

SEVENTH EDITION

Introducing Communication Theory

Analysis and Application

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Emerson College

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**INTRODUCING COMMUNICATION THEORY: ANALYSIS AND APPLICATION, SEVENTH EDITION**

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Preface

As we present the seventh edition of *Introducing Communication Theory: Analysis and Application*, we remain excited by its enormous success. The previous six editions demonstrate that communication theory courses are vibrant, that teachers of communication understand the importance of theoretical thinking, and that both instructors and students appreciate the consistent and organized template we employ throughout. This text explores the practical, engaging, and relevant ways in which theory operates in our lives. *It is written primarily for students who have little or no background in communication theory.*

We originally wrote the book because we thought that students need to know how theorizing helps us understand ourselves, as well as our experiences, relationships, media, environment, and culture. We also wrote this book because we believe that students should have a text that relates theory directly to their lives. We felt that some books insulted the student and trivialized theory while other books were written at a level that was far too advanced for an undergraduate. In this book, we take great care to achieve the following additional objectives:

- Familiarize students with the principles and central ideas of important theories they are likely to encounter in the communication discipline.
- Demystify the notion of theory by discussing it in concrete and unequivocal ways.
- Provide students with an understanding of the interplay among theory, communication, and application.
- Introduce students to the research process and the role of theory within this process.
- Assist students in becoming more systematic and thoughtful critical thinkers.

The seventh edition of this book maintains its original focus of introducing communication theory to students in an accessible, appealing, and consistent way. We believe that students understand material best when it is explained in a clear, direct way through a number of realistic and applicable examples. Our hope is that students will take away a basic knowledge of, and appreciation for, communication theory from reading our text.

The theories in communication studies have roots in both communication and in other fields of study. This interdisciplinary orientation is reflected in the selection of the various theories presented in the text. We not only include the unique contributions of communication theorists, but also theories with origins in other fields of study, including psychology, sociology, biology, education, business, and philosophy. Communication theorists have embraced the integration of ideas and principles forged by their colleagues across many disciplines. Yet, the application, influence, and inherent value of communication are all sustained by the theorists in this text. In other words, although theories cut across various academic disciplines, their relevance to communication remains paramount and we articulate this relevancy in each theory chapter. We do not presume to speak for the theorists; we have distilled their scholarship in a way that we hope represents and honors their hard work. Our overall goal is to frame their words and illustrate their theories with practical examples and instances so that their explication of communication behaviors becomes accessible for students.

Together, we have over 60 years of experience in teaching communication theory. During this time, we have learned a great deal. *Introducing Communication Theory: Analysis and Application* utilizes and applies all that we as teachers have learned from our students. We continue to be indebted to both students and colleagues whose suggestions and comments have greatly influenced this newest edition. In fact, many of these observations are found throughout the book!

The Challenges of Teaching and Learning Communication Theory

The instructor in a communication theory course may face several challenges that are not shared by other courses. First, because many students think of theory as distant, abstract, and obscure, teachers must overcome these potentially negative connotations. Negative feelings toward the subject can be magnified in classrooms where students represent a variety of ages and socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. *Introducing Communication Theory* addresses this challenge by offering a readable and pragmatic guide that integrates content with examples, capturing the essence and elegance of theory in a straightforward manner. In addition, the book takes an incremental approach to learning about theory, resulting in a thoughtful and appropriate learning pace. In our decades of teaching this course, we have found that students cannot be overwhelmed with too much information at once. Therefore, we unpack theory in reasonable and digestible ways.

A second challenge associated with teaching and learning communication theory relates to preconceived notions of research: Students may view scholarship as difficult or remote. This book demonstrates to students that they already possess many of the characteristics of researchers, such as curiosity and ambition. Students will be pleasantly surprised to know that they operate according to many personal theories every day. Once students begin to revise their misconceptions about research and theory, they are in a position to understand the principles, concepts, and theories contained in this book.

A third challenge of teaching and learning communication theory is capturing the complexity of a theory in an approachable way without oversimplifying the theoretical process. To address this problem, instructors often present a skeletal version of a theory and then fill in the missing pieces with personal materials. By providing a variety of engaging examples and applications reflecting a wide range of classroom demographics, *Introducing Communication Theory* facilitates such an approach.

A final challenge relates to a theory's genesis and today's students. Clearly, in this technological age, students look for and usually crave a desire to find a "tech angle" to communication theory. Although many theories were conceptualized decades ago, in each chapter, we have provided the most recent research that represents a theory-technology framework. Further we have added student comments in each chapter that speak to how the theory can be applied to technology, such as social media, texting, and so forth.

Major Changes in Content in the New Edition

As we do in every new edition, we have edited and modified *each and every chapter* to reflect our continued emphasis on making theory more approachable.

Most importantly, *the entire book has been reorganized to reflect the template most useful to students.*

In the past, we relied on an approach that was context-specific. Yet, after reflecting on how students learn, looking at the foundational information, and reviewing comments by colleagues across the country, we were struck by the narrowness of this approach. We found ourselves "forcing" a complex theory into a particular context, sometimes neglecting the fact that many of the theories fall across several contexts.

Therefore, the reorganization of the book adheres to a commonly-accepted division found in the field: Approaches to Knowing, or better known as Empirical, Interpretive, and Critical-Cultural approaches. Each "Approach to Knowing" is elaborated in Chapter 3, allowing students to see the relationship of a foundational chapter with the theory chapters.

In this seventh edition, we strengthened and streamlined each chapter and in many cases, reorganized the chapter to make the material more accessible. Further, we've updated many of our opening vignettes to make

them aligned with the communication challenges that students face in their lives. And, of course, we've rigorously updated each theory in keeping with the current research and changes in the theorists' thinking.

Representative Chapter Changes

Responding to the need to articulate further theories related to cultural diversity, we have added a new chapter (Chapter 30, Co-Cultural Theory). To keep the book a manageable length, Cognitive Dissonance Theory has been archived for the seventh edition. In addition, each foundational and subsequent theory chapter has undergone revision to make the content more recent, examples more compelling, material more organized, and critiques more balanced. Here's a sample of specific changes made in various chapters:

Chapter 1 (Thinking About Communication: Definitions, Models, and Ethics) adds the new holistic model of communication as students consider the value of context and technology in communication theory

Chapter 2 (Thinking About the Field: Traditions and Contexts) now includes an historical understanding of the communication field, from Classical origins to contemporary thinking

Chapter 3 (Thinking about Theory and Research) includes new information on "Theory as Metaphor," providing students further clarification of how theory functions in their lives

Chapter 5 (Uncertainty Reduction Theory) extends discussion of the expansions to the theory including context and technology.

Chapter 6 (Social Exchange Theory) expands section on power, exchange patterns, and matrices.

Chapter 8 (Social Information Processing Theory) contains new information on social media and the hyperpersonal effect

Chapter 9 (Structuration Theory) reconfigured in tone to make it more practical

Chapter 10 (Organizational Information Theory) presents new clarification on the relationship between sensemaking and storytelling

Chapter 11 (Agenda Setting Theory) has been significantly reorganized and also highlights the history of the theory and the 3-part process of agenda setting.

Chapter 12 (Spiral of Silence Theory) provides more information on the effects of social isolation and the "outing" process of GLBT individuals

Chapter 13 (Uses and Gratifications Theory) is now comprised of an expanded section on the history of the theory with additional attention paid to media effects

Chapter 14 (Face Negotiation Theory) adds a reconceptualization of the theory as representing the empirical, interpretive, and critical approaches

Chapter 16 (Coordinated Management of Meaning) includes refinement, through example, of conversational coordination

Chapter 17 (Communication Privacy Management Theory) now consists of a new section on the key components and axioms of the theory, keeping up with how Petronio revised the theory in 2013

Chapter 18 (Groupthink) presents new information on "polythink" and its consequences in group and team communication

Chapter 25 (Relational Dialectics Theory) now presents a section on RDT 2.0 and RDT as a critical theory

Chapter 27 (Cultural Studies) contains new information on the continued dominance of television as a source of information for older citizens

Features of the Book

To accomplish our goals and address the challenges of teaching communication theory, we have incorporated a structure that includes number of special features and learning aids into the seventh edition:

