that ***the more an organization grows and interacts, the more elaborate it becomes*** (Katz & Kahn, 1966; von Bertalanffy, 1968; Miller, 2002). Think about huge companies like AT&T. It must have elaborate organizational systems in place to deal with all of its employees and customers in a competitive market place.

If an organization is a system, how do we use the role of communication to analyze interactions among organizational members? Karl Weick's (1979) Theory of Organizing suggests that participants organize through their communication and make sense of unpredictable environments through interactions. Organizations exist through the interactions of people in those organizations. An organization is more than just a physical building with people inside. Communication is the "process of organizing" implying that communication actually is the organization (Farace, Monge, & Russell, 1977; Eisenberg & Goodall, 2001). Regardless of whether the focus is on the message or the meaning, systems theory stresses the interdependence of integrated people in organizations and the outcomes they produce as a result of their interactions.

Cultural Perspective

Each organization has unique characteristics that make it different from other organizations. Every organization has certain cultural differences such as language, traditions, symbols, practices, past-times, and social conveniences that distinguish it from other organizations. Each organization is rich with its own histories, stories, customs, and social norms. We can understand organizations by seeing them as unique cultures.

Simply put, the **cultural perspective** states that ***organizations maintain: 1) Shared values and beliefs, 2) Common practices, skills, and actions, 3) Customarily observed rules, 4) Objects and artifacts, and 5) Mutually understood meanings.*** Shockley-Zalabak (2002) contends, "Organizational culture reflects the shared realities and shared practices in the organization and how these realities create and shape organizational events" (p. 63). Not every individual in an organization shares, supports, or engages in organizational values, beliefs, or rules in a similar manner. Instead, organizational culture includes various perspectives in a continually changing, emerging, and complex environment.

It can be tempting to treat culture as a "thing." However, organizational cultures are shared ways of thinking that emerge through interaction. Members share meaning, construct reality, and make sense of their environment. From a communication perspective, individuals of organizations create culture through their interactions. "Culture is directly revealed through language, stories, nonverbal messages, and communication exchanges" (Eisenberg & Goodall, 2001, p. 128). As Morgan states, "There is often more to culture than meets the eye and our understandings are usually much more fragmented and superficial than the reality itself" (1997, p. 151).

Organizational Communication Now

Google

There's no question that Google is a trendsetter. The company made Web search sexy, and lucrative. It established the foundation for an ecosystem that allows any old little Web site to make money off advertising.

With its lava lamps, simple doodle design, pampered employees and millionaires in its rank and file, it has become a cultural icon and an emblem of the gold-rush promise of the Web.

Google was ranked by Fortune magazine as the best place in the U.S. to work, and it has reached another zenith by becoming the most popular Web site. It's even become a verb in the dictionary.

And it may even have started a new trend by creating a job that carries the title "chief culture officer." Stacy Savides Sullivan is that person at Google. Sullivan's mission is simple: retain the company's unique culture and keep the Googlers happy. In an exclusive interview, she tells CNET News.com how she does just that.

What do you do as chief culture officer?

Sullivan: I work with employees around the world to figure out ways to maintain and enhance and develop our culture and how to keep the core values we had in the very beginning--a flat organization, a lack of hierarchy, a collaborative environment--to keep these as we continue to grow and spread them and filtrate them into our new offices around the world.

We want all of our employees to play a part in being involved in keeping our culture the way it is today but also growing and developing it. So some of it is coming up with different programs or processes, and just being there to talk with people when they have issues, setting up Web sites where people can report bugs in their culture and ideas on how to improve it, and those types of thing.

What have we not covered that you think is germane to what you do at Google?

Sullivan: I think for any company that is growing as quickly as we are the work-life balance component is actually quite high. We don't typically have early-morning meetings or late-night meetings. And people are welcome to do things via conference call at home and we pay for people to connect from home. We have a good paternity-leave policy where the dads can take off a couple of weeks when their spouse has had a child and we pay for peoples' meals when they have new babies for the first few weeks.

We've all heard about the ability for people to bring their dogs to work. And you have such a litany of perks and benefits and things that would encourage people to stay or even join. And we have a benefit where we reimburse people up to $5,000 if they buy a hybrid or electric car. And we have shuttle service (for commuters) to and from San Francisco, the East Bay, Santa Cruz.

http://www.news.com/Meet-Googles-culture-czar/2008-1023_3-6179897.html

When we become involved with organizations, current members of that organization teach us "the correct way to perceive, think, and feel" (Schein, 1992, p. 12). There are three interdependent levels that provide insight into how culture works in organizations.

- **Artifacts** are the first type of communicative behavior we encounter in organizations. Artifacts are easy to observe but difficult to interpret. Artifacts are ***symbols used by an organization to represent the organization's culture***. You might observe artifacts such as office technology, office architecture and arrangement, lighting, artwork, written documents, personal items on desks, clothing preferences, personal appearance, name tags, security badges, policy handbook, or web sites. You might observe routine behavior such as work processes, patterned communication (greetings), non-verbal characteristics (eye contact and handshakes) rituals, ceremonies, stories, or informal/formal interactions between supervisor and subordinate. All of these are artifacts that tell us something about an organization's cultural values and practices.
- **Values** are an ***organization's preference for how things should happen, or strategies for determining how things should be accomplished correctly***. Hackman and Johnson (2000) believe that values "serve as the yardstick for judging behavior" (p. 233). Many times there is a disconnect between what an organization says it values, and their actual behavior. For example, Disney espouses family values, yet many of their subsidiary companies produce media that do not hold up these values. A way around this for Disney is to make sure to use other names, such as Touchstone Pictures, so that the Disney name is not attached to anything that looks like it does not support family values.
- **Basic assumptions** are the core of what individuals believe in organizations believe. These ***"unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings" ultimately influence how you experience the world as an organizational member*** (Schein, 1992, p. 17). Unspoken beliefs reveal how we treat other individuals, what we see as good and bad in human nature, how we discover truth, and our place in the environment (Hackman & Johnson, 2000). Basic assumptions guide how organizations treat employees and provide services to customers. Imagine that you work overtime almost everyday without pay. Why would you do this? Maybe you hold the basic assumption that people who work hard ultimately get ahead by being given promotions and pay raises. Imagine if you did this for years with no recognition or acknowledgement. What does that say about your basic assumptions in comparison to those of the organization?

Looking at organizations from the cultural perspective began in the 1980s (Putnam, 1990, p.2). During this time, several popular books focused on ideal corporate cultures, and the cultural perspective became a hot topic. Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life (Deal & Kennedy, 1982) and In Search of Excellence (Peters & Waterman, 1982) described cultural elements that mark prosperous organizations. The authors talked with Fortune 500 companies and determined that if an organization demonstrates a bias for action, has a close relationship with customers, has identifiable values, reveres individuals that exemplifies organizational values (heroes), and has a solid communication network, it is a healthy organization.

Culture is complicated and unstable. Each organization has its own unique identity, its own distinct ways of doing things, and its own ways of performing culture (Pacanowsky & O 'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). The books mentioned above prompted many organizations to try to replicate the companies with “strong” or “excellent” cultures. Ironically, several of the companies identified with strong or excellent cultures have had a difficult time maintaining productivity over the last twenty years.

An important focal point of the cultural perspective is the climate of an organization. **Climate** is ***the general workplace atmosphere or mood experienced by organizational members*** (Tagiuri, 1968). Organizational climate is a “subjective reaction to organization members’ perception of communication events” (Shockley-Zalabak, 2002, p. 66). Do you like working with the people at your job? Are you satisfied with the general climate of your college campus? Are you appropriately rewarded for the work you do? Do you feel like a valued member of your church or social group? Climate has a direct effect on organizational relationships and members’ satisfaction and morale. Researcher Jack Gibb (1961) proposes that the interpersonal communication in organizational relationships, especially between superiors and subordinates, contributes to the overall climate of organizations. Gibb identifies a continuum of climate characteristics ranging from supportive to defensive behaviors that lead to member satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Organizational Communication Then

Gibb’s Climate Characteristics: In the 1960;s Gibb developed characteristics of Defensive and Supportive Climates in organizations.

Defensive Climate

• Evaluation-passing judgment, blaming, and questioning standards, values, and motives

• Control-trying to do something to someone else

• Strategy-manipulating or tricking others

• Neutrality-expressing a lack of concern for other’s welfare

• Superiority-communicating an attitude of superiority in position, wealth, intellect, and physical characteristics by arousing feelings of inadequacy in others

• Certainty-being dogmatic and always needing to be right

Supportive Climate

• Descriptive-being nonjudgmental and asking questions without calling for change

• Problem Orientation-defining mutual problems and seeking solutions without inhibiting

• Spontaneity-being free of deception and straightforward

• Equality-having mutual trust and respect engaging in participative decision making

• Empathy-respecting the worth of the listener by sharing and accepting others problems and values

• Provisionalism-being willing to experiment and adapt

Challenges in Organizational Communication

In today’s world we all must be communicatively aware and ready to cope with rapid organizational change during this “information-intensive age” where downsizing, strikes, illegal activities, dot.coms, and bankruptcies dominate the headlines (Bennis, p. 178). As you continue your education in college, you’ll continue to understand the need to be prepared for a perpetually evolving, increasingly diverse, and unpredictable global workplace.

The key to organizational success, both for you and the organizations with whom you are involved, is effective communication. As you have probably experienced in both your personal relationships and organizational relationships, communication is not always successful. If you have ever worked on a group project for one of your classes, you have likely experienced many of the communicative challenges organizations face in this increasingly fast-paced and global world.

Ineffective communication can cause many problems that can impact relationships, productivity, job satisfaction, and morale as we interact in organizations. Gerald Goldhaber summarizes Osmo Wiio's "laws" of communication that are good to remember as you interact in increasingly complex organizations. Wiio pessimistically warns that: 1) If communication can fail, it will fail, 2) If a message can be understood in different ways, it will be misunderstood in the manner that does the most damage, 3) The more communication there is, the more tricky it is for the communication to be successful, and 4) There is always someone who thinks they know better what you said than you do.

Organizational Communication And You

Understanding the importance of organizational communication is essential in the success of any type of organization, large or small. If entering the work world is something that intrigues you, one cannot stress the importance of organizational communication. According to Kathryn A. Baker, "Managers have traditionally spent the majority of their time communicating in one form or another (meetings, face-to-face discussions, memos, letters, e-mails, reports, etc.). Today, however, more and more employees find that an important part of their work is communication, especially now that service workers outnumber production workers and research as well as production processes emphasize greater collaboration and teamwork among workers in different functional groups. Moreover, a sea-change in communication technologies has contributed to the transformation of both work and organizational structure. For these reasons, communication practices and technologies have become more important in all organizations."

[3]

One of the greatest challenges facing organizations is the practice of ethics. Ethics are a basic code of conduct (morals) that individuals and groups use to assess whether something is right or wrong. Shockley-Zalabak's (2002) expands the notion of communication ethics: "When applied to human communication, ethics are the moral principles that guide our judgments about the good and bad, right and wrong, of communication, not just communication effectiveness or efficiency" (p. 441). Jablin and Sias (2001) highlight what role truth plays in determining ethical standards. They maintain that organizations have fallen short in developing an understanding of that relationship.

How ethical are you as an organizational participant? Do you always make ethical personal and professional decisions? Have you ever withheld a bit of truth to lessen the impact of revealing the whole truth? What if you accidentally overhear that an individual who is up for a promotion has been stealing from the organization? Do you tell your boss? Or, on a greater scale, what if you discover that your organization is withholding vital information from consumers, or violating lawful practices? Do you blow the whistle or stay loyal to your company? When you write your resume, how accurately do you describe your work history? Each of these scenarios deals directly with ethical considerations and ethical communication.

Many organizations practice a climate of "survival of the fittest" as individuals scramble their way up the ladder of success at any cost. Comedian Jimmy Durante posited this advice: "Be nice to people on your way up because you might meet 'em on your way down." Obviously, not every organization has this type of cutthroat culture, but with an inherent hierarchy and imbalance of power, organizations are ripe for unethical behaviors. Because of the competitive nature of many business climates, and the push for profits, organizational and individual ethics are often tested.

Do organizations have a moral responsibility to act ethically outside of their capitalistic and legal obligations? "Since 1985, more than two-thirds of Fortune 500 firms have been convicted of serious crimes, ranging from fraud to the illegal dumping of hazardous waste" (Eisenberg & Goodall, 2001, p. 337). Enron, WorldCom, and Arthur Anderson are recent examples of unethical organizational behavior. In the movie, The Insider, Russell Crowe's character portrays a whistle-blower outing the tobacco industry for withholding pertinent health information. Business professor Eileen P. Kelly (2002) contends, "corporations owe an ethical responsibility to all of their stakeholders and have a duty to be good corporate citizens" (p. 4). All of us have an obligation to communicate ethically in all aspects of our lives, including organizations.

Case In Point

The Case of Hills Pet Nutrition, Inc.

In 2007 several major brands of pet food were recalled due to a contaminant in the food. As a result of the poisoned food, thousands of dogs and cats developed renal failure and many died. Many upset customers asked the pet food companies to take financial responsibility for the costs that were incurred while seeking vital veterinary care for their sick pets. Some companies responded ethically with financial settlements; others failed in their ethical responsibility. Hill's Pet Nutrition, Inc. (the maker of Science Diet) was one such company. In a letter sent to a customer seeking reimbursement for treating their sick cat, Hill's wrote a one sentence letter stating, ". . . it appears we are unable to settle your claim for Oscar's future medical expenses."

Thinking of this incident in ethical terms Kreps' (1990) three principles of ethical communication are of relevance. He states ethical treatment should 1) Tell the truth, 2) Do no harm, and 3) Treat people justly. Has Hills, Inc. engaged in ethical communication? How could they have done so?

Differences in perception and the failure to clarify communication can lead to miscommunication at interpersonal as well as organizational levels. Organizationally, communication failure occurs due to information overload, communication anxiety, unethical communication, bad timing, too little information, message distortion, lack of respect, insufficient information, minimal feedback, ineffective communication, and even disinterest or apathy. To be successful in our organizational environments, we need to be earnest participants, as well as active listeners, to ensure effective communication and mutual satisfaction. Organizations cannot successfully operate without effective communication at every level.