- *Part One, Foundations.* The first three chapters of the book continue to provide students a solid foundation for studying the theories that follow. This groundwork is essential in order to understand how theorists conceptualize and test their theories. Chapters 1 and 2 define communication and provide a framework for examining the theories. We present several traditions and contexts in which theory is customarily categorized and considered. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the intersection of theory and research. This discussion is essential in a theory course and also serves as a springboard for students as they enroll in other courses. In addition, we present students with a template of various evaluative components that we apply in each of the subsequent theory chapters.
- *Theories and Theoretical Thinking.* Updated coverage of all theories. Separate chapters on each of the theories provide accessible, thorough coverage for students and offer flexibility to instructors. Because of the feedback we received from the previous edition, we retained the original theories from the sixth edition and added one NEW theory, Co-Cultural Theory by Mark Orbe. This updating results in a more thoughtful, current, and applicable presentation of each theory. As noted earlier, in many cases, we have provided the most recent information of the influences of culture and/or technology upon a particular theory, resulting in some very compelling discussions and examples.
- *Chapter-opening vignettes.* Each chapter begins with an extended vignette, which is then integrated throughout the chapter, providing examples to illustrate the theoretical concepts and claims. We have been pleased that instructors and students point to these vignettes as important applications of sometimes complex material. These stories/case studies help students understand how communication theory plays out in the everyday lives of ordinary people. These opening stories help drive home the important points of the theory. In addition, the real-life tone of each vignette entices students to understand the practicality of a particular theory.
- *A structured approach to each theory.* Every theory chapter is self-contained and includes a consistent format that begins with a story, followed by an introduction, a summary of theoretical assumptions, a description of core concepts, and a critique (using the criteria established in Part One). This consistency provides continuity for students, ensures a balanced presentation of the theories, and helps ease the retrieval of information for future learning experiences. Instructors and students have found this template to be quite valuable because it focuses their attention on the key elements of each theory.
- *Student Voices boxes.* These boxes, featured in every chapter, present both new and returning student comments on a particular concept or theoretical issue. The comments, extracted from journals in classes we have taught, illustrate the practicality of the topic under discussion and also show how theoretical issues relate to students' lives. This feature illustrates how practical theories are and how much their tenets apply to our everyday lived experiences. It also allows readers to see how other students taking this course have thought about the material in each chapter.
- *Visual template for theory evaluation.* At the conclusion of each theory chapter, a criteria for theory evaluation (presented in Chapter 3) is employed. In addition, the theory's context, scholarly tradition (based on Robert Craig's typology), and approach to knowing are presented on charts.
- *Theory at a Glance boxes.* In order for students to have an immediate and concise understanding of a particular theory, we incorporate this feature at the beginning of each theory chapter. Students will have these brief explanations and short summaries before reading the rest of the chapter, thereby allowing them to have a general sense of what they are about to encounter.
- *Theory-Into-Practice (TIP) inserts.* We include this feature to provide further application of the information contained in the chapter. We identify a conclusion or two from the theory and then provide a real-world application of the particular claim. This feature sustains our commitment to enhancing the pragmatic value of a theory.

- *Afterword: ConnectingQuests.* This final section of the book provides students with an integration of the various theories in order to see the interrelationships between theories. We believe that theories cut across multiple contexts. To this end, students are asked questions that address the intersection of theories. For instance, to understand “decision making” from two theoretical threads, students are asked to compare the concept and its usage in both Groupthink and Structuration Theory.
- *Tables and figures.* To increase conceptual organization and enhance the visual presentation of content, we have provided several tables and figures throughout the text. Further, we have provided cartoons to provide another engaging reading option. Many chapters have visual aids for students to consider, helping them to understand the material. These visuals provide a clearer sense of the conceptual organization of the theories, and they support those students who best retain information visually.
- *Running glossary.* Throughout each chapter, a running glossary provides students immediate access to unfamiliar terms and their meanings.
- *Appendix.* At the end of the book all of the theories are listed with a short paragraph summarizing their main points.

In addition to the aforementioned features, several new additions exist in the new edition of *Introducing Communication Theory*:

- **NEW CHAPTER ON CO-CULTURAL THEORY.** We removed a chapter profiling an older theory from a discipline other than communication (Cognitive Dissonance) and replaced that with a newer theory centered in communication. Co-Cultural Theory has myriad applications for the diverse, multi-cultural world in which we live.
- **NEW THEORY INTO ACTION.** Students will be introduced to further applications of the various theories and theoretical concepts by examining popular press stories. Stories and articles exemplifying various parts of a theory are provided, extrapolated from media headlines around the world.
- **NEW STUDENTS TALKING TECH.** The feature has been added to reflect students’ comments about social media and technology pertaining to various theoretical issues. Dialogue applications related to Snapchat, Facebook, LinkedIn, TikTok, Twitter, YouTube, Weibo, Instagram, among others are spliced throughout the book to demonstrate students’ understanding and application of the theories to contemporary communication contexts.
- **NEW “ORIGINS THEORY” RECOGNITION.** Because numerous theories have their origins in other theoretical frameworks, we present students a list of “subordinate” theories that were inspirational and influential upon a current theoretical discussion.
- **NEW TIMELY EXAMPLES.** To ensure that communication theory remains relevant to all generations of students, the book includes relevant and contemporary topics, including many hashtag activism movements such as #MeToo, #TakeAKnee, #BlackLivesMatter, among others. In addition, examples related to immigration, Title IX, impeachment, minimum wage, Wikipedia, hate speech, school shootings, and many more are integrated for students to consider as they unpack the complexity of each theory.
- **NEW INTEGRATION OF NEARLY 200 NEW REFERENCES.** The explosion in communication research, in particular, is reflected in the incorporation of dozens of new studies, essays, and books that help students understand the theory or theoretical issue. We also provide students with easy access to a citation by integrating an APA format (the accepted writing style in the communication field) so that they can see the relevancy and currency of a theory. When appropriate, we also have provided URLs for useful websites.

New Organization of the Material

Part One, Foundations, provides a conceptual base for the discrete theory chapters in Part Two. Chapter 1 begins by introducing the discipline and describing the process of communication. Chapter 2 provides the prevailing traditions and contexts that frame the communication field. In this chapter, we focus on Robert Craig's guide to the ways in which communication theory can be considered. The chapter then turns to primary contexts of communication, which frame the study of communication in most academic settings across the country. Chapter 3 explores the intersection of theory and research. In this chapter, we provide students an understanding of the nature of theory and the characteristics of theory. The research process is also discussed, as are perspectives that guide communication research. Our goal in this chapter is to show that research and theory are interrelated and that the two should be considered in tandem as students read the individual chapters. Chapter 3 also provides a list of evaluative criteria for judging theories as well as for guiding students toward assessment of each subsequent theory chapter.

With Part One establishing a foundation, Part Two, Theories and Theoretical Thinking, introduces students to 27 different theories, each in a discrete, concise chapter and discussed within a particular Approach to Knowing (Post-Positive, Interpretive, and Critical) identified in Chapter 3 and emphasized in an insert between the Foundational and Theory chapters. In addition, many of these theories cut across communication contexts.



The 7th edition of *Introducing Communications Theory: Analysis and Application* is now available online with Connect, McGraw-Hill Education's integrated assignment and assessment platform. Connect also offers SmartBook for the new edition, which is the first adaptive reading experience proven to improve grades and help students study more effectively. All of the title's website and ancillary content is also available through Connect, including:

- An Instructor's Manual for each chapter with general guidelines for teaching the basic theory course, sample syllabi for quarter and semester courses, chapter outlines, and classroom activities.
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- Lecture Slides for instructor use in class.

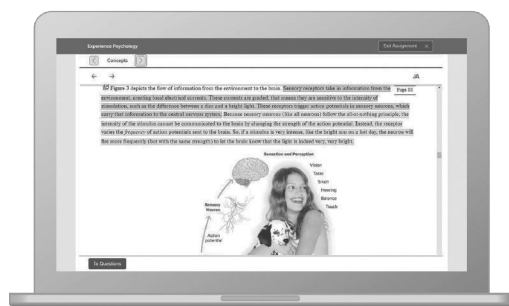


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Lynn H. Turner is a Professor in Communication Studies at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Lynn received her BA from the University of Illinois and her MA from the University of Iowa, and she received her PhD from Northwestern University. She has taught communication theory and research methods to undergraduates and graduates in the Diederich College of Communication at Marquette since 1985. Prior to coming to Marquette, Lynn taught at Iowa State University and in two high schools in Iowa. Her research interests include interpersonal communication, family communication, and gendered communication. She is the recipient of several awards, including Marquette's College of Communication Research Excellence Award, and the Book of the Year award from the Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender for her book with Patricia Sullivan, *From the Margins to the Center: Contemporary Women and Political Communication*. Lynn is a past president of the Central States Communication Association and was recognized for her contributions in service and research by CSCA as a member of their Hall of Fame.



Rich and Lynn, together, are coauthors of dozens of essays and articles in the communication field. In addition, the two have served as guest coeditors of the *Journal of Family Communication* a few times, focusing on diversity and the family. In addition, they have coauthored several books, including *Gender and Communication*, *Perspectives on Family Communication*, *IPC*, and *Understanding Interpersonal Communication*, and an *Introduction to Communication*. The two have coedited the *Family Communication Sourcebook* (Sage, 2006; Winner of the Outstanding Book Award by the National Communication Association), and *The Handbook of Family Communication*. Further, both are the recipients of the Bernard J. Brommel Award for Outstanding Scholarship and Service in Family Communication. Finally, both recognize the uniqueness and the honor to have served as president of the National Communication Association (Lynn in 2011; Rich in 2012), "the oldest and largest organization in the world promoting communication scholarship and education" (www.natcom.org).

CHAPTER 1

Thinking About Communication: Definitions, Models, and Ethics

I suppose all of us get accustomed to look at what we are doing in a certain way and after a while have a kind of “trained incapacity” for looking at things in any other way.

—Marie Hochmuth Nichols

The Hernandez Family

José and Angie Hernandez have been married for almost 30 years, and they are the parents of three children who have been out of the house for years. But, a recent layoff at the company where their son Eddy worked has forced the 24-year-old to return home until he can get another job. The job market after the recession was still not moving along fast enough.

At first, Eddy's parents were glad that he was home. His father was proud of the fact that his son wasn't embarrassed about returning home, and his mom was happy to have him help her with some of the mundane tasks at home. In fact, Eddy showed both José and Angie how to instant message their friends and also put together a family website. His parents were especially happy about having a family member who was “tech-savvy” hanging around the house.

But the good times surrounding Eddy's return soon ended. Eddy brought his cell phone to the table each morning, marring the Hernandezes' once-serene breakfasts. The clicking sound of texting and his incessant looking down undermined an otherwise calm beginning to the day. In addition, José and Angie's walks each morning were complicated because their son often wanted to join them. At night, when they went to bed, the parents could hear Eddy Skyping with his friends, sometimes until 1:00 A.M. When

Eddy's parents thought about communicating their frustration and disappointment, they quickly recalled the difficulty of their son's situation. They didn't want to upset him any further. The Hernandezes tried to figure out a way to communicate to their son that although they love him, they wished that he would get a job and leave the house. They simply wanted some peace, privacy, and freedom, and their son was getting in the way. It wasn't a feeling either one of them liked, but it was their reality.

They considered a number of different approaches. In order to get the conversation going, they even thought about giving Eddy a few website links related to local apartment rentals. Recently, the couple's frustration with the situation took a turn for the worse. Returning from one of their long walks, they discovered Eddy on the couch, hung over from a party held the night before at his friend's house. When José and Angie confronted him about his demeanor, Eddy shouted, “Don't start lecturing me now. Is it any wonder that none of your other kids call you? It's because you don't know when to stop! Look, I got a headache and I really don't need to hear it right now!” José snapped, “Get out of my house. Now!” Eddy left the home, slamming the front door behind him. Angie stared out of the window, wondering when or if they would ever hear from their son again.

The value of communication has been lauded by philosophers (“Be silent or say something better than silence”—Pythagoras), writers (“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug”—Mark Twain), performing artists (“Any problem, big or small, in a family usually starts with bad communication”—Emma Thompson), business leaders (“Writing is great for keeping records and putting down details, but talk generates ideas”—T. Boone Pickens), motivational speakers (“The quality of your communication is the quality of your life”—Tony Robbins), talk show hosts (“Great communication begins with connection”—Oprah), and even reality TV superstars (“Why not share my story?”—Kim Kardashian). Perhaps one of the most lasting of all words came from a 1967 film (*Cool Hand Luke*): “What we got here is a failure to communicate”—a quotation that has subsequently been stated in such diverse settings as in the movie *Madagascar*, the song “Civil War” by Guns N’ Roses, and television shows *NCIS*, *Modern Family*, *Law and Order: SVU*, and *Frasier*. It’s clear that nearly all cross sections of a Western society view communication as instrumental in human relationships. And clearly, regardless of where we live around the globe, we can’t go through a day without communication.

In the most fundamental way, communication depends on our ability to understand one another. Although our communication can be ambiguous (“I never thought I’d get this gift from you”), as we suggested above, one primary and essential goal in communicating is understanding. Our daily activities are wrapped in conversations with others. Yet, as we see with the Hernandez family, even those in close relationships can have difficulty expressing their thoughts.

Being able to communicate effectively is highly valued in the United States. Corporations have recognized the importance of communication. In 2019, in an agreement establishing an alliance between the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the National Safety Management Society (https://www.osha.gov/dcspl/alliance/nsms/nsms_20031001_final.html) communication is identified as instrumental in establishing a national dialogue on safety and health. Indeed, the entire safety profession supports this claim (<http://www.com.edu/gcsi/>): “First and foremost, risk managers must be good communicators.” Health care, too, is focusing more on the value of communication. Interestingly, as early as the late 1960s, doctor–patient communication has been a topic of concern in research (Korsch, Gozzi, & Francis, 1968). More recent literature shows that effective doctor–patient communication is essential for the recovery of patients. Finally, in the classroom, researchers have concluded that affirming feedback/student confirmation positively affects student learning (Titsworth, Mazer, Goodboy, Bolkan, & Myers, 2015), and in athletics, this confirming communication influences athlete motivation and competitiveness (Cranmer, Gagnon, & Mazer, 2019). And, with respect to cross-platform messaging sites such as WhatsApp, individuals in intergenerational families report its use helps to make communicating to various family members both realistic and practical (Taipale, 2019). Make no mistake about it: Abundant evidence underscores the fact that communication is an essential, pervasive, and consequential behavior in our society.

As a student of communication, you are uniquely positioned to determine your potential for effective communication. To do so, however, you must have a basic understanding of the communication process and of how communication theory, in particular, functions in your life. We need to be able to talk effectively, for instance, to a number of very different types of people during an average day: roommates, teachers, ministers, salespeople, family members, friends, automobile mechanics, and health care providers, among many others.

Communication opportunities fill our lives each day. However, we need to understand the whys and hows of our conversations with others. For instance, why do two people in a relationship feel a simultaneous need for togetherness and independence? Why do some women feel ignored or devalued in conversations with men? Why does language often influence the thoughts of others? How do media influence people’s behavior? To what extent can social media affect the communication among people? These and many other questions are at the root of why communication theory is so important in our society and so critical to understand.

Defining Communication

Our first task is to create a common understanding for the term *communication*. Defining communication can be challenging because it's a term that has been used by a wide assortment of people—from politicians to evangelical preachers to our parents. It is also an all-encompassing term and invoked with different motivations in mind. A friend might think everything is communication, while you might think that it occurs only with mutual understanding. Sarah Trenholm (2014) notes that although the study of communication has been around for centuries, it does not mean communication is well understood. In fact, Trenholm interestingly illustrates the dilemma when defining the term. She states, "Communication has become a sort of 'portmanteau' term. Like a piece of luggage, it is overstuffed with all manner of odd ideas and meanings. The fact that some of these do fit, resulting in a conceptual suitcase much too heavy for anyone to carry, is often overlooked" (p. 4).

We should note that there are many ways to interpret and define communication—a result of the complexity and richness of the communication discipline. Imagine, for instance, taking this course from two different professors. Each would have their own way of presenting the material, and each classroom of students would likely approach communication theory in a unique manner. Ideally, the result would be two exciting and distinctive approaches to studying the same topic.

Students Talking Tech

Maddy



My own way of defining communication would have to include how I met my current boyfriend. I would never be with him if it wasn't for social media and Bumble. The site let me—as a woman—make the first move. When I heard about this app, I thought, "Finally!" I was sick of guys who were looking for "now" rather than "now and later!" My boyfriend and I talked online and then over the phone, and then we met. The whole process was something I controlled, which made it easier and more comfortable for me. I can't imagine that I would've had any chance to even meet this guy, let alone communicate with him, if Bumble didn't help me start that process.