Future Directions

As with many other specializations in the field of Communication, the area of organizational communication is changing faster than organizations, individuals, and scholars can adapt. It is difficult for organizations to anticipate and keep in front of the changes they encounter. What worked during the industrial age may no longer be relevant in the 21st century. In fact, what worked ten years ago likely does not work today. A sense of urgency, a fast pace, inconsistency, information overload, regenerating technology, and constant change characterize the dynamic changes as organizations move from operating in the industrial age to the information age. Miller (2003) identifies four elements of the changing landscape for organizations: 1) Organizations are becoming more global, 2) Images and identity are becoming increasingly important, 3) There is a shift to a more predominant service economy, and 4) The changing workforce is highlighted by the "disposable worker" (Conrad & Poole, 1997), downsizing, early retirement, and temporary workers.

As a result, new directions of research are emerging. These changes are forcing the those of us in organizational communication to reexamine existing communicative practices relative to the changing dynamics of organizations. For example, can a person lead without any personal, face-to-face contact? How do organizational values impact ethics, and what is the attitude towards ethical communication in this increasingly competitive age? Eisenberg and Goodall (2001) suggest that organizational communication scholars must focus on the moral dimensions of organizational communication, communication ethics, and ecological responsibilities due to the increasing potential that large-scale organizations have to exploit workers and the environment. How should work-life issues such as working parents, affirmative action, and AIDS screening be handled? With increasing diversity in the workplace, what is the role of intercultural communication? In this age of elevated tensions, how do stress and emotions communicatively manifest themselves in the workplace?

Organizational Communication Now

Today, E-mail has become a popular tool for communication within organizations. E-mail can be used as for an array of communication purposes. One can use it as a means of sending a brief memo or to address more serious matters. Although people tend to view E mail as an informal written message it is important to formalize written E-mails in the business setting. According to Shawn Smith's article E-mail in the Workplace: Avoiding legal landmines, "… All companies should develop and communicate a sound email policy to communicate proper usage of the company email system to employees. The employer should distribute its email policy regularly to all employees, and require them to sign an acknowledgement that they have received, read, understood and agree to abide by the rules." It is essential to make appropriate use of E-mail within an organization so as to avoid potential legal issues as well as to initiate effective communication.

[4]

Scholars are continuing to communicatively adapt and respond to the changing landscape in terms of what we teach, research, and practice. Expect to see a variety of approaches and distinctively unique research agendas that will likely highlight the ways in which you will spend your life working in organizations that are different from today.

Summary

In this chapter, you learned that an organization is a "consciously coordinated social unit composed of two or more people, that functions on a relatively continuous basis to achieve a common goal or set of goals" (Robbins, 2001, p. 4). Organizations are dynamic and are created through our communication. Organizational communication is the sending and receiving of messages among interrelated individuals within a particular environment or setting to achieve individual and common goals. Organizational communication is highly contextual and culturally dependent. The study of organizational communication developed as a result of the rapid changes brought on by the industrial revolution in the past 150 years. The more formal study of organizational communication took root in the mid-1900s and has gained increasing attention over the past 60 years. We examined three predominant periods of organizational communication during this time. The Era of Preparation (1900 to 1940) is the era in which practitioners and scholars focused on public address, business writing, managerial communication, and persuasion. The Era of Identification and Consolidation (1940-1970) saw the beginnings of business and industrial communication with certain group and organizational relationships becoming important. During the Era of Maturity and Innovation (1970 –present) organizational communication has worked to rationalize its existence through rigorous research methods and scholarship.

Those in the field of organizational communication study a variety of communication activity in organizational settings. Researchers focus on communication channels, communication climates, network analysis and, superior-subordinate communication. Since the 1980s, this specialization has expanded to include the study of organizational culture, power and conflict management, and organizational rhetoric. Other content areas of focus include communication in groups and teams, leadership, conflict and conflict management, communication networks, decision making and problem solving, ethics, and communication technology. Introductory organizational communication classrooms often focus on skill development in socialization, interviewing, individual and group presentations, work relationships, performance evaluation, conflict resolution, stress management, decision making, or external publics.

Since the start of the industrial revolution, perspectives regarding organizational communication have continued to be developed and refined. The initial organizational communication perspective, founded on scientific principles, is the classical management perspective which focused on specialization, standardization, and predictability in organizations. Following this perspective were the human relations and human resources perspectives which further tried to incorporate human satisfaction, needs, and participation as a means for creating effective organizations and productive employees. The systems perspective allowed researchers to understand organizations as a "whole greater then the sum of their parts." This perspective focuses on the interactions of the people who form organizations, with the basic assumption that all people in the organization impact organizational outcomes. Finally, the cultural perspective understands organizations as unique cultures with their own sets of artifacts, values, and basic assumptions. As part of the cultural perspective we can examine the climate of an organization to reveal how an organization impacts its members, and how members impact an organization.

The future of organizational communication is complex and rapidly changing. As a result, there are many challenges to organizations. Two of the most compelling challenges are ethics and the rapid changes occurring in organizational life. As competition continues to increase, and greater demands are placed on organizations and individuals, ethics is becoming an essential focus of examination for organizational communication and behavior. Likewise, the rapid advances in technology and globalization are creating increased challenges and demands on organizational members.

Discussion Questions

1. Think of an organization you have worked in. What theoretical perspective did the organization take towards its workers? What was it like working within the boundaries of that perspective?
2. What kinds of organizations does the classical management approach work in today? What kinds of organizations does it not work in?
3. What needs of Maslow’s do you want your job to help you fulfill? Why?
4. How would you describe the “culture” of your campus? What does this tell you about your campus?

Key Terms

- Artifacts
- Basic assumptions
- Bureaucracy
- Classical management perspective
- Climate
- Competent communicator
- Complexity
- Cultural perspective
- Defensive Climate
- Equifinality
- Era of Preparation
- Era of Identification and Consolidation
- Era of Maturity and Innovation
- Ethical communication
- Homeostasis
- Human relations perspective
- Human resources perspective
- Negative entropy
- Organization
- Organizational communication
- Permeability
- Requisite variety
- Sociability
- Solidarity
- Supportive Climate
- Systems perspective
- Theory of Scientific Management

- Theory X
- Values

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Chapter 12 - Intercultural Communication

Chapter 12

Intercultural Communication

Chapter Objectives:

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

• Identify your own cultural identity.

• Understand how communication, identity, and culture are related.

• Describe research methodologies specific to the study of intercultural communication.

• Identify cultural representations in popular culture artifacts.

I

n his effort to explain the world's population to young children, David J. Smith asks children to imagine the world as a small village so they can understand the vast population figures in a more comprehensible way. For example, by January, 2002, the world's population was 6,200,000,000 (Smith 7). Instead of talking about numbers of this magnitude he represents the world as 100 people; where 1 imaginary person represents 62,000,000 people from the real world. Using his model, we can more easily examine what nationalities make up the world's population, what languages they speak, how old they are, and how statistics regarding wealth and education.

Here are some interesting facts from Smith's global village (8). Of the 100 people living in the village:

- 61 are from Asia
- 13 are from Africa
- 12 are from Europe
- 8 are from South and Central America
- 5 are from the United States and Canada
- 1 is from Oceania

So, how do these 100 people talk with one another? While there are nearly 6,000 languages spoken in this village, more than 50% of the villagers speak one of these eight (10):

- 22 speak a Chinese dialect (18 speak Mandarin)
- 9 speak English
- 8 speak Hindi
- 7 speak Spanish
- 4 speak Arabic
- 4 speak Bengali
- 3 speak Portuguese
- 3 speak Russian

Although there are 38 school-aged villagers (5-24 years), only 31 of them go to school, and there is only one teacher. Of the 88 people old enough to read, 71 can read at least a little while 17 cannot read at all. Male villagers are taught to read more than females (Smith 21). Seventy-six villagers have electricity, 24 do not (Smith 25). Like literacy and electricity, access to money is disparate. If each villager earned a similar annual income, each one would have $6,200 per year. Instead, 20 people in the village earn more than $9,000 a year, another 20 villagers earn less than $365 a year, while the remaining 60 earn somewhere in between. As the average annual cost of food and shelter in the village is between $4,000-$5,000, many people go without these basic necessities (Smith 22).

Moreover, it probably does not surprise you that the people with less money are also likely to have electricity and education. What may surprise you though is that these villagers are also more likely to be female and non-white? Besides simple cultural differences such as what language one speaks or the foods they prefer, cultural identity impacts individuals' accessibility to certain resources such as shelter, electricity, running water, health care, education, and political and legal systems.

If we return to the United States from our look at the global village we see that according to Moore (62-63, 149-50):

- About 20 percent of young black men ages 16-24 are neither in school nor working. Compare this to 9 percent of young white men.
- Black women are four times more likely than white women to die in childbirth.
- Black levels of unemployment have been roughly twice those of white since 1954.
- Women hold only 13 seats in Congress.
- 496 of the top 500 companies are run by men.
- Women's earnings average 76 cents for every $1 earned by men—resulting in a lifetime loss of over $650,133.
- To make the same annual salary as her male counterpart, a woman would have to work the entire year PLUS an additional four months.
- The United States is one of the few countries in the world that puts to death both the mentally retarded and children. The other five countries in the world that execute their children are Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen.

The question of how this relates to communication is a complex one, and one that we will try to address throughout this chapter. For now, let us think about culture and communication as a reciprocal process: culture affects communication and communication affects culture. Both work together to shape how we identify as belonging to one culture or another, how we feel about belonging to a particular cultural group, how we communicate with other cultural groups, and how that group is regarded in the larger social system. In other words, what is the value and level of power afforded to various cultural groups? As you will see, this is often a reflection of the language used to refer to a particular group of people, or the relative value placed on their communication practices.

What Do We Mean by Culture?

Before going any further, let us spend some time discussing what we mean by culture. When you began reading this chapter what did you think we meant by the word culture? Your answer probably had something to do with people from different countries or of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. You are right—to a point. Culture does include race, nationality, and ethnicity, but goes beyond those identity markers as well. The following are various aspects of our individual identity that we use to create membership with others to form shared cultural identity: race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, and class. In addition to explaining the above identities, we will also discuss ethnocentrism, privilege, advantage, disadvantage, power, whiteness, co-culture and political correctness as these terms are relevant to understanding the interplay between communication and culture.

When we talk about **culture** we are referring to ***belief systems, values, and behaviors that support a particular ideology or social arrangement***. Culture guides language use, appropriate forms of dress, and views of the world. The concept is broad and encompasses many areas of our lives such as the role of the family, individual, educational systems, employment, and gender.

Understanding Race

Race is often difficult to talk about, not because of the inherent complexity of the term itself, but because of the role that race plays in society. Race is what we call a loaded word because it can bring up strong emotions and connotations. Understandings of race fall into two camps: a biological versus a sociopolitical construction of what it means to belong to a particular racial group. A **biological construction of race** claims that ***"pure" races existed and could be distinguished by such physical features as eye color and shape, skin color, and hair***. Moreover, these differences could be traced back to genetic differences. This theory has been debunked by numerous scientists and been replaced with the understanding that there are greater genetic differences within racial groups, not between them. In addition, there is no scientific connection with racial identity and cultural traits or behaviors. Instead of biology, we draw on a **sociopolitical** understanding of what it means to be of a particular race. This simply means that it is not a person's DNA that places them into a particular racial grouping, but all of the other factors that create social relations—politics, geography, or migration. We can also examine the reality that the meanings of race have changed across time and space. Blacks were once considered property and counted as two-thirds of a person. This of course has changed and blacks are equally counted as U.S. citizens with access to property ownership and voting rights. As dramatized in the 2002 film, "Gangs of New York," the Irish were once considered a minority with little social or political status. Now, being Irish in America is considered part of the general majority group, white or Caucasian. Noting the change from the biological to the sociopolitical understanding, we refer to race as a "largely social—yet powerful construction of human difference that has been used to classify human beings into separate value-based categories" (Orbe and Harris 6).

Related to race are three other distinct concepts: racial prejudice, racial discrimination, and racism. **Racial prejudice** refers to ***the practice of holding false or negative beliefs of one racial group for the purpose of making another racial group (usually one's own) appear superior or normative***. **Racial discrimination** is ***the outward manifestation of racial prejudice: it is when people act upon their negative beliefs about other races when communicating or setting policy***. Note, it is possible to be prejudiced without acting upon those beliefs and that all races can discriminate against other races. The final concept, **racism**, combines racial prejudice with social power. Racism is institutional, rather than individual, meaning it ***occurs in large institutional contexts such as the representations of particular groups within media or the fact that racial minorities do not have equal access to educational or legal opportunities*** (Orbe and Harris 7). Racism often involves the unequal accessibility to resources and power.

Where Do You Come From?

Two other concepts that are often confused with race are ethnicity and nationality. **Ethnicity** refers to ***a person's or people's heritage and history, and involves shared cultural traditions and beliefs***. A person may identify as Asian-American racially while their ethnicity is Chinese. **Nationality** refers to ***a person's nation-state of residence or where he/she holds citizenship***. Most often nationality is derived from the country where one was born, but on occasion people give up their citizenship by birth and migrate to a new country where they claim national identity. One of your author's father, for example, was born and raised in Canada, but eventually migrated to the United States and is now a U.S. citizen.

Gender and Sexual Orientation

Are you male or female? Do you identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, or transgendered? One's gender and sexual orientation are two additional ways to think about culture. Gender is discussed in more detail in Chapter 13, but for now think of it as the recognition that one is male, female, or androgynous. **Gender** is part of culture in that every ***society has particular gender roles and expectations for males and females***. In the United States, for example, the female gender is expected to wear make-up while it is most often considered inappropriate for a male to do so. However, in some Native American tribes it is customary for the males to adorn themselves with paint for hunting and ceremonial rituals.