This uniqueness holds true with defining communication. Scholars tend to see human phenomena from their own perspectives, something we delve into further in the next chapter. In some ways, researchers establish boundaries when they try to explain phenomena to others. Communication scholars may approach the interpretation of communication differently because of differences in scholarly values. With these caveats in mind, we offer the following definition of *communication* to get us pointed in the same direction. **Communication** is a social process in which individuals employ symbols to establish, interpret, and co-create meaning in their environment(s). We necessarily draw in elements of mediated communication as well in our discussion, given the importance that communication technology plays in contemporary society. With that in mind, let's define five key terms in our perspective: *social*, *process*, *symbols*, *meaning*, and *environment* (**Figure 1.1**).

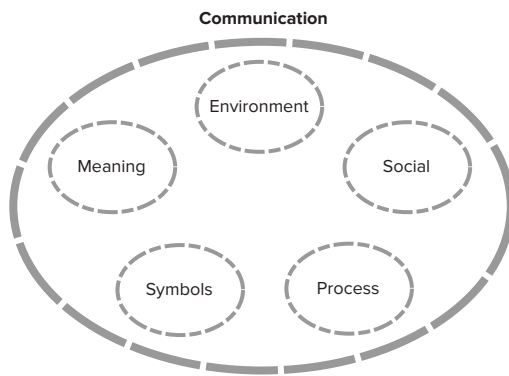


Figure 1.1 Key Terms in Defining Communication

First, we believe that communication is a social process. When interpreting communication as **social**, we mean to suggest that it involves people and interactions, whether face-to-face or online. This necessarily includes two people, who act as senders and receivers. Both play an integral role in the communication process. When communication is social, it involves people who come to an interaction with various intentions, motivations, and abilities. To suggest that communication is a **process** means that it is ongoing and unending. Communication is also dynamic, complex, and continually changing. With this view of communication, we emphasize the dynamics of making meaning. There-

fore, communication has no definable beginning and ending. For example, although José and Angie Hernandez may tell their son that he must leave the house, their discussions with him and about him will definitely continue well after he leaves (e.g., “What do we do now?”). In fact, the conversation they have with Eddy today will most likely affect their communication with him tomorrow. Similarly, our past communications with people have been stored in their minds and have affected their conversations with us.

The process nature of communication also means that much can happen from the beginning of a conversation to the end. People may end up at a very different place once a discussion begins. This is exemplified by the frequent conflicts that roommates, spouses, and siblings experience. Although a conversation may begin with absolute and inflexible language, the conflict may be resolved with compromise. All of this can occur in a matter of minutes.

Individual and cultural changes affect communication. Conversations between siblings, for example, have shifted from the 1950s to today. Years ago, siblings rarely discussed the impending death of a parent or the need to take care of an aging parent. Today, it’s not uncommon to listen to even young people talking about senior care, home health care, and even cremation arrangements. Perceptions and feelings can change and may remain in flux for quite some time.

Some of you may be thinking that because the communication process is dynamic and unique it is virtually impossible to study. However, C. Arthur VanLear (1996) argues that because the communication process is so dynamic, researchers and theorists can look for patterns over time. He concludes that “if we recognize a pattern across a large number of cases, it permits us to ‘generalize’ to other unobserved cases” (p. 36). Or, as communication pioneers Paul Watzlawick, Janet Beavin, and Don Jackson (1967) suggest, the interconnectedness of communication events is critical and pervasive. Thus, it is possible to study the dynamic communication process.

To help you visualize this process, imagine a continuum where the points are unrepeatable and irreversible. The communication field employed the historical spiral or helix to explain this process (**Figure 1.2**). In doing so, two conclusions emerged: (1) communication experiences are cumulative and are influenced by the past, and (2) because present experiences inevitably influence a person’s future, communication is nonlinear. Communication, therefore, can be considered a process that changes over time and among interactants.

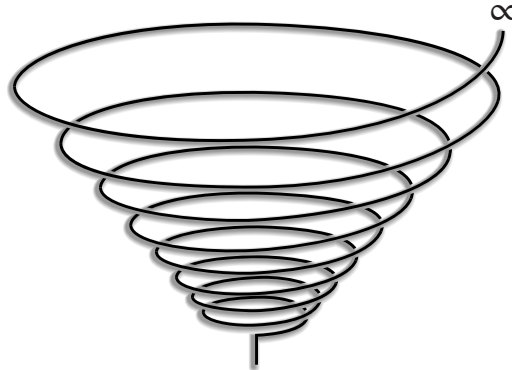


Figure 1.2 Communication Process as a Helix

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A third term associated with our definition of communication is *symbols*. A **symbol** is an arbitrary label or representation of phenomena. Words are symbols for concepts and things—for example, the word *love* represents the idea of *love*; the word *chair* represents a thing we sit on. Labels may be ambiguous, may be both verbal and nonverbal, and may occur in face-to-face and mediated communication. Symbols are usually agreed on within a group but may not be understood outside of the group. In this way, their use is often arbitrary. For instance, most college students understand the phrase “preregistration is closed”; those outside of college may not understand its meaning. Further, there are both **concrete symbols** (the symbol represents an object) and **abstract symbols** (the symbol stands for a thought or idea).

Even the innocuous Twitter symbol—the hashtag—resonates in a number of fields, particularly in politics. Think, for instance, of the thousands of tweets that President Trump sent before and during his presidency, even though most of his posts represented the “politics of debasement” (Ott, 2017, p. 58). Further, in-depth political reporting and discussion are fast becoming rare in politics, and “the more candidates used Twitter to broadcast their thoughts, the more people retweeted them, spreading their messages and journalists mentioned tweets in their election coverage (Buccoliero, Bellio, Crestini, & Arkoudas, 2018, p. 88). The search for a condensed, 140-character tweet has supplanted efforts to investigate and interrogate, sometimes called “viral politics” (Penney, 2014, p. 80). So, the hashtag symbol effectively has become a representation of a story that used to be several hundred words found in newspapers and magazines.

In addition to process and symbols, meaning is central to our definition of communication. **Meaning** is what people extract from a message. In communication episodes, messages can have more than one meaning and even multiple layers of meaning. Without sharing some meanings, we would all have a difficult time speaking the same language or interpreting the same event. Judith Martin and Tom Nakayama (2017) point out that meaning has cultural consequences:

[W]hen President George W. Bush was about to go to war in Iraq, he referred to this war as a “crusade.” The use of this term evoked strong negative reactions in the Islamic world, due to the history of the Crusades nearly 1,000 years ago While President Bush may not have knowingly wanted to frame the Iraq invasion as a religious war against Muslims, the history of the Crusades may make others feel that it is. (p. 70)

Clearly, not all meaning is shared, and people do not always know what others mean. In these situations, we must be able to explain, repeat, and clarify. For example, if the Hernandezes want to tell Eddy to move out, they will probably need to go beyond telling him that they just need their “space.” Eddy may perceive “needing space” as simply staying out of the house two nights a week. Furthermore, his parents will have

to figure out what communication “approach” is best. They might believe that being direct may be best to get their son out of the house. Or they might fear that such clear communication is not the most effective strategy to change Eddy’s behavior. Regardless of how José and Angie Hernandez communicate their wishes, without sharing the same meaning, the family will have a challenging time getting their messages across to one another.

The final key term in our definition of communication refers to the multiple environments related to communication. An **environment** is the situation or context in which communication occurs. The environment includes a number of elements, including time, place, historical period, relationship, and a speaker’s and listener’s cultural backgrounds. You can understand the influence of environments by thinking about your beliefs and values pertaining to socially significant topics such as marriage equality, physician-assisted suicide, and immigration into the United States. If you have had personal experience with any of these topics, it’s likely your views are affected by your perceptions.

The environment can also be mediated. By that, we mean that communication takes place with technological assistance. At one point or another, all of us have communicated in a mediated environment, namely through email, chat rooms, or social networking sites. These mediated environments influence the communication between two people in that people in electronic relationships are (usually) not able to observe each other’s eye behavior, listen to vocal characteristics, or watch body movement (Skype and Snapchat are exceptions to this, however). Clearly, the mediated environment has received a great deal of attention over the years as communication theory continues to develop.

Models of Understanding: Communication as Action, Interaction, and Transaction

Communication theorists create **models**, or simplified representations of complex interrelationships among elements in the communication process, which allow us to visually understand a sometimes complex process. Models help us weave together the basic elements of the communication process. Although there are many communication models, we discuss the three most prominent ones here (linear, interactional, and transactional). In discussing these models and their underlying approaches, we wish to demonstrate the manner in which communication has been conceptualized over the years. We conclude our discussion by proposing a fourth model that infuses technology and other elements into our discussion. We term this the holistic model.

Communication as Action: The Linear Model

In 1949, Claude Shannon, a Bell Laboratories scientist and professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Warren Weaver, a consultant on projects at the Sloan Foundation, described communication as a linear process. They were concerned with radio and telephone technology and wanted to develop a model that could explain how information passed through various channels. The result was the conceptualization of the **linear model of communication**.

This approach to human communication comprises several key elements, as **Figure 1.3** demonstrates. A **source**, or transmitter of a message, sends a **message** to a **receiver**, the recipient of the message. The receiver is the person who makes sense out of the message. All of this communication takes place in a **channel**, which is the pathway to communication. Channels frequently correspond to the visual, tactile, olfactory, and auditory senses. Thus, you use the visual channel when you see your roommate, and you use the tactile channel when you hug your parent.

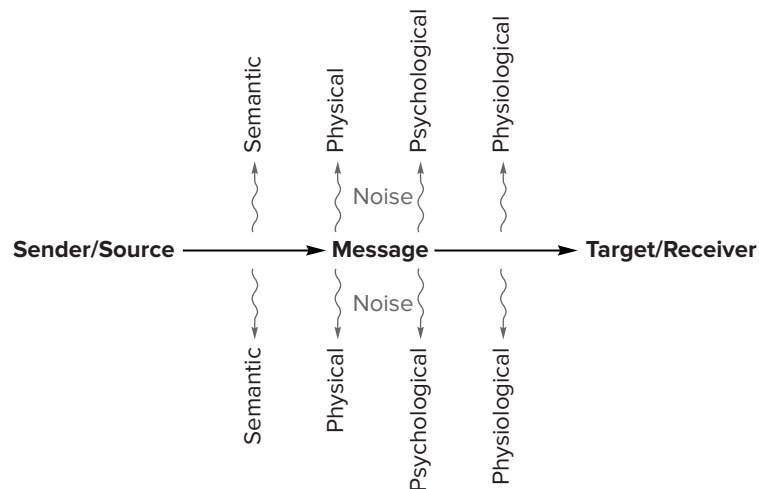


Figure 1.3 Linear Model of Communication

Communication also involves **noise**, which is anything not intended by the informational source. There are four types of noise. First, **semantic noise** pertains to the slang, jargon, or specialized language used by individuals or groups. For instance, when Jennifer received a medical report from her ophthalmologist, the physician's words included phrases such as "ocular neuritis," "dilated fundoscopic examination," and "papillary conjunctival changes." This is an example of semantic noise because outside of the medical community, these words have limited (or no) meaning. **Psychological noise** refers to a communicator's prejudices, biases, and predispositions toward another or the message. **Physical, or external, noise** exists outside of the receiver. To exemplify these two types, imagine listening to participants at a political rally. You may experience psychological noise listening to the views of a politician whom you do not support, and you may also experience physical noise from the people nearby who may be protesting the politician's presence. Finally, **physiological noise** refers to the biological influences on the communication process. Physiological noise, exists if you or a speaker is ill, fatigued, or hungry.



Dan Reynolds/CartoonStock Ltd

Although this view of the communication process was highly respected many years ago, the approach is very limited for several reasons. First, the model presumes that there is only one message in the communication process. Yet we all can point to a number of circumstances in which we send several messages at once. Second, as we have previously noted, communication does not have a definable beginning and ending. Shannon and Weaver's model adopts this mechanistic orientation. Furthermore, to suggest that communication is simply one person speaking to another oversimplifies the complex communication process. Listeners are not so passive, as we can all confirm when we are in heated arguments with others. Clearly, communication is more than a one-way effort and has no definable middle or end.

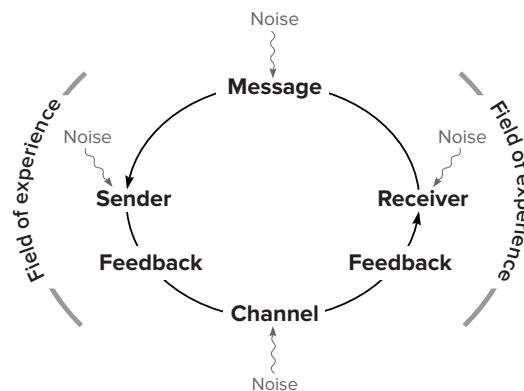


Figure 1.4 Interactional Model of Communication

Communication as Interaction: The Interactional Model

The linear model suggests that a person is only a sender or a receiver. That is a particularly narrow view of the participants in the communication process. Wilbur Schramm (1954), therefore, proposed that we also examine the relationship between a sender and a receiver. He conceptualized the **interactional model of communication**, which emphasizes the two-way communication process between communicators (Figure 1.4). In other words, communication goes in two directions: from sender to receiver and from receiver to sender. This circular process suggests that communication is ongoing. The interactional view illustrates that a person can perform the role of either sender or receiver during an interaction, but not both roles simultaneously.

One element essential to the interactional model of communication is **feedback**, or the response to a message. Feedback may be verbal or nonverbal, intentional or unintentional. Feedback helps communicators to know whether or not their message is being received and the extent to which meaning is achieved. In the interactional model, feedback takes place after a message is received, not during the message itself.

To illustrate the critical nature of feedback and the interactional model of communication, consider our opening example of the Hernandez family. When Eddy's parents find him on the couch drunk, they proceed to tell Eddy how they feel about his behavior. Their outcry prompts Eddy to argue with his parents, who in turn, tell him to leave their house immediately. This interactional sequence shows that there is an alternating nature in the communication between Eddy and his parents. They see his behavior and provide their feedback on it, Eddy listens to their message and responds, then his father sends the final message telling his son to leave. We can take this even further by noting the door slam as one additional feedback behavior in the interaction.

A final feature of the interactional model is a person's **field of experience**, or how a person's culture and experiences influence their ability to communicate with another. Each person brings a unique field of experience to each communication episode, and these experiences frequently influence the communication between people. For instance, when two people come together and begin dating, the two inevitably bring their fields of experience into the relationship. One person in this couple may have been raised in a large family with several siblings, while the other may be an only child. These experiences (and others) will necessarily influence how the two come together and will most likely affect how they maintain their relationship.

Like the linear view, the interactional model has been criticized. The interactional model suggests that one person acts as sender while the other acts as receiver in a communication encounter. As you have experienced, however, people communicate as both senders and receivers in a single encounter. But the prevailing criticism of the interactional model pertains to the issue of feedback. The interactional view assumes two people speaking and listening, but not at the same time. But what occurs when a person sends a nonverbal

message during an interaction? Smiling, frowning, or simply moving away from the conversation during an interaction between two people happens all the time. For example, in an interaction between a mother and her daughter, the mother may be reprimanding her child while simultaneously “reading” the child’s nonverbal behavior. Is the girl laughing? Is she upset? Is she even listening to her mother? Each of these behaviors will inevitably prompt the mother to modify her message. These criticisms and contradictions inspired development of a third model of communication.

Communication as Transaction: The Transactional Model

The **transactional model of communication** (Barnlund, 1970; Frymier, 2005; Wilmot, 1987) underscores the simultaneous sending and receiving of messages in a communication episode, as **Figure 1.5** shows. To say that communication is transactional means that the process is cooperative; the sender and the receiver are mutually responsible for the effect and the effectiveness of communication. In the linear model of communication, meaning is sent from one person to another. In the interactional model, meaning is achieved through the feedback of a sender and a receiver. In the transactional model, people build shared meaning. Furthermore, what people say during a transaction is greatly influenced by their past experience. So, for instance, at a college fair, it is likely that a college student will have a great deal to say to a high school senior because of the college student’s experiences in class and around campus. A college senior will, no doubt, have a different view of college than, say, a college sophomore, due in large part to their past college experiences.