Sexual orientation refers to ***a person's preference for sexual or romantic relationships; one may prefer a partner of the same sex, the opposite sex, or both***. Sexual orientation influences one's worldview or politics because while all societies include members who identify as gay or lesbian, these members do not always receive the same benefits as heterosexual couples. Currently in the United States, same sex couples are prohibited from obtaining a legal marriage. Thus, they are denied many of the benefits that come with a marriage license such as income tax breaks, eligibility for health care benefits, and the legal right to make medical decisions for their partner. On top of these specific benefits, those with a nondominant sexual orientation must also contend on a daily basis that in the eyes of mainstream culture, they are deviant or somehow less than heterosexual people and couples. This may result in strained family relationships or discrimination in the workplace.

The Role of Money

You are probably familiar with the concept of class—what do the labels working class, middle-class, upper-class bring to mind? Money? Economic standing is only one variable that influences class or socioeconomic standing. As the label suggests, one's **socioeconomic status** is influenced by monetary and social factors. In essence, socioeconomic standing is ***"your understanding of the world and where you fit in; it's composed of ideas, behaviors, attitudes, values, and language; class is how you think, feel, act, look, dress, talk, move, walk"*** (Langston 101). Your authors, for example, grew up in middle-class homes where it was expected the children would go to college just as their parents and grandparents had done. Also expected was that the children would attend reasonably priced state colleges and universities as opposed to Ivy League Universities as may be the norm in upper-class families. Once in college and living on our own however, our earnings fell below the poverty line and in purely economic terms we had lost our middle-class standing. But because socioeconomic status goes beyond dollars, and our lifestyles, clothing preferences, goals, and worldview did not change drastically; we could still be labeled part of the middle-class. By now you are probably able to think of some other identity markers that shape a person's culture or worldview. How about spirituality or religion, profession, hobbies, political persuasion, age, abilities? These too are aspects of cultural identity. Spend some time thinking about how these aspects would influence a person's culture as we have done above.

Facilitating Discussions about Intercultural Communication Issues

P

erhaps you may have noticed the theme of inequality as we have as we have discussed topics like "unequal access to resources and benefits," racial discrimination, and racism. You may have also thought, "oh, my, this is going to be a touchy chapter to read and discuss in class" or "this is interesting and relevant, but I feel uncomfortable talking about this as I don't want to offend anyone." These are very common and understandable reactions and ones we hear when we teach this subject matter. Hopefully, your instructor has set up a safe, open, and respectful classroom environment to facilitate such discussions. The fact that you are self-reflective of your feelings and how to express them to others is a great start! We too want you to be able to discuss this material both in and out of your class in a productive and self-reflective manner. To facilitate that goal we have included some additional concepts— privilege, ethnocentrism, whiteness, and political correctness—that are useful when considering your own cultural identity, your place in society, and your communication with others.

Privilege

Hopefully, you have been thinking about your own cultural identity as you have been reading this chapter. If so, then you have been thinking about labels that define you culturally. Maybe you have defined yourself as female, Latina, and heterosexual. Or maybe you have labeled yourself as gay, white, working-class, and male. When we give ourselves labels such as these, often we ask ourselves, “Where do I fit in?” This is a good question to ask and demonstrates a recognition of the fact that you belong to more than one culture and that your cultures intersect in various ways. The most significant manifestation of these intersections is **power—*the ability to influence others and control our lives***. From the statistics given earlier in the chapter and from your own experiences, you should realize that some groups have more power than others. These people are what we refer to as the **dominant group**: ***white, male, Christian, middle-class, able-bodied, educated, and heterosexual***. People whose cultural identities do not conform to this model are the **nondominant groups** and ***have less sociopolitical and economic power***.

Peggy McIntosh uses the term **privilege** to refer to ***the power of dominant groups***. She defines privilege as an invisible knapsack of advantages that some people carry around. They are invisible because they are often not recognized, seen as normative (i.e., “that’s just the way things are”), seen as universal (i.e., “everyone has them”), or used unconsciously. Below is a list of some of the privileges McIntosh identifies. Can you think of others?

1. I can, if I wish, arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area that I can afford and in which I would want to live.
3. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
4. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
5. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
6. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
7. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
8. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege.
9. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods that fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can deal with my hair.
10. Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
11. I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
12. I can swear, or dress in second-hand clothes, or not answer letters without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
13. I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
14. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
15. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
16. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color, who constitute the world's majority, without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
17. I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.
18. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge" I will be facing a person of my race.
19. If a traffic cop pulls me over, or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
20. I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
21. I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in rather than isolated, out of place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, or feared.
22. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having coworkers on the job suspect that I got it because of race.

23. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.

24. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help my race will not work against me.

25. If my day, week, or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it has racial overtones.

26. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color that more or less match my skin.

As you think about privilege and the resulting advantages that some groups have over others, you should also keep in mind two facts. One, privilege is a relative concept that varies according to context. In some situations we may be more privileged than others, and in order to access some of that privilege one may decide to highlight or conceal parts of their identity. For example, unless a person tells you, you have no way of knowing his/her sexual orientation. Thus, a gay man might decide to “pass” as straight at a family reunion to avoid conflict from a heterosexist family. The fact that he can choose to pass and a black man cannot make the choice to pass as white is another example of privilege. Two, we may have aspects of our identities that are simultaneously advantaged and disadvantaged. The gay, white, working-class, male above is advantaged by the fact that he has light skin and is male, and is disadvantaged by the fact that he is gay and working-class.

Ethnocentrism

One of the first steps to communicating sensitively and productively about cultural identity is to be able to name and recognize one’s identity and the relative privilege that it affords. Similarly important, is a recognition that one’s cultural standpoint is not everyone’s standpoint. Our views of the world, what we consider right and wrong, normal or weird, are largely influenced by our cultural position or standpoint: the intersections of all aspects of our identity. One common mistake that people from all cultures are guilty of is **ethnocentrism—*placing one’s own culture and the corresponding beliefs, values, and behaviors in the center; in a position where it is seen as normal and right, and evaluating all other cultural systems against it***.

Ethnocentrism shows up in small and large ways: the WWII Nazi’s elevation of the Aryan race and the corresponding killing of Jews, Gypsies, gays and lesbians, and other non Aryan groups is one of the most horrific ethnocentric acts in history. However, ethnocentrism shows up in small and seemingly unconscious ways as well. If there is a world map hanging on the wall in your classroom look at it. Where is the United States? In the center, of course. When one of your authors was teaching in Beijing, China she noticed that the map in the classroom looked “different” compared to the map with which she was familiar. On closer examination she realized why: China was in the center and the United States was off to the side. Again, “of course,” the United States is not the “center of the world” to the Chinese. Ethnocentrism is likely to show up in Literature classes as well as each culture decides on the “great works” to be read and studied. More often than not these works represent the given culture (i.e., reading French authors in France and Korean authors in Korea). This ethnocentric bias has received some challenge in United States’ schools as teachers make efforts to create a multicultural classroom by incorporating books, short stories, and traditions from nondominant groups.

In the field of geography there has been an ongoing debate about the use of a Mercater map versus a Peter’s Projection map. The arguments reveal cultural biases toward the Northern, industrialized nations.

Case In Point

The Greenland Problem

The Mercator projection creates increasing distortions of size as you move away from the equator. As you get closer to the poles the distortion becomes severe. Cartographers refer to the inability to compare size on a Mercator projection as "the Greenland Problem." Greenland appears to be the same size as Africa, yet Africa's land mass is actually fourteen times larger. Because the Mercator distorts size so much at the poles it is common to crop Antarctica off the map. This practice results in the Northern Hemisphere appearing much larger than it really is. Typically, the cropping technique results in a map showing the equator about 60% of the way down the map, diminishing the size and importance of the developing countries.

Greenland is 0.8 million sq. miles and Africa is 11.6 million sq. miles, yet the often look roughly the same size on maps.

This was convenient, psychologically and practically, through the eras of colonial domination when most of the world powers were European. It suited them to maintain an image of the world with Europe at the center and looking much larger than it really was. Was this conscious or deliberate? Probably not, as most map users probably never realized the Eurocentric bias inherent in their world view. When there are so many other projections to choose from, why is it that today the Mercator projection is still such a widely recognized image used to represent the globe? The answer may be simply convention or habit. The inertia of habit is a powerful force.

Whiteness

If you are White, how would you describe your culture? When we ask this question to our students we find that White students are often uncomfortable with the question, feel guilty about self-identifying as White, or claim that White people do not have a culture. These sentiments are common in our society and have lead an increasing amount of scholars in a variety of disciplines such as Sociology, Women’s Studies, Anthropology, English, as well as Communication to study the concept of Whiteness. Orbe and Harris explain why exploring this concept is important. First, by studying Whiteness people create “an increased awareness of how race and racism shapes the lives of European Americans.” Doing so, we can then

> *view communication as a racialized process—meaning that our communication is structured by larger societal and racial dynamics. Second, understanding Whiteness sharpens our awareness of how racial categorization is used to reinforce old hierarchies in which some races are more superior than others. This helps us recognize how Whiteness can be used to signify dominance, privilege, and advantage in the United States. And, third, through studying and recognizing the effects of Whiteness, each person plays a role in race relations. White people can no longer sit on the sidelines and claim “it’s a black problem” when discussing interracial conflict. (82-83)*

Overall, it removes the White race from the often-unidentified “normative” group and provides a context for studying, talking about, and hopefully improving race relations. The above discussion about privilege and Whiteness is not meant to suggest that those people with sociopolitical privilege should feel ashamed or guilty. This is often a trap that people fall into and it can shut down important thinking and conversations about intercultural communication. We want everyone to realize that they have a racial identity and thus are an important part of improving race relations. Race relations is not just a subject that concerns minorities—it concerns everyone as we all play a part and benefit whether consciously or unconsciously.

Political Correctness

Another claim or label that may be used to discount such difficult discussions is Political Correctness, or “PC” as it has been dubbed in the popular press. Opponents of multiculturalism and diversity studies try and dismiss such topics as “that’s just PC.” Luckily, some of the heated debate about PC have quieted in recent years but the history lingers. In short, **political correctness** refers to ***“the elimination of speech that often works to exclude, oppress, demean, or harass certain groups”*** (Orbe and Harris 48, Remar). The debate largely focused around competing interpretations of the First Amendment right to free speech and the Fourteenth Amendment’s right to equal access to education. No matter what your position on this issue, we want to simply recognize two facts. One, that much of the PC debate and fury was largely misrepresented and hyped in the mainstream media by the use of extreme examples and a slippery-slope argument. Rush Limbaugh, for example, became famous for claiming that an awareness and sensitivity of language choice would lead to the “thought Police” or “PC police.” Two, that words and labels have great power to create perceptions, realities and identities. Toward that aim, we will discuss the power of language in greater detail in the following section.

Knowing Where We Belong

At this point, you are probably aware of the cultural groups to which you belong (i.e., “I am a white, middle-class, (almost) college-educated male”). Do you remember the process of coming to awareness of your cultural identity—when did you know you were white and what that meant? Was it during childhood, as a teenager, or reading this chapter? Has your understanding, or acceptance, of your racial heritage changed during the course of your lifetime? For most people it does. Just as Piaget organized the growth of children according to various stages of development, cultural scholars have similarly organized racial awareness along models and stages. Before explaining the various models, let us make a couple general comments about models. One, a model is not the thing it represents. Is the model car you played with as a child the same as the actual automobile? What were the differences? Size, time, maneuverability, details? These same kinds of differences exist between the model of racial identity development and the actual personal process. But just like the car model gives a fairly accurate picture of the actual automobile so do the racial identity models. Two, these models are general and not meant to fit perfectly to every individual’s experience. With that said, let us examine the process of coming to an understanding of our racial identity.

To better understand this complex process, and in recognition of the above discussion regarding the distinctions in experiences for various cultural groups, we will present four racial identity models—Minority, Majority, Bi-racial, and Global Nomads.

Minority Identity Development

Because people who identify as members of a minority group in the United States tend to stand out or get noticed as “other” or “different,” they also tend to become aware of their identity sooner than individuals who are part of the majority group. Since White is considered normative in the United States, White people may take their identity (and the corresponding privilege for granted). While we are using the following four stages of development to refer to racial and ethnic identity development, they may also be useful when considering other minority aspects of our identity such as gender, class, or sexual orientation (Ponterotto and Pendersen 1993). Moreover, there is no set age or time period that a person reaches or spends in a particular stage, and not everyone will reach the final stage.

- **Stage 1: Unexamined Identity**. As the name of this stage suggests, the person in stage 1 of Phinney’s model has little or no concern with ethnicity (1993). They may be too young to pay attention to such matters or just not see the relationship between racial identity and their own life. One may accept the values and beliefs of the majority culture even if they work against their own cultural group.
- **Stage 2: Conformity**. In stage two the individual moves from a passive acceptance of the dominant culture’s value system to a more active one. They consciously make choices to assimilate or fit in with the dominant culture even if this means putting down or denying their own heritage. They may remain at this stage until a precipitating event forces them to question their belief system.
- **Stage 3: Resistance and Separation**. The move from stage two to stage three can be a difficult process as it necessitates a certain level of critical thinking and self-reflexiveness. If you have ever tried to wrestle with aspects of your own belief system then you can imagine the struggle. The move may be triggered by a national event such

as the beating of Rodney King and the corresponding L.A. riots. Or, it may be fostered on a more individual scale such as enrolling in a Women's Studies class and learning about the specifics of women's history in America. Martin Luther King Jr. moved to this stage around age six after the mother of his White neighborhood friends told him that he could not play with her children anymore because he was Black. A person in this stage may simply reject all of their previously held beliefs and positive feelings about the dominant culture with those of their own group, or they may learn how to critically examine and hold beliefs from a variety of cultural perspective, which leads to stage four.

- **Stage 4: Integration**. The final stage is one where the individual reaches an achieved identity. They learn to value diversity; seeing race, gender, class, and ethnic relations as a complex process instead of an either/or dichotomy. Their aim is to end oppression against all groups, not just their own.

Majority Identity Development

The following model was developed by Rita Hardiman in 1994 and contains some similarities with Phinney's minority identity development model.

- **Stage 1: Unexamined Identity**. This stage is the same for both minority and majority individuals. While White children may notice that some of their playmates have dark skin they do not fear or feel superior to them.
- **Stage 2: Acceptance**. The move to stage two signals a passive or active acceptance of the dominant ideology—either way the individual does not recognize that he or she has been socialized into accepting it. When a person goes the route of **passive acceptance** they have ***no conscious awareness of being White although they may hold some subtly racist assumptions such as "People of color are culturally different, whereas Whites are individuals with no group identity, culture, or shared experience of racial privilege."*** Or, White art forms are "classical" whereas works of art by people pf color are considered "ethnic art," "folk art" or "crafts" (Martin and Nakayama 132). People in this stage may minimize contact with minorities or act in a "let me help you" fashion toward them. If a person in this stage follows the **active acceptance** path then they are ***conscious of their White identity and may act in ways that highlight it***. Refusing to eat food from other cultures or watch foreign films, for example.
- **Stage 3: Resistance**. Just as the move from stage two to stage three in the minority development model required a great deal of critical thought, so does this juncture. Here the members of the majority group cease blaming the members of minority groups for their conditions and see socioeconomic realities as a result of an unjust and biased sociopolitical system. There is an overall move from seeing one's station in life as a purely individual event or responsibility to a more systemic issue. Here, people may feel guilty about being White and ashamed of some historical actions taken by some White people, they may try to associate with only people of color, or they may attempt to exorcise aspects of White privilege from their daily lives.
- **Stage 4: Redefinition**. In this stage, people attempt to redefine what it means to be White without the racist baggage. They are able to move beyond White guilt and recognize that White people and people of all cultures contain both racist and nonracist elements and that there are many historical and cultural events of which White people can be proud.
- **Stage 5: Integration**. In the last phase individuals are able to accept their Whiteness or other majority aspects of their identity and integrate it into other parts of their lives. There is a simultaneous self-acceptance and acceptance of others.

Bi- or Multiracial Identity Development

Originally, people thought that bi-racial individuals followed the development model of minority individuals, but given that we now know that race and the meanings about race are socially constructed, it makes sense to realize that a person of mixed racial ancestry is likely to be viewed differently (from both the dominant culture and the individual's own culture) than a minority individual. Thus, they are likely to experience a social reality unique to their experience. The following five-stage model is derived from the work of W.S. Carlos Poston (1990).

- **Stage 1: Personal Identity**. Poston's first stage is much like the unexamined identity stage in the previous two models. Again, children are not aware of race as a value-based social category and derive their personal identity from individual personality features instead of cultural ones.
- **Stage 2: Group Categorization**. In the move from stage one to two, the person goes from no racial or cultural awareness to having to choose between one or the other. In a family where the father is Black and the mother is Japanese, the child may be asked by members of both families to decide if he or she is Black or Japanese. Choosing both is not an option in this stage.
- **Stage 3: Enmeshment/Denial**. Following the choice made in stage two, the individual attempts to immerse him or herself in one culture while denying ties to the other. This process may result in guilt or feelings of distance from the parent and family whose culture was rejected in stage two. If these feelings are resolved then the child moves to the next stage. If not, they remain here.
- **Stage 4: Appreciation**. When feelings of guilt and anger are resolved the person can work to appreciate all of the cultures that shape their identity. While there is an attempt to learn about the diversity of their heritage, they will still identify primarily with the culture chosen in stage two.
- **Stage 5: Integration**. In the fifth and final stage the once fragmented parts of the person's identity are brought together to create a unique whole. There is integration of cultures throughout all facets of the person's life—dress, food, holidays, spirituality, language, and communication.

Global Nomads

People who move around a lot may develop a multicultural identity as a result of their extensive international travel. International teachers, business people, and military personnel are examples of global nomads (Martin and Nakayama 138). One of the earlier theories to describe this model of development was called the U-curve theory because the stages were thought to follow the pattern of the letter U. This model has since been revised in the form of a W, or a series of Ws as in WWWWWW; this pattern is thought to better represent the up and down nature of this process.

- **Stage 1: Anticipation and Excitement**. If you have ever planned for an international trip, what were some of the things you did to prepare? Did you do something like buy a guide book to learn some of the native customs, figure out the local diet to see if you would need to make any special accommodations, or learn the language, or at least some handy phrases perhaps? All of these acts characterize stage one in which people are filled with positive feelings about their upcoming journey and try to ready themselves.
- **Stage 2: Culture Shock**. Once the excitement has worn off or you are confronted with an unexpected or unpleasant event you may experience culture shock. This is the move from the top of the U or W to the bottom. Culture shock can result from physical, psychological, or emotional causes often correlating with an unpleasant and unfamiliar event. When one of your authors was teaching in Beijing for the first time, she had planned her syllabus and class to begin on the day that she was told was the start of the semester. Upon arrival, she was told that the start of the semester was pushed back a few days for reasons that were unclear to her. Never having experienced the delay of a semester in the United States, not knowing why such an event would occur, on top of feeling a little anxious about teaching in a new country caused her to move from stage one into stage two.
- **Stage 3: Adaptation**. The final stage at the top of the U and W is a feeling of comfortableness: of being somewhat familiar with new cultural patterns and beliefs. Upon her second excursion to Beijing, for example,

your author was fully prepared for a delay in the semester both logistically and mentally. And when it did occur a second time she looked upon the event not as anxiety provoking, but as a gift of time to sight see.

After exploring the identity development models for minority, majority, bi-racial individuals, and global nomads, we hope you have some understanding that a person's identity development is a process, occurs in stages, and is specific to the individual and cultural groups. We also hope you noticed that identity development is a social process—it occurs within our relationships with other people and the larger society. Not surprisingly, language is a key factor in shaping our own self-perception as well as the attitudes and beliefs we hold about other cultural groups. In the next section, we will explore the role that language plays in intercultural communication.

Language Shapes Cultural Perception

Saying that language plays a vital role in intercultural communication and relationships probably seems obvious to you at this point. But do you know how and why? Let us now turn to a more detailed explanation of the power of language. Specifically, we will discuss ascription and avowal, the Sapir-Wharf hypothesis, labels and stereotypes, and reclaiming.

As you have been reflecting on your own identity, do you think it matches up with how others see you? The way a person presents her- or himself is referred to as the avowal process. The opposite of that is ascription, how others see us: the qualities or attributes that are ascribed to us. Part of your avowed identity is probably that of college student and you hope that others see you this way too. Perhaps one of your hobbies is fashion and you enjoy paying attention to your clothes. You may then see yourself as fashionable and stylish. But do others? Might some of your classmates think you trendy, superficial, or fiscally irresponsible? The qualities that others may ascribe to you based on your fashion sense may in turn affect how you see yourself. This is yet another way that identity is shaped through communication in a social context. In Part I of this book you were introduced to the idea that language shapes reality; the vocabulary we use to discuss an idea or person influences how we think about our subject. Likewise, if we have no words for a phenomenon then we are discouraged from talking about it or bringing it into our reality. Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf believed that the structure of language was a necessary component for producing thought. You have probably heard that Eskimos have numerous words for snow. How many do you have? Snow. Ice. If you ski or snowboard then you probably have a few more. Powder. Moguls. Depending on the extent of your snow vocabulary you can look at the frozen water and perceive it in numerous ways. But if your vocabulary is limited then so is the way you can think and talk about snow. If you have studied languages such as Spanish or French then you are familiar with the concepts of a formal and informal "you." Depending on the relationship between you and your audience you will use a different word for "you" and consequently conjugate your verbs accordingly. If you are talking with a child, for example, you would use the informal version, but if you were speaking with someone of higher social status such as your Professor you would use the formal "you." As you speak and write, this language structure demands that you be consciously aware of social relations. This awareness then becomes part of your social reality. If you have ever been on the receiving end of a stereotype or derogatory label in reference to your culture, religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, or other aspect of your identity, then you are acutely aware of the power of language. You know that such language is not a neutral conveyor of ideas, but is designed to hurt and shape the way the audience thinks about a particular person or group. Think about the list of terms that historically have been used to refer to persons of African dissent—African, Colored, Negro, Black, Afro-American, African American, and the harshest, Nigger. When you read each term, what are the different images or connotations connected with them? Do they bring up different historical periods, varying degrees of sociopolitical power, a variety of relationships to the dominant group? The range of emotions and images that each of these terms produces is further testament to the subjectivity of language as well as its temporal nature. A more recent linguistic strategy among historically oppressed groups is called reclaiming. When a group reclaims a word they are attempting to take it back from the dominant group. If the dominant group has used a word or phrase as an insult then the oppressed group reclaims it for their own, positive meaning. Can you think of some examples? How about "bitch," "queer," "nigga," or "cunt"? Hopefully, you are thinking, "hey, those words may still be insulting to some people; they're not necessarily positive." True. Part of the process in reclaiming is that only certain people can use them in a reclaimed fashion, most simply, the members of the oppressed groups at which the term was designed to hurt. If a woman is walking down the street and a man yells out, "Hey Bitch, watch where you're going!" that is not reclaiming as the term is used as an insult. But the magazine, BITCH: A Feminist Response to Popular Culture, is reclaiming this term. The books, Cunt and Nigger, provide histories of these traditionally derogatory terms and attempt to reclaim them.

How Scholars Study Intercultural Communication: Theoretical Approaches and Concepts

By now you should be familiar with the three general research approaches—social science, interpretive, and critical. Thus, this chapter will highlight a few specific approaches within these three general categories that have particular relevance to the study if intercultural communication.

Social Science

Describe and predict behavior. These are the goals of the social scientist. One particular theory useful for this kind of research is **communication accommodation theory (CAT)** that was developed by Giles and his colleagues. This model focuses on the **'ways in which individuals adjust their communication with others**. *When you tell the story of a college party to a friend or to a parent do you tell it the same way? Do you leave out or highlight certain details? The kinds of decisions you make when telling a story reflect the ways in which you accommodate your communication to your specific audience. In general, there are two types of accommodation: convergence and divergence. When we converge our communication we make it more like the person or persons with whom we are speaking. We attempt to show our similarity with them through our speech patterns. When we diverge, we attempt to create distance between our audience and ourselves. Here, we want to stress our difference from others or our uniqueness. Using social scientific approaches as applied to communication accommodation theory, researchers may attempt to define, describe and predict what sorts of verbal and nonverbal acts can produce the desired convergent or divergent effects.*

Interpretive

Like the social scientists, interpretive scholars want to describe behavior, but because of the importance of the individual context, they do not assume accurate and generalizeable predictions can be made. As they are particularly relevant to intercultural communication research, we will discuss the following two methodologies in this section—ethnography and co-cultural research. Since interpretivists believe in the subjective experience of each cultural group, it makes sense that they would select to study intercultural communication as used in particular speech communities. A **speech community**, according to Hymes is a ***"community sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety"*** (54). This method is also referred to ethnography. A prolific ethnographer, Gerry Philipsen has identified four assumptions of this method:

1. Members of speech communities create meanings.
2. Each distinct culture possesses a unique speech code.
3. The rules for interpreting actions and meanings are limited to a given culture and cannot be universally applied.
4. Within each speech community there are specific procedures and sources for assigning meaning.

Using ethnography guided by these four assumptions, researchers are able to understand the culture, its participants, and its communication on its own terms.

Critical Cultural

Originating in the legal arena, **Critical Race Theory** explores ***the role of race in questions of justice, equal access, and opportunity***. Borrowing from the work of Matsuda et.al, Orbe and Harris summarize six key assumptions helpful for understanding critical race theory (125-6).

1. Critical race theory recognizes that racism is an integral part of the United States.
2. Critical race theory rejects dominant legal and social claims of neutrality, objectivity, and color blindness.
3. Critical race theory rejects a purely historical approach for studying race for a contextual/historical one to study interracial communication.
4. Critical race theory recognizes the importance of perspectives that arise from co-cultural standpoints.
5. Critical race theory is interdisciplinary and borrows from Marxism, feminism, critical/cultural studies, and postmodernism.
6. Critical race theory is actively focused on the elimination of the interlocking nature of oppression based on race, gender, class, and sexual orientation.

As this methodology is inherently complex and multifaceted it lends itself to producing a rich understanding of interracial and intercultural communication. A method focused solely on the interests of Africans is referred to as Afrocentricity. The foremost scholar in this field is Molefi Kete Asante and this functions as an interdisciplinary approach to questions of race relations. Instead of assuming a Eurocentric frame as normative for understanding the world and its people, this perspective embraces “African ways of knowing and interpreting the world” (Orbe and Harris 127). Similarly, there are also Asiacentric frameworks for understanding intercultural communication.

Important Concepts for Understanding Intercultural Communication

If you decide to take a class on intercultural communication you will learn a great deal about the similarities and differences across cultural groups. Since this chapter is meant to give you an overview or taste of this exciting field of study we will discuss four important concepts for understanding communication practices among cultures.

High and Low context

Think about someone you are very close to—a best friend, romantic partner, or sibling. Have there been times when you began a sentence and the other person knew exactly what you were going to say before you said it? When this occurs between Dr. Hahn and her sister, the sister exclaims, “Get off!” short for “get off my wavelength.” This phenomenon of being on someone’s wavelength is similar to what Hall describes as high context. In high context communication the meaning is in the people, or more specifically, the relationship between the people as opposed to just the words. When we have to rely on the translation of the words to decipher a person’s meaning then this is said to be low context communication. The American legal system, for example, relies on low context communication. While some cultures are low or high context, in general terms, there can also be individual or contextual differences within cultures. In the above illustration between Dr. Hahn and her sister, they are using high context communication, however, America is considered a low context culture. Countries such as Germany and Sweden are also low context while Japan and China are high context.

Speech Styles

Other variations in communication can be described using Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey's four communication styles. We find it is helpful to think about these descriptors as a continuum rather than polar opposites because it allows us to imagine more communicative options for speakers. They are not fixed into one style or another but instead, people can make choices about where to be on the continuum according to the context in which they find themselves.

This first continuum has to do with the explicitness of one's talk, or how much of their thoughts are communicated directly through words and how much is hinted at. Direct speech is very explicit while indirect speech is more obscure. If I say, "Close the window" my meaning is quite clear. However, if I were to ask, "Is anyone else cold in here" or, "Geez, this room is cold," I might also be signaling indirectly that I want someone to close the window. As the United States is typically a direct culture, these latter statements might generate comments like, "Why didn't you just ask someone to shut the window?" or "Shut it yourself." Why might someone make a choice to use a direct or indirect form of communication? What are some of the advantages or disadvantages of each style? Think about the context for a moment. If you as a student were in a meeting with the President of your university and you were to tell him or her to "Shut the window," what do you think would happen? Can you even imagine saying that? An indirect approach in this context may appear more polite, appropriate, and effective.