Transactional communication requires us to recognize the influence of one message on another. One message builds on the previous message; therefore, there is an interdependency between and among the components of communication. A change in one causes a change in others. Furthermore, the transactional model presumes that as we simultaneously send and receive messages, we attend to both verbal and nonverbal elements of a message. In a sense, communicators negotiate meaning. For instance, if a friend asks you about your family background, you may use some private language that your friend doesn’t understand. Your friend may make a face while you are presenting your message, indicating some sort of confusion with what you’ve said. As a result, you will most likely back up and define your terms and then continue with the conversation. This

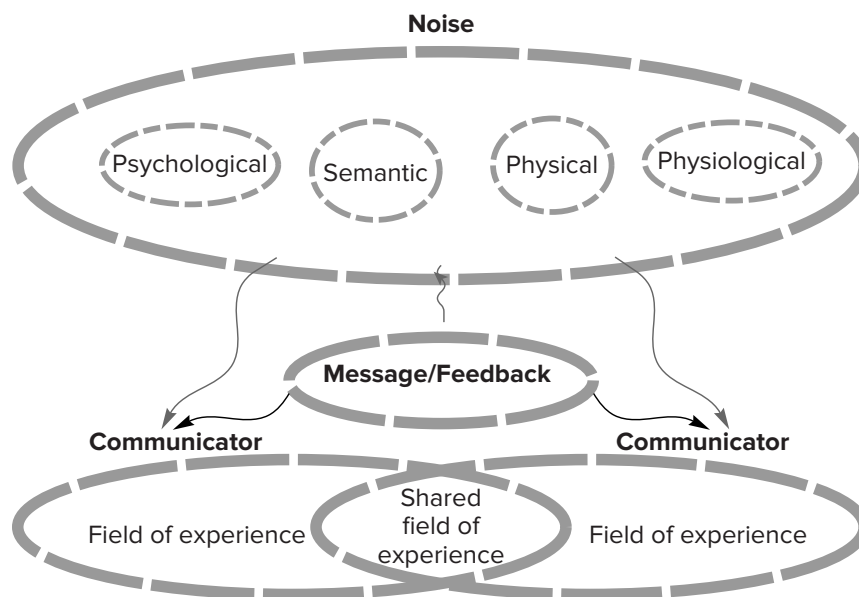


Figure 1.5 Transactional Model of Communication

example highlights the degree to which two people are actively involved in a communication encounter. The nonverbal communication is just as important as the verbal message in such a transactional process.

Earlier we noted that the field of experience functions in the interactional model. In the transactional model, the fields of experience exist, but overlap occurs. That is, rather than person A and person B having separate fields of experience, eventually the two fields merge (see **Figure 1.5**). This was an important addition to the understanding of the communication process because it demonstrates an active process of understanding. That is, for communication to take place, individuals must build shared meaning. For instance, in our earlier example of two people with different childhoods, the interactional model suggests that they would come together with an understanding of their backgrounds. The transactional model, however, requires each of them to understand and incorporate the other's field of experience into their life. For example, it's not enough for Julianna to know that Paul has a prior prison record; the transactional view holds that she must figure out a way to put his past into perspective. Will it affect their current relationship? How? If not, how will Julianna discuss it with Paul? The transactional model takes the meaning-making process one step further than the interactional model. It assumes reciprocity, or shared meaning.

Communication Models of the Future

As we move further into the 21st century, we have to ask the question: Are these models sufficient as we examine human communication? We already know that communication models are usually incomplete and unsuitable for all purposes (Perse & Lambe, 2017). The answer is fairly complex. First, the proliferation of new social networking sites (SNS), for example, and their influence upon communication demand that communication models integrate technological discussions. Second, this integration must necessarily be thoughtful, given the plethora of SNS. Traffic to SNS has grown exponentially over the past few years with about 75 percent of online adults using social networking (<http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/social-networking-fact-sheet>)—up from 7 percent in 2005. The diversity of these sites—from Facebook to LinkedIn to Instagram to Snapchat—suggests that no simple model will be possible.

To this end, we suggest that the holistic model of communication might be on the horizon (Turner & West, 2019). This approach emphasizes some of the foundational elements found in our definition and the other models. The **holistic model of communication** underscores communication as a coherent combination of environment, shared technology experience, and communication effect. We address these elements below (**Figure 1.6**).

First, we believe that all communication occurs in a **context**, or an environment in which a message is sent. Context is complex and includes more than the tangible; it can be cultural, historical, and/or situational. We briefly address each type of context below.

The **cultural context** pertains to the various patterns of communication that are unique to a particular culture. Whether we're addressing its rules, roles, or norms, cultures both in the United States and across the globe are idiosyncratic, and we cannot ignore this distinctness when talking about the communication process. Imagine, for instance, talking to a colleague. Culture always influences the communication that takes place between and among people. We return to a more comprehensive discussion of the impact of culture on communication in **Chapter 2**. For now, it's simply important to note that the cultural context influences people's communication.

In the **historical context**, messages are understood in relationship to the historical period in which they are exchanged, underscoring the process-centered nature of communication, which we identified earlier. For each of you, for instance, sending a text or an email is second nature (first nature for many of you!). But, think

about the sci-fi nature of such a message if you lived in the 1940s! The notion of what it meant to be “unemployed” during the Great Depression is vastly different from the interpretation of “unemployment” today. In fact, the word “underemployed” is often used more frequently to avoid the negative meaning related to not having sufficient income to live (Barnichon & Zylberberg, 2019). The word was never fully understood in the early 1900s!

The **situational context** is the tangible environment in which communication occurs—the train on the way to your job, the breakfast bar, and the inside of a mosque are examples of situational contexts. Environmental conditions such as overhead lighting, room temperature, and room size are components of this context. Further, the social and emotional climates are also associated with this context. For example, to what degree are the communicators friendly/unfriendly or supportive/unsupportive? Think also about the consequences of talking about marriage equality to an audience of GLBT families and to a group of Orthodox Jews.

When you examine **Figure 1.6**, you will note that the holistic model shows each communicator carries with them a technological field of experience, expanding upon a concept identified in the interactional model. The **technological field of experience** refers to a person’s use of technology as it influences or is influenced by their culture, past experiences, personal history, and/or heredity. The infusion of technology in this model distinguishes it from the other three. First, communicators employ technology with a variety of goals in mind, namely, to stay in touch, to stay up to date, to network, to meet new people, to share opinions, and so forth. Contemporary models of communication must include technology, as we noted earlier, to understand the nuances of SNS, in particular, and their value to the communication process.

Moreover, the holistic model shows a common technological field of experience between communicator A and communicator B. This overlap between fields of experience is where messages are exchanged. Thus, the model suggests more than sending a Facebook post; for communication to be achieved, someone must comment. That communication can either be direct (“I love your post!”) or indirect (“Will someone tell this person that they’re nuts?!”). So, to co-create meaning, a comment-response dynamic must take place.

Finally, the holistic model shows that all communication generates some type of **effect**, or a result, coming from the communication encounter. Effect suggests that something evolved from the conversation. For example, if you hear a commercial for an Amazon product and go out and buy that product, you experienced an effect. If you are a member of a task group at work and you have a really productive meeting, you might feel more confident that you can get the job finished on time than you did before the meeting. That is an effect.

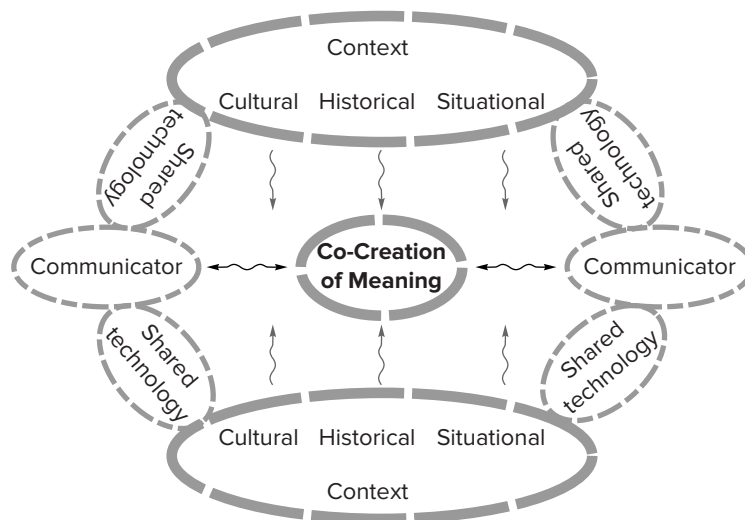


Figure 1.6 Holistic Model of Communication

Effects range in their magnitude; some are large (you and a friend stop speaking to each other), while others are more minor (you feel better about the choice of car you recently purchased), but they always exist in any communication encounter.

Thinking about the holistic model and its relationship to platforms such as Snapchat will be an ongoing process for years to come. Clearly, Shannon, Weaver, Schramm, and Barnlund could never have envisioned such technology. We're sure that in the not-so-distant future, we will have an abundance of research on the influences of these technological influences on the communication process.