Remember the fairy tale of Goldilocks and the Three Bears? As Goldilocks tasted their porridge, she exclaimed, "this is too hot, this one is too cold, but this one is just right." This next continuum of communication styles can be thought of this way as well. The elaborate style uses more words, phrases, or metaphors to express an idea than the other two styles. It may be described as descriptive, poetic or too wordy depending on your view. Commenting on a flower garden an American (Exact/Succinct) speaker may say, "Wow, look at all the color variations. That's beautiful." An Egyptian (Elaborate) speaker may go into much more detail about the specific varieties and colors of the blossoms, "This garden invokes so many memories for me. The deep purple irises remind me of my maternal grandmother as those are her favorite flowers. Those pink roses are similar to the ones I sent to my first love." The succinct style in contrast values simplicity and silence. As Dr. Hahn's mother used to tell her as a child, "If you can't say anything nice, then don't say anything at all." Cultures such as Buddhism and the Amish value this form. The exact style is the one for Goldilocks as it falls between the other two and would be in her words, "just right." It is not overly descriptive or too vague to be of use.

Remember when we were talking about the French and Spanish languages and the fact that they have a formal and informal "you" depending on the relationship between the speaker and the audience? This example also helps explain the third communication style: the personal and contextual. The contextual style is one where there are structural linguistic devices used to mark the relationship between the speaker and the listener. If this sounds a bit unfamiliar, that is because the English language has no such linguistic distinctions; it is an example of the personal style that enhances the sense of "I." While the English language does allow us to show respect for our audience such as the choice to eliminate slang or the use of titles such as Sir, Madame, President, Congressperson, or Professor, they do not inherently change the structure of the language. The final continuum, instrumental/affective, refers to who holds the responsibility for effectively conveying a message: the speaker or the audience? The instrumental style is goal- or sender-orientated, meaning it is the burden of the speaker to make him or herself understood. The affective style is more receiver-orientated thus, places more responsibility on the listener. Here, the listener should pay attention to verbal, nonverbal, and relationship clues in an attempt to understand the message. Asian cultures such as China and Japan and many Native American tribes are affective cultures. The United States is more instrumental. Think about sitting in your college classroom listening to your Professor lecture. If you do not understand the material where does the responsibility reside. Usually it is given to the professor as in statements such as "My Math Prof. isn't very well organized." Or "By the end of the Econ. lecture all that was on the board were lines, circles, and a bunch of numbers. I didn't know what was important and what wasn't." These statements suggest that it is up to the professor to communicate the material to the students. As your authors were raised in the American educational system they too were used to this perspective and often look at their teaching methods when students fail to understand the material. When Dr. Hahn was teaching in China and her students encountered particular difficulty with a certain concept she would often ask the students, “What do you need—more examples? Shall we review again? Are the terms confusing?” Her students, raised in a more affective environment responded, “No, it’s not you. It is our job as your students to try harder. We did not study enough and will read the chapter again so we will understand.” The students accepted the responsibility as listeners to work to understand the speaker.

Collectivist versus Individualistic

In addition to the four speaking styles that characterize cultures so do value systems. One of particular importance to intercultural communication is whether the culture has a collectivist or individualistic orientation. When a person or culture has a collective orientation they place the needs and interests of the group above individual desires or motivations. In contrast, the self or one’s own personal goals motivate those cultures with individualistic orientations. Thus, each person is viewed as responsible for his or her own success or failure in life. From years of research, Geert Hofstede organized 52 countries in terms of their orientation to individualism. His results are displayed in Table 10.1. Are you surprised at the ranking of the United States?

When looking at Hofstede’s research and that of others on individualism and collectivism, it is important to remember is that no culture is purely one or the other. Again, think of these qualities as points along a continuum rather than fixed positions. Individuals and co-cultures may exhibit differences in individualism/collectivism from the dominant culture and certain contexts may highlight one or the other. Also remember that it can be very difficult to change one’s orientation and interaction with those with different value orientations can prove challenging. In some of your classes, for example, does the Professor require a group project as part of the final grade? How do students respond to such an assignment? In our experience we find that some students enjoy and benefit from the collective and collaborative process and seem to learn better in such an environment. These students have more of a collective orientation. Other students, usually the majority, are resistant to such assignments citing reasons such as “it’s difficult to coordinate schedules with four other people” or “I don’t want my grade resting on someone else’s performance.” These statements reflect an individual orientation.

Where Intercultural Communication Occurs

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hus far, we have shared with you a bit about what intercultural communication is, some important concepts, and how scholars study this phenomenon. Now we want to spend the final part of the chapter looking at a major context for intercultural communication—the media. There are other contexts as well, such as interpersonal relationships and organizations, but we will leave these to your own investigation or in a class devoted to intercultural communication.

Media

Looking at texts or media artifacts (these are specific television shows, films, books, magazines, musical artists, etc.) is both a fun and important area of study for intercultural communication. Since most people spend much of their free time taking in some form of media, such as going to the movies with friends or turning on the T.V. at the end of a stressful day, it is an arena that has a great deal of influence and impact over its audience. As you also remember, the media is also the location and source for much of the critical cultural research. Specifically, what critical theorists tend to look at are the artifacts of popular, or pop culture? At the time of this writing, bands such as Creed and Wilco; the television programs Friends, West Wing, and Sex and the City; and the films Bowling for Columbine and The Two Towers were all pop culture artifacts. **Popular culture** is defined as ***“those systems or artifacts that most people share and that most people know about”*** (Brummett 21). So, while you may not listen to or watch the examples listed, chances are that you are at least aware of them and have a basic idea of the plot or content. Popular culture is distinct from high culture, which includes events such as the ballet or opera, visiting the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the L'ourve, or listening to classical music at the symphony. These activities, unlike the artifacts mentioned earlier all require something to have access. Namely money. Attending the ballet or opera takes considerably more money than playing the latest Creed CD. Moreover, one must live in or have access to an urban area where these events are typically held. For example, if Dr. Hahn and Dr. Paynton want to go to the Opera, they have to travel nearly 300 miles. This requires both a lot of time and money. Because most people do not have an abundance of either, these events or artifacts tend to be associated with the elite. The fact that most of us participate to some degree in consuming popular culture is one reason to study it. Another is that it is an area of struggle for representation—specifically about cultural identity issues. By looking at the numbers and characterizations of ethnic minorities in television and film we can see the dominant culture's attitudes about them. This is because the dominant culture is the group in control of media outlets and represents groups in particular ways. **Representation** refers to ***the portrayal, depiction, or characterization of particular cultural groups***. A related term is that of **symbolic annihilation** which refers to ***the fact that "women and minorities are underrepresented in media content and that when they are represented they are marginalized, trivialized, or victimized"*** (Valdiva 243).

Let us walk through an analysis of a scene in the 2001 film, Spiderman, to illustrate these concepts. The female character, Mary Jane, is walking home from work one dark and rainy night. She has neither an umbrella nor proper rain gear so her white shirt and clothes are drenched and cling to her. (Prior to this scene she has been portrayed as the "girl next door" with little or no sexuality.) Her path home takes her through an alleyway where she is quickly surrounded by a group of men of color. One of the men pulls a knife and there is the threat of rape or other violent attack. She does not attempt to fight back but is frozen with fear. But as is the case with superheroes, Spiderman arrives just in the nick of time to save the damsel in distress. After he saves her, she and Spiderman, who, while hanging upside down from a building, share their first kiss. So, what is going on in this scene? Can you identify examples of representation or symbolic annihilation? There are issues concerning both gender and race in this scene. First, she is portrayed as weak, unable to take care of herself, and in need of a man to save her. This is characteristic of images of women in film. Second, in terms of race, the "good guys" or "innocent victims" are White and the potential attackers are nonwhite. This too represents a stereotyped portrayal of young men of color as criminals or gang members. Finally, and perhaps the most dangerous message in this scene, is the equation of female sexuality, violence, and romance. As her white shirt clings to her, her breasts are revealed in a sexual manner, next she is almost attacked, and then she is sweetly and romantically kissing Spiderman. If you were nearly raped by a group of strangers would you be feeling romantic? Thus, this short scene illustrates how images (we did not even discuss the dialogue) work to unfairly and inaccurately portray groups of people. By looking to the media scholars can discover what images of various cultural groups are prevalent in a society and the stories that are told about various cultures. As active citizens we can make choices about what media images we decide to consume, accept, or reject. As knowledgeable communicators we can critique the images we see rather than accept constructed and artificial media images as normative or "just the way things are." For as you learned in the first section of the book, language, symbols, and images are not neutral, but are subjective interpretations of a person's or group of people's interpretation of reality.

Summary

After reading this chapter, you should have a greater understanding about how culture influences communication. We began with an overview and description of the various aspects of personal identity and how they work together to determine a person's and co-cultures relative power and privilege. Next, we traced the process of coming to an understanding of one's individual identity through the use of the identity models for minorities, Bi-racial individuals, Majority members, and those whom identify as global nomads. Turning to specific communication styles we discussed the differences between high and low context cultures and the continuums of direct/indirect, elaborate/exact/succinct, personal/contextual, and instrumental/affective styles. Finally, we examined a particular site for intercultural communication—the media. We hope this chapter has increased your knowledge base as well as your enthusiasm and interest in this exciting area of the Communication discipline. Moreover, we encourage you to think about the importance of culture when studying the other subdisciplines of communication such ad gender, organizational, interpersonal, rhetorical theory and criticism and health communication.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some ways that you see to support Hofstede's claim that the U.S. is the most individualistic society? Are there ways in which we display attributes of collectivism?
2. Describe a situation in which you attempted to diverge or converge you communication with others? What did you do? What were you attempting to accomplish by doing so? What was the result?
3. What are some examples of representation and symbolic annihilation can you locate and analyze in contemporary texts of popular culture?

Key Terms

- Afrocentricity
- Critical race theory
- Collectivism/Individualism
- Communication Styles
- Culture
- Ethnicity
- Ethnocentrism
- Gender
- High and low context
- Identity
- Popular Culture
- Privilege
- Race
- Representation
- Symbolic Annihilation
- Whiteness

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Chapter 13 - Gender Communication

Chapter 13

Gender Communication

Chapter Objectives:

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

- Understand the difference between sex and gender.
- Identify the multiplicity of feminisms.
- Discuss prominent theories used in the study of gender and communication.
- Identify the major theorists in gender and communication research.
- Identify the various methods used to study gender communication.
- Understand how one's gender culture influences verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Describe masculine and feminine speaking styles.
- Recognize the impact of gender on nonverbal communication.
- Know the problems with and the future directions of this area of communication studies.

According to a 13 year-old Thai girl, "To be a good girl you must have manners, speak politely and help with the housework." And when Pannipa Chaiyated isn't helping around the house you can find her slugging it out in the boxing ring! A surprise hit, female boxing has become quite popular in Thailand for preteen and teenage girls. It's a surprise because Thai culture places great value on a view of femininity that encourages domesticity and discreetness—not attributes associated with boxing. The girls say they fight to increase skills in self-defense, enjoy the sport and the discipline it brings, and fight their way out of poverty (Fuller, 2007, p. 9). This example highlights one of the key characteristics of gender—that it is fluid. Gender roles of a given culture are always changing.

Gender and communication is a relatively new specialization of the Communication field that focuses on the ways females and males of the human species communicate in different contexts. For example, research in this area could reveal the differences and similarities between the ways a female talk show host like Ellen Degeneres and a male talk show host like Wayne Brady interact with their guests. In this chapter, we want to make a distinction between sex and gender before providing an overview of this specialization's areas of research, main theories and theorists, and highlights from research findings about feminine and masculine communication styles. While we're taking a communication lens to the study of gender, we need to acknowledge the contributions made by other academic disciplines such as women's studies, linguistics, and psychology (Stephen, 2000).

As with other specializations in communication, definitions of gender abound (Gamble & Gamble, 2003; Gilbert, 1993; Howard & Hollander, 1997; Lorber, 1994; Vannoy, 2001). For our purposes, we will use Ivy and Backlund (2000) definition of **gender communication** which is, **'"communication about and between men and women"'** (4). Central to this definition are the terms about and between, and men and women. About addresses the attention this specialization pays to how the sexes are "discussed, referred to, or depicted, both verbally and nonverbally." Between addresses how members of each sex communicate interpersonally with others of the same, as well as the opposite, sex (Ivy & Backlund, p. 4). In our society, we use the gendered terms women and men instead of male and female. What's the difference between these two sets of terms? One pair refers to the biological categories of male and female. The other pair, men and women, refers to what are now generally regarded as socially constructed concepts that convey the cultural ideals or values of masculinity and femininity.

This basic difference is important, but it's most important that you know something else about these two sets of terms. One set has fixed meaning and the other set maintains fluid or dynamic meaning. Because they refer to biological distinctions, the terms male and female are essentially fixed. That is, their meanings are generally unchanging (as concepts if not in reality, since we do live in an age when it's medically possible to change sexes). Conversely, because they are social constructions, the meanings of the gendered terms masculine and feminine are dynamic or fluid. Why? Because their meanings are open to interpretation: Different people give them different meanings. Sometimes, even the same person might interpret these terms differently over time. For example, as a teenager a girl may portray her femininity by wearing make-up. Eventually, she may decide to forego this traditional display of femininity because her sense of herself as a woman may no longer need the validation that a socially prescribed behavior, such as wearing make-up, provides.

The Interplay of Sex and Gender

A quick review of some biological basics will lay a good foundation for a more detailed discussion of the interplay between sex and gender in communication studies.

Sex

As you may recall from a biology or health class, a fetus's sex is determined at conception by the chromosomal composition of the fertilized egg. The most common chromosome patterns are XX (female) and XY (male). After about seven weeks of gestation, a fetus begins to receive the hormones that cause sex organs to develop. Fetuses with a Y chromosome receive androgens that produce male sex organs (prostate) and external genitalia (penis and testes). Fetuses without androgens develop female sex organs (ovaries and uterus) and external genitalia (clitoris and vagina). In cases where hormones are not produced along the two most common patterns, a fetus may develop biological characteristics of each sex. These people are considered intersexuals.

Case In Point

According to the Intersex Society of North America

"Intersex" is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. For example, a person might be born appearing to be female on the outside, but having mostly male-typical anatomy on the inside. Or a person may be born with genitals that seem to be in-between the usual male and female types—for example, a girl may be born with a noticeably large clitoris, or lacking a vaginal opening, or a boy may be born with a notably small penis, or with a scrotum that is divided so that it has formed more like labia. Or a person may be born with mosaic genetics, so that some of her cells have XX chromosomes and some of them have XY.

Though we speak of intersex as an inborn condition, intersex anatomy doesn't always show up at birth. Sometimes a person isn't found to have intersex anatomy until she or he reaches the age of puberty, or finds himself an infertile adult, or dies of old age and is autopsied. Some people live and die with intersex anatomy without anyone (including themselves) ever knowing.

Which variations of sexual anatomy count as intersex? In practice, different people have different answers to that question. That's not surprising, because intersex isn't a discreet or natural category.

What does this mean? Intersex is a socially constructed category that reflects real biological variation. To better explain this, we can liken the sex spectrum to the color spectrum. There's no question that in nature there are different wavelengths that translate into colors most of us see as red, blue, orange, yellow. But the decision to distinguish, say, between orange and red-orange is made only when we need it—like when we're asking for a particular paint color. Sometimes social necessity leads us to make color distinctions that otherwise would seem incorrect or irrational, as, for instance, when we call certain people "black" or "white" when they're not especially black or white as we would otherwise use the terms.

In the same way, nature presents us with sex anatomy spectrums. Breasts, penises, clitorises, scrotums, labia, gonads—all of these vary in size and shape and morphology. So-called "sex" chromosomes can vary quite a bit, too. But in human cultures, sex categories get simplified into male, female, and sometimes intersex, in order to simplify social interactions, express what we know and feel, and

> maintain order.
>
> So nature doesn't decide where the category of "male" ends and the category of "intersex" begins, or where the category of "intersex" ends and the category of "female" begins. Humans decide. Humans (today, typically doctors) decide how small a penis has to be, or how unusual a combination of parts has to be, before it counts as intersex. Humans decide whether a person with XXY chromosomes or XY chromosomes and androgen insensitivity will count as intersex.
>
> In our work, we find that doctors' opinions about what should count as "intersex" vary substantially. Some think you have to have "ambiguous genitalia" to count as intersex, even if your inside is mostly of one sex and your outside is mostly of another. Some think your brain has to be exposed to an unusual mix of hormones prenatally to count as intersex—so that even if you're born with atypical genitalia, you're not intersex unless your brain experienced atypical development. And some think you have to have both ovarian and testicular tissue to count as intersex.
>
> Rather than trying to play a semantic game that never ends, we at ISNA take a pragmatic approach to the question of who counts as intersex. We work to build a world free of shame, secrecy, and unwanted genital surgeries for anyone born with what someone believes to be non-standard sexual anatomy. By the way, because some forms of intersex signal underlying metabolic concerns, a person who thinks she or he might be intersex should seek a diagnosis and find out if she or he needs professional healthcare.

As you know, hormones continue to affect us after birth—throughout our entire lives, in fact. For example, hormones control when and how much women menstruate, how much body and facial hair we grow, and the amount of muscle mass we are capable of developing. Although the influence of hormones on our development and existence is very real, there is no strong, conclusive evidence that they alone determine gender behavior. The degree to which personality is influenced by the interplay of biological, cultural, and social factors is one of the primary focal points of gender studies.

Gender

Compared with sex, which biology establishes, gender doesn't have such a clear source or cause. Gender is socially constructed because it refers to what it means to be a woman (feminine) or a man (masculine). Because it is open to interpretation, gender exists on a continuum, an imaginary line with each concept anchoring an end, and degrees of each concept progressing toward the midpoint (Figure 11.1). The midpoint of this continuum is where we locate **androgyny**, the term we use to identify ***gendered behavior that is neither distinctly feminine nor masculine—the look of indeterminate gender***. Gender exists on a continuum because feminine males and masculine females are not only possible but common, and the varying degrees of masculinity and femininity we see (and embody ourselves) are often separate from sexual orientation or preference.

The Social Construction of Gender

Gender is dynamic, not just because it exists on a continuum, but because its meanings change over time within different cultural contexts. For example, in 1907, women in the United States did not have the legal right to vote, let alone the option of holding public office, while a few worked outside the home. Women were expected to marry and raise children. A woman who worked, did not marry, and had no children was considered unusual, if not an outright failure. Now, of course, women have the right to vote and are considered an important voting block. Many women, though not representative of the fact that they constitute 51 percent of the population, are members of not just local and state governing bodies, but also of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. Similarly, society prescribed marriage and the role of wage earner for men one hundred years ago. Men were discouraged from being too involved in the raising of children, let alone being stay-at-home dads. Increasingly, men are accepted as suitable child-care providers and have the option to stay home and raise children.

As a social construct, gender is learned, symbolic, and dynamic. We say that gender is learned because we are not born knowing how to act masculine or feminine, as a man or a woman, or even as a boy or a girl. Just as we rely on others to teach us basic social conventions, we also rely on others to teach us how to look and act like our gender. Whether that process of learning begins with our being dressed in clothes traditionally associated with our sex (blue for males and pink for females), or being discouraged from playing with a toy not associated with our sex (dolls for boys, guns for girls), the learning of our genders begins at some point. Once it's begun (usually within our families), society reinforces the gender behaviors we learn. Despite some parents' best efforts to not impose gender expectations on their children, we all know what's expected of our individual gender. Gender is symbolic and is learned and expressed through language. Because language is central to the way we learn about gender and enact it through communicative acts, it is itself said to be social and symbolic. Remember that language is symbolic in that the word "man" isn't a real man. It is a symbol that identifies the physical entity that is a human male. So, when a mother says to her children, "Be a good girl and help me bake cookies," or "Boys don't cry" they learn through symbols (words) how to "be" their gender. The toys we are given, the colors our rooms are painted, and the after-school activities we are encouraged to participate in are all symbolic ways we internalize, and ultimately act out, our gender identity. Finally, gender communication is cultural. Meanings for masculinity and femininity, and ways of communicating those identities, are largely determined by culture. A culture is made up of belief systems, values, and behaviors that support a particular ideology or social system. How we communicate our gender is influenced by the values and beliefs of our particular culture. What is considered appropriate gender behavior in one culture may be looked down upon in another. In America women often wear shorts and tank tops to keep cool in the summer. Think back to summer vacations to popular American tourist destinations where casual dress is the norm. If you were to travel to Rome, Italy to visit the Vatican, this style of dress is not allowed. There, women are expected to dress in more formal attire, to reveal less skin, and to cover their hair as a display of respect. Not only does culture influence how we communicate gender identities, it also influences the interpretation, understanding, or judgment of the gender displays of others (Kyratzis & Guo, 2001; Ramsey, 2004).

Feminism versus Feminisms

If you have a gender and communication course on your campus you may have heard students refer to it as a "women's class," or even more misinformed, a course in "male bashing." When one of your authors teaches this course and hears such remarks, she is both saddened and frustrated: sad because those descriptors define the course as an unsafe place for male students, and frustrated because there is often a common misconception that only females are gendered. Courses in gender and communication serve as powerful places for both female and male students to learn about their own gender construction and its influence on their communication with others. Perhaps one of the reasons for the popular misconception that gender is exclusively female is that it has somehow been linked with the other f-word—feminism. What sorts of images or thoughts come to mind when you hear or read the word feminism? Are they positive or negative? Where did you learn them? Is this a label you would use to define yourself? Why or why not? Just as gender is not synonymous with biological sex, it is also not synonymous with feminism. As we stated earlier, gender refers to the socially constructed meanings of what it means to be female or male in a given culture. Feminism is a socio-political and philosophical position about the relationships between men, women and power. As a result, there is not one kind of feminism (Lotz, 2003; Bing 2004), thus this section is entitled feminisms. Just as members of republican, democratic, green, and independent political parties disagree and agree about values, causes of social conditions, and policy, so do feminists. Below we provide brief descriptions of twelve types of feminism. These are not all the feminisms that exist but some of the most common in which you may have already come into contact.

- **Liberal Feminism**. Liberal Feminism is one of the most common types of feminism and is institutionalized in the organization, the National Organization of Women (NOW). Basic beliefs of this position are that women and men are alike in important ways and should receive equal treatment. Accordingly, supporters work for causes such as “equal pay for equal work,” gender equity in political representation, as well as equality in other social, professional, and civic causes. This is movement is often referred to as second wave feminism.
- **Radical Feminism**. Growing out of a discontentment with their treatment in New Left political movements of the 1960’s, many women began addressing issues of oppression on a systematic level. They argued that oppression of women is a platform on which all other forms (race, class, sexual orientation) of oppression are based. Communication strategies such as “consciousness raising” and “rap groups,” and positions such as the “personal is political” grew out of this movement.
- **Ecofeminism**. Coming into consciousness in 1974, Ecofeminism unites feminist philosophy with environmental and ecological ideas and ethics. Ecofeminists see the oppression of women as one example of an overall oppressive ideology. Thus, supporters of this position are not just concerned with ending oppression of women but changing the value structure that supports oppression of the earth (i.e. deforestation), oppression of children (i.e. physical and sexual abuse), and oppression of animals (i.e. eating meat.).
- **Marxist Feminism**. Stemming from the work of Karl Marx, Marxist feminism focuses on the economic forces that work to oppress women. Specifically, Marxist feminists question how a capitalist system supports a division of labor that privileges men and devalues women. If you thought that women were catching up to men economically, think again. The U.S. census found that the salary gap between men and women is actually widening, not narrowing. In fact, in 2003 women earned 75.5 cents for every dollar men made. This is a classic example of economic oppression of women in our society.
- **Socialist Feminism**. Extending Marxist feminist thought, Socialist Feminists believe that women’s unpaid labor in the home is one of the fundamental causes of sexism and oppression of women. Moreover, patriarchy, the system of sex oppression is connected with other forms of oppression, such as race and class.
- **Womanist**. One criticism of liberal and radical feminism is that these two movements have been largely a movement for and about white women. These movements have often failed to address issues such as the interlocking nature of race, class, and sex oppression. Womanists, then, connect issues of race and sex when working against oppression.
- **Lesbian Feminism**. This type of feminism is connected with one’s sexual orientation. Important issues for this feminist perspective include fighting for marriage and adoption rights, fair and safe treatment in the workplace, and women’s health issues for gay and lesbian couples.
- **Separatist Feminism**. Instead of fighting against the patriarchal system, this position maintains that patriarchal systems of oppression cannot be changed. Thus, the best way to deal with patriarchy is to leave it. Separatists work toward the formation of women-centered communities that are largely removed from the larger society.
- **Power Feminism**. Power Feminism emerged in the 1990’s and urges women not to be victims. Power is derived not by changing a patriarchal structure but by gaining success and approval from traditionally male dominated activities. Although it labels itself feminist, this position is actually contradictory to some very basic feminist tenants. Instead of recognizing the interplay of cultural institutions and sexual oppression, Power Feminism takes a “blame the victim” position and asserts that if women are denied opportunity then it is their fault.
- **Revalorist Feminism**. Those who are Revalorist Feminists are dedicated to uncovering women’s history through writings, art, and traditional activities such as sewing. Once uncovered, they can be incorporated into educational curriculum, used as a basis for reevaluating existing theoretical and methodological perspectives, and receive a more positive or accepted place in society. Their approach is to move women’s positions, ideas, and contributions from the margin to the center.
- **Structural Feminism**. Unlike Liberal Feminists who contend that women and men are alike in important ways, Structural Feminism holds that men and women are not alike due to different cultural experiences and expectations. These different experiences produce dissimilar characteristics. Because women can bear children,

for example, they are more nurturing and caring.

- **Third Wave Feminism**. Third Wave Feminism believes the best way to change patriarchy is to not replicate the strategies of second wave feminism, although it is vital to acknowledge their contributions. Instead, a feminist agenda should focus more on practice than theory, foster positive connections and relationships between women and men, and be inclusive of diversity issues and diverse people.

Just as there are many women's movements, did you know that there are men's movements too? Men's movements also vary in their goals and philosophies. Some men's movements are strong supporters of feminist positions while others resist feminist movements and seek to return to a time where sex roles were clearly defined and distinct. Just as women can consider themselves feminists, did you know that men can be feminists too!

- **Pro-Feminist Men**. Pro-feminist men are the most closely aligned with the Liberal Feminist position. They share the belief that women and men are alike in important ways, thus, should have access to equal opportunities in work, politics, and the home. They do not stop at challenging the traditional roles for women. They also work for expanding the roles and opportunities of men. The ability to express emotions, to seek nurturing relationships, and to fight against cultural sexism are all concerns of Pro-Feminist Men. The organization NOMAS (National Organization for Men Against Sexism) represents this group of men.
- **Free Men**. Compared to Pro-Feminist men, Free Men – represented by organizations such as NOM (National Organization of Men), the National Coalition for Free Men, and MR, Inc. (Men's Rights, Incorporated) – seek to restore the macho and independent image of men in culture. While they may acknowledge that women do suffer gender and sex oppression, the oppression leveled at men is far greater. Arguing that feminism has emasculated men, Free Men want women to return to roles of subordination and dependence.
- **Mythopoetic**. Founded by poet, Robert Bly, this group of men is a combination of the previous two perspectives. Although they believe that the man's role is limiting and damaging to both men and women, they argue that there was a time when this was not the case. Masculinity, they claim, was originally tied to connection with the earth and it was the advent of technology, resulting in modernization and industrialization, and feminism that ripped men from their roots.
- **Promise Keepers**. Strongly aligned with a Christian belief system, Promise Keepers urge men to dedicate themselves to God and their families. They ask men to take a servant leadership role in their families, being involved in their homes as well as in work contexts.
- **Million Man March**. Like the Womanists who believe that a majority of feminisms do not adequately address issues of race and class oppression, many African-American males do not feel represented in the majority of men's movements. Thus, on October 18, 1995, the leader of the nation of Islam, Minister Louis Farrakhan, organized the Million Man March to bring African American men together in Washington, D.C. Like, the Promise Keepers, this group asked men to dedicate themselves spiritually with the belief that this will help strengthen families.