You now have a basic understanding of how we define communication, and we have outlined the basic elements and a few communication models. Recall this interpretation as you read the book and examine the various theories. It is probable that you will interpret communication differently from one theory to another. Remember that theorists set boundaries in their discussions about human behavior, and, consequently, they often define *communication* according to their own view. One of our goals in this book is to enable you to articulate the role that communication plays in a number of different theories.

Thus far, we have examined the communication process and unpacked the complexity associated with it. We have identified the primary models of communication, trying to demonstrate the evolution and maturation of the communication field. We now explore a component that is a necessary and vital part of every communication episode: ethics.

Ethics and Communication

In the movie *The Insider*, which was based on a true story, the lead character's name is Jeffrey Wigand, a former tobacco scientist who violated a contractual agreement and exposed a cigarette maker's efforts to include addictive ingredients in all cigarettes. The movie shows Wigand as a man of good conscience with the intention of telling the public about the company and its immoral undertakings. Wigand clearly believed that saving lives was the right and only thing to do, and he made his actions fit his beliefs: He acted on his ethics.

In this section, we examine **ethics**, or the perceived rightness or wrongness of action or behavior. Ethics is a type of moral decision making (Carter, 2020), and determining what is right or wrong is influenced by society's rules and laws. For example, although some may believe Wigand's efforts were laudable, others may note that Wigand apparently knew what was going on when he signed a contract prohibiting him from disclosing company secrets. Furthermore, the murkiness of ethics is evidenced when one considers that Wigand made a lot of money before disclosing what was occurring.

The United States is built on standards of moral conduct, and these standards are central to a number of institutions and relationships. Because ethical standards tend to shift according to historical period, the environment, the conversation, and the people involved, ethics can be difficult to understand. Let's briefly discuss ethical issues as they pertain to cultural institutions; a more comprehensive explanation of ethics can be found elsewhere (see Roger, 2018).

To begin, George Cheney, Debashish Munshi, Steve May, and Erin Ortiz (2010) posit the following: "Communication, as both a discipline and an 'interdiscipline' or field, is poised to play a unique role in advancing discussions of ethics because the field offers an array of concepts and principles attuned to the examination of ethics" (p. 1). Their words resonate throughout this discussion.

Let's start here by asking why we should understand ethics, next explain ethics as it relates to society, and finally, explain the intersection of ethics and communication theory. As you think about this information, keep in mind that ethical decision making is culturally based. That is, what we consider to be ethical and appropriate in one society is not necessarily a shared value in another society. For instance, though many

in the United States can identify with the plight of the Hernandez family, you should know that in many cultures, having a son return to his family-of-origin is revered and would not pose the problems that the Hernandezes are experiencing.

Why study ethics? The response to this question could easily be another question: Why not study it? Ethics permeates all walks of life and cuts across gender, race, class, sexual identity, and spiritual/religious affiliation, among others. In other words, we cannot (and should not) escape ethical principles that guide our lives. Ethics is part of virtually every decision we make, regardless of our cultural heritage. Moral development is part of human development, and as we grow older, our moral code undergoes changes well into adulthood. Ethics is also what prompts a society toward higher levels of integrity and truth. Elaine Englehardt (2001) observes that “we don’t get to ‘invent’ our own system of ethics” (p. 2), which means that we generally follow a given cultural code of morality. And, Ken Andersen (2003) argues that without an understanding and an expression of ethical values, society will be disadvantaged: “Violating the norms of ethical communication is, I believe, a major factor in the malaise that has led many people to withdraw from the civic culture whether of their profession, their associations, their political arena” (p. 14).

From a communication perspective, ethical issues surface whenever messages potentially influence others. Consider, for instance, the ethics associated with telling your professor that you couldn’t turn in a paper on time because a member of your family is ill, when such an illness doesn’t exist. Think about the ethics involved if you take an idea of a coworker and present it to your boss as if it were your own. Consider the ethical consequences of going out on several dates with someone and choosing not to disclose a past felony for assault, or of posing as someone other than yourself on **Tinder.com** or Tweeting events that are deceptive. Television, too, carries ethical implications. For example, can television promote racial tolerance and harmony and simultaneously present portrayals of cultural groups in stereotypic and offensive ways? We continue our discussion of ethics by identifying some of the institutions whose ethical standards have been the subject of much conversation. Business and industry, religion, entertainment, education, medicine, politics, and technology are just a few of the many fields that have been prone to ethical lapses and have been challenged in communicating messages of integrity (**Table 1.1**).

Table 1.1 Examples of Ethical Decision Making in the United States

INSTITUTION	EXAMPLES OF ETHICAL ISSUES
Business and industry	Should CEOs be given pay raises in companies that are not profitable?
Religion	Should the church allow priests to counsel couples who are about to be married?
Entertainment	Does viewing violence in movies prompt violence in society?
Higher education	Should student fees go to political activist groups on campus?
Medicine	Can pharmaceutical companies be held responsible for sample medicines?
Politics	Should political candidates make promises to citizens?
Technology	Should Facebook be prohibited from sharing any of your personal data with advertisers?

Students Talking: Caitlyn



I could go on and on about how my high school dealt with unethical situations. We had one kid smoking in the bathroom, but nothing happened to him because he was the son of a school board member. We had a girl who had a cheat sheet for her math midterm, but because she admitted to it, the teacher did nothing about it. Even our principal was caught with another married parent. The school board just asked him to leave. It's like there are no ethics anymore.

Business and Industry

Perhaps no cultural institution has been under more ethical suspicions of late than “corporate America.” Unethical behavior in corporations has reached proportions never before seen. In fact, many of these scandals prompted the Occupy Wall Street protest movements in 2011 and 2012, and in 2016, the rise of (then) two little-known U.S. Senators from New England: Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders. Further, ongoing websites dedicated to discovering and revealing how companies violate ethical standards exist (<https://globalexchange.org/campaigns/corporatecriminals2017/>).

Because a corporation is usually obsessed about its reputation, companies have tried to hide costs, use creative accounting practices, commit accounting fraud, and a plethora of other ethical breaches. In fact, in the movie *The Big Short*, an ex-physician invests more than \$1 billion of investors' money into credit defaults in the home mortgage industry. While some argued this was legal, the decision to take advantage of an impending mortgage crisis was clearly an unethical business practice. Other examples are not Hollywood-based but found around the globe: The former head of the World Bank engineers a job promotion and salary increase for his longtime companion; WorldCom declares bankruptcy after the discovery of an \$11 billion accounting “error”; Trump University in New York, a defunct for-profit education company, was sued by former students who claimed that they were duped by the organization because it did nothing to educate them about real estate; Volkswagen, the world's biggest automaker, admits to rigging diesel emissions tests in the United States and Europe; Enron inflates earnings reports and hides billions in debt, while increasing salaries of its executives; the founder of Adelphia Communications and his two sons commit bank and securities fraud, leading to the company's demise; and Boeing ignores safety upgrades to its 737 to cut costs. Finally, the Bernie Madoff investment securities scandal included Madoff bilking nearly \$64 billion from over 4,500 clients. The list of business scandals has been especially prominent. But with the advent of Corporate Ethics Statements, congressional legislation requiring public accountability, improved transparent accounting practices, and increased accountability to stockholders, most businesses have begun to improve their ethical standing. Of course, much, much more needs to be done to eliminate lingering levels of distrust.

Religion and Faith

Both Eastern and Western civilizations have stressed ethics in their moral traditions. For instance, according to Taoism, no one exists in isolation, and, therefore, empathy and insight will lead to truth. For the Buddhist,

being moral requires that one use words that elicit peace and avoid gossip, self-promotion, anger, argument, and lying. From a Western perspective, many ethical issues derive from early Greek civilization. One Greek philosopher, Aristotle, first articulated the principle of the Golden Mean. He believed that a person's moral virtue stands between two vices, with the middle, or the mean, being the foundation for a rational society. For instance, when the Hernandezes are deciding what to say to their son, Eddy, about overstaying his welcome, their Golden Mean might look like this:

EXTREME	GOLDEN MEAN	EXTREME
lying	truthful communication	reveal everything

The Judeo-Christian religions are centered as well on questions of ethics. In fact, there is an online publication devoted solely to Religion and Ethics (<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/>). Christianity is founded on the principle of example—that is, live according to God's laws and set an example for others. However, some believe that such moral standards are not uniquely religious. For those not affiliated with organized religion, the secular values of fairness and justice and working toward better relationships are important as well. Affiliating with a religion may also pose some ethical difficulty if a person does not subscribe to a number of its philosophies or orientations. For instance, people who believe that Catholic priests should be able to marry will have a difficult time reconciling that value with Catholic law that prohibits such marriages.