With the different groups or philosophical positions all communicating aspects of gender, the next section examines how gender is related to communication. Specifically we discuss what we study, gender development theories, prominent scholars in this specialization, and research methods used to study gender and communication.

Theories of Gender Development

We said earlier that gender is socially learned, but we did not say specifically just what that process looks like. Socialization occurs through our interactions, but that is not as simple as it may seem. Below we describe five different theories of gender development.

- **Psychodynamic**. Psychodynamic theory has its roots in the work of Viennese Psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud. This theory sees the role of the family, the mother in particular, as crucial in shaping one's gender identity. Boys and girls shape their identity in relation to that of their mother. Because girls are like their mothers biologically they see themselves as connected to her. Because boy are biologically different or separate from their mother, they construct their gender identity in contrast to their mother. When asked about his gender identity development, one of our male students explained, "I remember learning that I was a boy while showering with my mom one day. I noticed that I had something that she didn't." This student's experience exemplifies the use of psychodynamic theory in understanding gender development.
- **Symbolic Interactionism**. Symbolic Interactionism (George Herbert Mead) is based specifically on communication. Although not developed specifically for use in understanding gender development, it has particular applicability here. Because gender is learned through communication in cultural contexts, communication is vital for the transformation of such messages. When young girls are told to "sit up straight like a lady" or boys are told "gentlemen open doors for others," girls and boys learn how to be gendered (as masculine and feminine) through the words (symbols) told to them by others (interaction).
- **Social Learning**. Social Learning theory is based on outward motivational factors that argue that if a child receives positive reinforcement he/she is motivated to continue a particular behavior. If he/she receive punishment or other indicators of disapproval he/she is more motivated to stop that behavior. In terms of gender development, children receive praise if they engage in culturally appropriate gender displays and punishment if they do not. When aggressiveness in boys is met with acceptance, or a "boys will be boys" attitude, but a girl's aggressiveness earns them little attention, the two children learn different meanings for aggressiveness as it relates to their gender development. Thus, boys may continue being aggressive while girls may drop it out of their repertoire.
- **Cognitive Learning**. Unlike Social Learning theory that is based on external rewards and punishments, Cognitive Learning theory states that children develop gender at their own levels. The model, formulated by Kohlberg, asserts that children recognize their gender identity around age three but do not see it as relatively fixed until the ages of five to seven. This identity marker provides children with a schema in which to organize much of their behavior and that of others. Thus, they look for role models to emulate maleness or femaleness as they grow older.
- **Standpoint**. Earlier we wrote about the important role of culture in understanding gender. Standpoint theory places culture at the nexus for understanding gender development. Theorists such as Collins and Harding recognize identity markers such as race and class as important to gender in the process of identity construction. Probably obvious to you is the fact that our culture, and many others, are organized hierarchically—some groups of people have more social capital or cultural privilege than others. In the dominate U.S. culture, a well-educated, upper-middle class Caucasian male has certain sociopolitical advantages that a working-class African American female may not. Because of the different opportunities available to people based on their identity markers (or standpoints), humans grow to see themselves in particular ways. An expectation common to upper middle-class families, for example, is that children will grow up and attend college. As a result of hearing, "Where are you going to college"? as opposed to "Are you going to college"? these children may grow up thinking that college attendance is the norm. From their class standing, or standpoint, going to college is presented as the norm. Contrast this to children of the economically elite who may frame their college attendance around the question of

"Which Ivy League school should I attend?" Or, the first generation college student who may never have thought they would be in the privileged position of sitting in a university classroom. In all of these cases, the children begin to frame their identity and role in the society based on the values and opportunities offered by a particular standpoint.

What Do We Study When We Study Gender Communication?

Let's take a moment to describe in more detail many of the specific areas of gender and communication study discussed in this chapter. You know by now that the field of Communication is divided up into specializations such as interpersonal, organizational, mass media, etc. Within these particular contexts gender is an important variable, thus, much of the gender research can also be integrated into most of these specializations.

Gender and Interpersonal Communication

There are many kinds of personal relationships central to our lives wherein gender plays an important role. The most obvious one is romantic relationships. Whether it takes place in the context of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, or heterosexual relationships, the gender of the couple will have an impact on communication in the relationship as well as relational expectations placed on them from the culture at large. After a man and woman marry, for example, a common question for family and friends to ask is, "So, when are you having a baby?" The assumption is when not if. Since gay and lesbian couples are not allowed to legally marry in the U.S. and must go outside their relationship for the biological maternal or paternal role, they may be less likely to be asked such a question.

Other interpersonal relationships occur in families and friendships where gender is a consistent component. You may have noticed growing up that the boys and girls in your household received different treatment such as chores or curfews. You may also notice that the nature of your female and male friendships, while both valuable, manifest themselves differently. These are just a couple of examples that gender communication scholars study regarding how gender impacts interpersonal relationships.

Gender and Organizational Communication

While Liberal Feminist organizations such as NOW have made great strides for women in the workplace, gender continues to influence the organizational lives of both men and women. Issues such as equal pay for equal work, maternity and paternity leave, sexual harassment, and on-site family care facilities all have gender at their core. Those who study gender in these contexts are interested in the ways gender influences the policies and roles people play in organizational contexts. See Box 11.2 for information on the current wage-gap in organizations.

Case In Point

The Wage-Gap Widens

According to the U.S. General Accounting Office (a nonpartisan group), the wage gap between the sexes is widening, In 2002 women earned 77 cents to every dollar earned by her male counterparts; in 2003 that fell to 76 cents. The disparity is even greater when kids are involved, citing the GAO's research, Strasburg explains, "Men with kids earn 2.1 percent more, on average, than men without kids. Women with kids earn 2.5 percent less than women without kids" (14). The cause of the disparity is a complex one—involving economics, education, science, public relations, and social gender roles. If women, for example, are expected to take on a more passive role in the public sphere, they may feel less inclined to negotiate for a higher salary or ask for a raise.

Gender and Mass Communication

A particular focal point of gender and communication focuses on ways in which males and females are represented in culture by mass media. The majority of this representation in the 21st century occurs through channels of mass media—television, radio, films, magazines, music videos, video games, and the internet. From the verbal and nonverbal images sold to us as media consumers, we learn the “proper” roles and styles of being male and female in American culture. During World War II, for example, there was a shortage of workers in factories because many of the workers (men) were being sent overseas to fight. Needing to replace them to keep the factories in business, the media launched a campaign to convince women that the best way they could support the war effort was to go out and get a job. Thus, we saw a large influx of women in the workplace. All was fine until the war ended and the men returned home. When they wanted their jobs back they discovered that they were already filled—by women! The media once again launched a campaign to convince women that their proper place was now back in the home raising children. Thus, many women left paid employment and returned to a more traditional role. (This phenomenon is depicted in the film, Rosie the Riveter.) As media and technology increase in sophistication and use in our lives, they become new sites of gender display and performance (Krolokke, 2003).

Are There Really Differences in Gender Communication Styles?

Many of us have had conversations with others about how different the “other” gender communicates. Countless books have been written claiming they have the answer for understanding the opposite gender. But what have we really learned about gendered ways of communicating? This section talks about Language, the Purpose of Communication, Patterns of Talk, and Nonverbal Communication in relation to our gender.

Language

We have already discussed that one way language obscures women’s contributions to academic scholarship is by erasing the name from the ideas generated. Below we will discuss three other ways in which the English language demonstrates a positive bias toward the masculine and a negative bias toward the feminine.

- **Generic “He”**

It is likely that you have been told when you write or speak to use what is referred to as gender-neutral language. This is an attempt to get away from the generic “he” and move toward inclusive pronouns. For example, using “he” when we mean “he or she.” Using gender-neutral language tells us to select the latter option. Another popular way this issue presents itself is with the use of titles that contain gender markers. Words such as “policeman,” “fireman,” “mailman,” and “chairman” all suggest that the people who hold these positions are male. Over time it has become more common to replace the above titles with gender neutral ones such as “police officer,” “firefighter,” “mail carrier,” and “chairperson.” The linguistic change has two main implications: 1) We don’t know the gender of the person being discussed, and 2) Both males and females can perform these jobs. Since we know that language influences perception and constructs our reality, it is important to use language responsibly to reflect nonsexist attitudes (Beal, 1994; McConnell and Fazio, 1996; O Barr, 2001; Stringer & Hopper, 1998).

- **Defining Men and Women**

A second way in which language is biased against the feminine is the way it is used to define women. One such way is to use descriptions based on accomplishments or action to define males, while defining females in terms of physical features or their relationships to men. As First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton received a lot of press coverage about her changing hairstyle and criticism that she was too influential on the President. Her personal accomplishments as a lawyer and political figure were either downplayed or used against her as evidence that she was not properly filling the role of First Lady. In her run for President, many commentators focused on her hairstyle and dress rather than the positions she advocated.

Another way language is used to define men and women is through the slang terms commonly used to refer to one sex or another. What are some common ones you hear on your campus and within your circle of friends? Are women "chicks?" Are men "dudes?" What about explicit sexual references to women as a "piece of ass" or men as "dicks?" These are just some ways in which sexual terms are used to define us. Numerous studies have shown that there are many more sexual terms used for women than men. Stanley (1977) found that there were 220 terms for sexually promiscuous women and 22 similar terms for men. See table 11.3 for an example on an international effort to challenge gendered language.

Case In Point

Vagina Isn't a Dirty Word

While driving in the car with one of your author's two young girls, his four year old asked, "If boys have a penis, then what do girls have"? We were taken aback by the question since they were able to name the correct body part for male genitalia but not their own. We told them that girls and women have a vagina. They smiled and then started screaming, "Vagina, Vagina, I have a vagina!" over and over again. We both laughed, saying Eve Ensler would be so proud.

Eve Ensler is the playwright of The Vagina Monologues, a collection of over 200 interviews of women of diverse sexual orientations, racial, class, age, religious, and professional backgrounds. Her play has become an international hit and is performed every year on college campuses and local theatres. It has spawned the V-Day movement which seeks to end sexual violence against women and girls.

One of the key themes in the play is communication, specifically how we communicate about vaginas. In one monologue the woman explains, "Let's just start with the word "vagina." It sounds like an infection at best, maybe a medical instrument: "Hurry nurse, bring me the vagina." "Vagina." "Vagina." Doesn't matter how many times you say it, it never sounds like a word you want to say. It's a totally ridiculous, completely unsexy word. If you use it during sex, trying to be politically correct—"Darling, could you stroke my vagina?"—you kill the act right there."

By reclaiming the word "vagina" through challenging the connotation that it is a dirty, unsexy, or clinical term, Ensler attempts to create a positive way of thinking about "vaginas": an accurate and loving way to refer to girls and women. Her efforts and success demonstrate the power of language to name and create reality.

- **Naming Reality**'

The final way language influences the ways we understand gender is in the reality it creates for us. In the same way that the term "fireman" suggests that only males can do this job, creating terms to name experiences (or not having such terms) defines what we can or cannot experience. Undoubtedly, you are familiar with the term "sexual harassment" and may be familiar with your campus policy for reducing its occurrence. Did you know that this term did not come into existence until the last 20-30 years? Did sexual harassment occur prior to 30 years ago? Of course it did! The point is that until there was a term for such behavior there was no way for women (as they are the most common victims/survivors of this behavior) to either talk about what was happening to them or to fight against it. Imagine the difficulty inherent in trying to create a policy or law to prohibit behavior when there is no term for such behavior! With the advent of the term and the publicity about this issue generated by the bravery of Anita Hill when she testified against current Supreme Court Justice Clearance Thomas, most organizations have policies to protect employees from sexual harassment. Without the language, this would have been impossible to accomplish: "the development of a vocabulary with which to accurately describe one's experiences is an important process during which one needs to reflect on the political implications of that experience" (DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2007, p. 119).

The use of a generic or universal he, the use of nonparallel descriptors for different genders, and the lack of vocabulary are just some of the ways language influences our experiences as one gender or another. See if you can think of other examples.

Purpose of Communication

Starting in childhood, girls and boys are generally socialized to belong to distinct cultures and thus, speak in ways particular to their own gender's rules and norms (Johnson, 2000; Tannen 1986, 1990, 1995.) This pattern of gendered socialization continues throughout our lives. As a result, men and women often interpret the same conversation differently. Culturally diverse ways of speaking can cause miscommunication between members of each culture or speech community. These cultural differences are seen in the simple purpose of communication. For those socialized in a feminine community, the purpose of communication is to create and foster relational connections with other people (Johnson, 2000; Wood, 2005). On the other hand, the goal for men's communication is to establish individuality. This is done in a number of ways such as indicating independence, showing control, and entertaining or performing for others. To understand these differences, we must think about the role of culture and social expectations on the purpose of communication for gender (Mortenson, 2002). Although our previous discussion of feminist movements for women and men indicates that gender roles are changing, traditional roles still influence our communication behaviors. Because men have traditionally been expected to work outside the home to provide financial support for the family, they need to demonstrate their individual competence as this is often the criterion for raises and promotions. Conversely, because women have been expected to work inside the home to provide childcare, household duties, and other social functions the need to create interpersonal bonds is crucial. Thus, it is important to understand the cultural reasons and pressures for the differences in communication, rather than judge one against the other devoid of context.

Patterns of Talk

One way to think of gender communication is in terms of co-cultures or speech communities. A speech community is a "community sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech" (Hymes, 1972, p. 54). Muted group theory (Kramerae, 1981) explains the societal differentiation of gender and its corresponding language development. This develops on two levels:

1. Women (and members of other subordinate groups) are not as free or as able as men are to say what they wish, when and where they wish, because the words and the norms for their use have been formulated by the dominant group, men.
2. Women's perceptions differ from those of men because women's subordination means they experience life differently. However, the words and norms for speaking are not generated from or fitted to women's experiences (p.1).

Thus, when discussing patterns of talk we conceptualize them as occurring in different speech communities or co-cultures based on historical, cultural and economic expectations of a given co-culture. For the different genders, we develop different patterns of talk based on expectations placed on us.

- **Feminine Speech Community**

When cultures have different goals for their communication this results in unique communication strategies and behaviors. When the goal is connection, members of a feminine speech community are likely to engage in the following six strategies—equity, support, conversational "maintenance work," responsiveness, a personal style, and tentativeness.

Displaying equity in conversation means showing that you are similar to others. To do this one might say, "That happened to me too," or "I was in a similar situation." Showing support conversationally involves the expression of sympathy, understanding, and emotions when listening or responding to others. Sotirin (1990), suggests "women use bitching to cope with troubles by reaffirming rapport; men address troubles as problems of status asymmetry and respond with solutions. The characterization minimizes the political import of women's bitching; it's not political but interpersonal; not transformative but cathartic" (p. 20). Examining the role of swearing in women's friendships, Stapleton (2003) explains that swearing for women can function as a marker of trust between friends, a marker for the in-group versus the out-group, or as a means of negotiating and actively constructing that friendship identity.

Have you ever felt as if you were the one in the conversation who had to keep the conversation moving? This is conversational maintenance at work. This work is performed by asking questions and trying to elicit responses from others. A typical family dinner conversation might begin with one of the parents asking her/his child, “What happened in school today?” The purpose is to initiate dialogue and learn about others to fulfill the purpose of communication—to maintain connection with others. When listening to others we often respond in various ways to show that we are attentive and that we care about what the other person is saying. Responsiveness includes asking probing questions such as, “How did you feel when that happened?” or, “Wow, that’s interesting, I’ve never thought of that before.” Displaying a personal style refers to all the small details, personal references, or narratives that a person uses to explain her/his ideas. A professor explaining the stages of friendship development might supplement the model with how a particular friendship developed in his/her life. The final quality, tentativeness, involves a number of strategies and has invoked a multiplicity of interpretations. A student might say, “This is probably a stupid question, but…” as a way of qualifying her/his question. Turning statements into questions is another way of showing tentativeness. This is done with tag questions or intonation. Tag questions are phrases tacked onto the end of a sentence. In the statement, “I liked the film, didn’t you?” the “didn’t you?” is the tag. If you have studied French, this is similar to the use of “n’est pas.” When we use our voice to make a statement into a question (intonation) we make the last syllable raise. For example, if your roommate asks you, “what do you want for dinner?” you could say “pizza” to make it a question (“pizza?”) or a statement (“pizza.”) Another way to show tentativeness is through verbal hedges such as, “I sort of think I was too sensitive.” As you read the types of tentativeness, what were your reactions? How do you feel when someone (including yourself) communicates this way? How do you interpret the remarks? Generally, scholars have offered four explanations for tentativeness. First, is that this style represents a lack of power, self-confidence, or assuredness on the part of the speaker. Lakoff (1975) theorized that the powerlessness in speech mirrored women’s powerlessness in the culture. Wood theorized that tentativeness is a strategy to maintain communication and connection. A final interpretation is that to understand tentativeness we must examine the context in which such speech occurs. The relative power between two speakers may cause the one with less power to communicate tentatively to the other. Do you use markers of tentativeness when speaking with those in power such as your boss, teachers, or parents?

- **Masculine Speech Community**

When the goal is independence, members of this speech community are likely to communicate in ways that exhibit knowledge, refrain from personal disclosure, are abstract, are focused on instrumentality, demonstrate conversational command, are direct and assertive, and are less responsive. Showing knowledge in conversation gives speakers the opportunity to present themselves as competent and capable. If someone has a problem at work one might respond, “You should do this …” or “The best way to deal with that is …” This strategy is sometimes referred to as a “communication tool box.” While some may interpret this as bossy, responding in a manner that tries to fix a problem for someone you care about makes a lot of sense.

The next two features—minimal personal disclosure and abstractness—are related. When we refrain from personal disclosure we reveal minimal or no personal information. While giving a lecture on communication anxiety in a public speaking class, a professor may use examples from famous people rather than revealing her/his own experiences. Likewise, when we speak in less personal terms our conversation tends to become more abstract. Think back to the traditional roles for men and women for a moment. Since men typically have been more involved in the public rather than the private sphere, it makes sense that their communication would be more abstract and less personal. A masculine communication style tends to be focused on instrumental tasks. This is particularly true in the case of same sex friendships. Like the “tool box” or a problem solving approach to communication, when talk is instrumental it has a specific goal or task. It is used to accomplish something. Take baseball or football, for example. The talk that is used in these activities is strategic. In the case of male friendships it is more likely that men will get together to do something. Whether the activity is rock climbing, going to lunch, or helping someone move, the conversation is instigated by a particular activity. While female friends also like to engage in activities together, they are much more likely to get together “just to talk.” Conversational command refers to the ability to control or manage conversation. This can be done by controlling which topics are discussed, interrupting, or being the one to control the turn taking in conversation. A popular stereotype is that women talk a lot, but most research shows that men talk more than women. More talk time is another way to demonstrate conversational command. Directness is another feature of masculine communication. This refers to the use of more authoritative language and minimal use of tentativeness. Finally, men generally perform “minimal response cues” (Parlee, 1979). Response cues include saying, “mmm” or “go on” while nodding when listening to others. Fewer verbal indicators of sympathy, empathy, or understanding are likely to characterize this style of talk. While members of this speech community may be less likely to verbally express sympathy or other similar emotions, this is not the same as saying the members of the community do not feel such emotions. Both men and women feel and care for others in a variety of ways. The difference is how they are communicated, not if they are communicated. As you were reading about the feminine and masculine speech communities you were probably thinking to yourself, “Hey, I am a woman but I have a lot of masculine communication traits,” or “I know some men who speak in a more feminine style.” As you think reflect more on these ideas you will realize that all of us are capable of speaking, and do speak, the language of multiple gender cultures. Again, this is one of the reasons it is important to make a distinction between gender and sex. Our gender construction and the contexts in which we speak play a large role in the ways we communicate and express our gender identity. Both men and women may make conscious choices to speak more directly and abstractly at work, but more personal at home. Such strategic choices indicate that we can use our knowledge about various communication styles or options to make us successful in many different contexts.

Nonverbal Communication

Because you know how important nonverbal communication is to the production of meaning you may have wondered about the gendered nature of nonverbal communication. Below we discuss six areas of nonverbal communication and the role of gender in each.

- **Artifacts**

Earlier in the chapter we mentioned the pink and blue blankets used to wrap girl and boy babies after birth. These are examples of artifacts that communicate gender. Simply speaking, personal artifacts are objects that humans use to communicate self-identity. The jewelry we choose to wear (or not wear) communicates something about our personal tastes and social roles. Our clothes indicate a preference for certain designers or fashions, or may be used to subvert dominant fashion trends and expectations. An American male who wears a skirt or sarong may be trying to challenge the cultural norm that says pants and shorts are the only appropriate clothes for men.

Artifacts that are an early influence on gender construction are the toys we are given as children. What are typical girl and boy toys and what kind of play do they inspire? You are probably thinking of dolls for girls and cars and trucks for boys. Just walk through the aisles of your local toy store and you will have no difficulty discovering the “girl” aisle (it’s pink) and the boy aisle (it’s darker colors). Typically toys for boys are more action-oriented and encourage competition. Girls’ toys, on the other hand, encourage talk (Barbies talk to each other and role play) and preparation for traditional female roles (playing house). If you think products (toys) are only gendered at a young age, pay close attention when you watch television commercials and look through magazines. What kinds of products do women typically sell? What do men sell? How are gender-neutral products (cigarettes for example) sold to both women and men?

- **Personal Space and Proxemics**

As you recall, the study of space and our use of it (proxemics) has two important dimensions. First, we understand space as our personal space, or the bubble in which we feel comfortable. When someone stands or sits too close to you, you may react by pulling away and describe the interaction as “they invaded my space.” Second, space can be thought of in terms of the kinds of physical spaces we have access to. Were some rooms in the family home off limits to you as a child? Relative to both kinds of space is power. People with more power in society are able to invade the space of those with less power with few repercussions. Those with more power also have access to more and better spaces. For example, the upper-class often own multiple homes in desirable locations such as the beach or high-priced urban areas. What does all of this have to do with gender? Go back to the construct of power and ask yourself, “Which gender in American society holds the most power?” While there are exceptions, most of the time the masculine gender holds the most powerful positions in our culture. Thus, males typically have access to greater space. In the parental homes of both of your authors, the father had a den and a garage that was for his use only. The mother was limited to shared space such as the kitchen and living areas. Not only did she lack her own private space, but also the tasks associated with each (cooking in the kitchen) were work as opposed to the hobbies that took place in the garage (rebuilding cars). What are some ways that space was gendered in your family?

- **Haptics**

Both men and women in our culture use touch to communicate with others. However, there are differences in both the types of touch used and in the messages conveyed (Lee & Guerrero, 2001). Women are more likely to use touch to express support or caring, such as touching someone on the shoulder or giving them a hug. Men are more likely to use touch to direct actions of another. The relative power of men to women, coupled with a greater level of social power that can manifest itself in unwanted closeness or touching, have been linked with the problems of sexual harassment and domestic violence (Wood, 1993; 1993; 199; May, 1998). However, men do not use touch only to show control. Men use touch to display affection and desire to romantic partners, to communicate caring and closeness to children, and to show support to friends. Since men are culturally sanctioned for showing caring through touch, especially to other men, a choice to do so is a conscious choice to challenge gender stereotypes for men. Another strategy for touch between men is to create contexts in which it is acceptable such as wrestling, play punching or fighting, or football.

- **Kinesics**

Like haptics, men and women use body language differently and to convey different meanings. Coinciding with cultural messages, men use their bodies to signal strength and control while women use theirs to communicate approachability and friendliness. Women, for example, smile more often than men and Caucasian women do this more than African-American women (Halberstadt & Saitta, 1987). Whether the cause is social or biological, men tend to take up more space and encroach on others’ space more often than females.

- **Paralanguage**

Consistent with a communication goal of maintaining and fostering relationships with others, women tend to use more listening noises or back-channeling. Such noises are “mmm,” “ah,” and “oh” and are often accompanied by nodding the head. Often they mean, “I am listening and following what you are saying. Keep going.” While men also make listening noises, they do so less frequently and often the meaning is “I agree.” Hopefully, you can see how this could cause some miscommunication between the sexes. Likewise, being aware of this difference can reduce miscommunication. When two of your authors (Laura and Scott) talk, Scott will often ask Laura, “are you saying ‘mm hmm” because you agree, or are you just listening?” trying to determine which gendered approach to listening paralanguage Laura is employing.

- **Physical Attributes**

A final area of nonverbal communication that has gendered implications is physical attributes—the most common one for gender being body size and shape. If you were socialized in America you probably know how men and women are “supposed” to look. Men should be larger and physically strong while women should be smaller—very thin. These cultural pressures cause both men and women to engage in dangerous behaviors in an attempt to achieve an ideal physical body. Women are more likely to engage in dieting to become thin and men are more likely to weight-lift to excess, or take steroids, to increase muscle mass. The cultural messages for both sexes are physically and emotionally dangerous. Too severe dieting or steroid use can permanently damage the physical body and too much attention to appearance can harm one’s self esteem and take time away from pursuing other activities such as school, career, hobbies, and personal relationships.

Summary

In this chapter you have been exposed to the specialization of gender and communication. You learned that gender communication is “communication about and between men and women” (Ivy & Backlund, 200, p. 4). It is important to remember as we discuss gender and communication that there is a difference between sex and gender. Sex refers to the biological distinctions that make us male or female. Gender is the socially constructed enactment of what it means to be a man or a woman. We are generally born as either male or female, but taught how to be men and women. Both men and women are gendered and experience their genders in a variety of ways. As a result of how gender is manifested, many feminist and men’s groups have formed for the purpose of banding together with others who understand gender in similar ways. We discussed 12 types of feminism and five different men’s groups that focus on various approaches for understanding and enacting gender. There are variety of theories that seeks to explain how we form gender. Remember that theories are simply our best representations of something. Thus theories of gender development such as Psychodynamic theory, Social Interactionism, Social Learning theory, Cognitive Learning theory, and Standpoint theory are all attempts to explain the various ways we come to understand and enact our genders. Like with many other specializations in the field of Communication, gender communication applies to a variety of other specializations. Interpersonal communication, organizational communication, and mass communication are specializations that are particularly ripe for exploring the impact of gender and communication. Gender communication research continues to explore gender in these contexts, thus helping redefine how gender is understood and behaved. We explored differences in gender communication styles by looking at language, the purpose of communication, patterns of talk, and nonverbal communication. While impossible to come to a definitive conclusion, gender and communication studies generally promotes the idea that the differences in gender communication are socially learned and are thus fluid and dynamic. Realistically, males and females can learn to communicate in both masculine and feminine ways.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some ways that your gender was communicated or taught to you by your parents? Other family members? Your school? Friends? Church?
2. Analyze a popular television show or film in terms of gender communication. In what ways are masculine and feminine speaking styles illustrated? Who uses them? What artifacts are used to signal gender?
3. What are the pros and cons of the six theories of gender development? What are the social and/or political implications of each?
4. Take some time to investigate the types of feminisms we mentioned in more detail. What specific contributions have they made in furthering equality of gender?

Key Terms

- androgyny
- cognitive learning
- culture
- ecofeminism
- feminine speech community
- feminism
- free men
- gender
- gender communicated

- gendered
- lesbian feminism
- liberal feminism
- marxist feminism
- masculine speech community
- million man march
- muted group theory
- mythopoetic
- power feminism
- pro-feminist men
- promise keepers
- psychodynamic
- psychological theories
- radical feminism
- revalorist feminism
- separatist feminism
- sex
- socialist feminism
- social learning
- speech community
- standpoint theory
- structural feminism
- symbolic interactionism
- third-wave feminism
- womanist

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