Despite efforts to retain ethicality, religious institutions have had a number of ethical challenges over the years. Ministers frequenting prostitutes, pedophilic priests, drug abuse by church leaders, and sexual immorality among parishioners and pastors are just a few of the dozens of religious scandals that have caused outrage. Fortunately, many religious bodies are now developing clear ethical statements on appropriate behavior and clarifying the consequences of ethical violations.

Entertainment

The entertainment industry has also been intimately involved in dialogues about ethics and communication. Often, a circular argument surfaces with respect to Hollywood: Does Hollywood reflect society or does Hollywood shape society? Many viewpoints are raised in these arguments, but three seem to dominate. One belief is that Hollywood has a responsibility to show the moral side of an immoral society; movies should help people escape a difficult reality, not relive it. A second opinion is that Hollywood should create more nonviolent and nonsexual films so that all family members can watch a movie. Unfortunately, critics note, films like *Polar*, *Kill Bill*, *Django Unchained*, *The Night Comes for Us*, and *Rampage* tend to exacerbate violent attitudes in young people. A third school of thought is that Hollywood is in show *business*, and therefore making money is what moviemaking is all about. Regardless of whether you agree with any of these orientations, the entertainment industry will continue to reflect *and* influence changing moral climates in the United States. Some might say that Hollywood leading the charge in any conversation on ethics is, in itself, a question of ethics.

Higher Education

A third cultural institution that has been charged with questionable ethics is higher education. First, as you know, colleges and universities across the United States teach introductory courses in ethics, and these are required courses in many schools.

Yet, despite this interest, many schools have lost their own moral compass. For instance, colleges and universities face an ethical choice about reporting crime statistics on their campus. Despite the fact that they

are required to report campus crime via the Jeanne Clery Act (named after a Lehigh University student who was murdered in 1986), some campuses fear the bad publicity. As a result, crime is “contextualized” (“Our campus is in a large city; there’s a lot of crime everywhere” or “Our campus is in a rural setting; we may have a few problems but, we’re still relatively safe”). On a logistic level, another ethical decision arises when schools are required to identify the enrollment patterns for legislative and financial support. Frequently, schools report statistical increases in enrollment over a number of years when in reality the school system has simply adopted a new way of counting heads. And, perhaps one of the most compelling examples of how higher education clashed with ethics came in 2019. The college admissions cheating scandal ensnared dozens of wealthy parents and several elite schools, including Georgetown, Stanford, and the University of Southern California. In particular, parents paid a college placement firm to help their kids cheat on college entrance exams and to falsify athletic records. Parents were instructed to donate to a bogus charity as part of the scheme, and the “donations” ranged from \$200,000 to \$6.5 million. Clearly, although they are called institutions of “higher” learning, some would argue that many campuses have reached new “lows” in ethical decision making.

Medicine

A fourth institution concerned with ethics and communication is the medical community. Specifically, with advances in science changing the cultural landscape, bioethical issues are topics of conversation around the dinner table. Physician-assisted suicide is one example of medicine at the center of ethical controversy. To some, the decision to prolong life should be a private one, made by the patient and their doctor. To others, society should have a say in such a decision.

Medical decisions can become publicly debated far from the hospital bedside. Late-term abortions, human cloning, drug-enhanced athletes, medicinal marijuana, executed prisoners’ organ use, and physician-assisted suicide are all topics that demonstrate the interrelationship among ethics, politics, and medicine. This topic has resonated sufficiently in our society that there is an abundance of professional journals, websites, and publications dedicated to the interface of ethics and medicine. The American Society of Law, Medicine, and Ethics is one such organization dedicated to ethical decision making (www.aslme.org).

Theory-Into-Action • An Ethic of Medical Care



Ethics, as we noted above, permeates a number of different Eastern and Western cultures. And, perhaps the most critical professional arenas where being ethical is important are in medicine. While medical journals have talked about ethical discussions being critical in medical communities, the practices are often concerning. Whether it’s the overuse of tests, harmful treatments, overpriced prescription drugs, disclosing a patient’s confidential information, romantic relationships between health care professionals and their patients, or a number of other areas, medical personnel are often forgetting to prioritize their patients’ well-being. The “Hippocratic Oath,” taken by most doctors and still taught in most medical schools, needs further recalibration to require that the “proper conduct” related to patients’ health is always primary.

Politics

It is difficult to disentangle the topic of ethics from politics. The two are often viewed as incompatible. We are living in cynical times, and opinion polls consistently show that the public's view of political leaders rates lower than the public's view of paying taxes. The scandals associated with politics relate to lobbyists, campaign financing, infidelity, deception, conflicts of interest, cover-ups, bribery, conspiracy, tax evasion. Political scandals have been in the news since, well, the beginning of politics. It may seem, however, that they have grown in number over the past few years. Whether it's the resignation of the CIA Director because of his extramarital affair, sexual harassment allegations levied at both a U.S. president and a Supreme Court justice, or the hateful Facebook postings by political candidates, the list goes on and on.

The ethical problems associated with politics may never go away, despite efforts to establish ethics commissions and oversight advisory boards in state and national governments. Though many of us wish to be optimistic in thinking that we are cultivating a new generation of political leaders who are ethical beings, there are those who are not as hopeful. Still, with nonprofit organizations such as Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) and the Government Accountability Project—groups that expose ethical shortcomings in our government and its leaders—and with aptly named Government offices such as the U.S. Office of Government Ethics, there may be cause for increased confidence in the future.

Technology

Technology is at the center of many ethical debates today. Armed with a copy of the First Amendment, proponents of free speech say the Internet, for example, should not be censored. Free speech advocates stress that what is considered inappropriate can vary tremendously from one person to another, and consequently, censorship is arbitrary. Consider, for instance, the U.S. Supreme Court decision protecting “virtual” child pornography on the Internet. Noting that the Child Pornography Protection Act was overly broad, the justices felt that banning computer-generated images of young people was unjustified. In addition, social networking sites such as Facebook, with more than 2 billion global users, are prone to ethical problems. How much information is too much? Teenagers letting others know where they live, blogs that divulge too much information about a family's financial situation, and would-be employers looking over the shoulders of users are just a few of the many ethical challenges characterizing the online world.

As the United States is clearly more reliant on technology than ever before, ethical issues will continue to arise. Lying about one's identity online, downloading copyrighted material, inviting young people into violent and hate-filled websites, and watching executions on the Internet are all examples of potential technological ethics dilemmas.

Some Final Thoughts

The relationship between communication and ethics is intricate and complex. Public discourse requires responsibility. We presume that political leaders will tell the truth and that spiritual leaders will guide us by their example. Yet we know that not all elected officials are honest and that not all religious leaders set a spiritual standard. Organizations are especially prone to ethical dilemmas. For instance, whistle-blowing, or any strategic decision to reveal ethically suspicious behavior, can have lasting implications. In fact, it was a whistleblower who first reported the activities of President Trump in Ukraine, resulting in his impeachment. Unethical practices do little to garner trust in people.

Although our focus has been rather general, you should keep in mind the ethical dimensions of communication theory as well. As readers of theory, we have a responsibility to being open to the complexity, relevance,

and timeliness of communication theory, and we are ethically compelled to give a fair hearing to the ideas of others. Rob Anderson and Veronica Ross (2002) point out six important ethical strategies to consider when reading communication theory:

1. Remain open to being persuaded by the statements of others.
2. Remain willing to try out new ideas that may be seen by others as mistakes, and invite others to experiment also.
3. Accept that multiple perspectives on reality are held as valid by different people, especially in different cultural contexts.
4. Attempt to test any tentatively held knowledge.
5. Live with ambiguity, but become less tolerant of contradiction.
6. Evaluate knowledge claims against personal experience and the everyday concrete pragmatics of what works. (p. 15)

To provide you even further evidence of the interplay between communication and ethics, we urge you review the National Communication Association's "Credo for Ethical Communication" (Appendix A). This document, developed and endorsed by communication teachers and researchers, includes nine statements that suggest, among other things, that we should be advocates for honesty and that we should condemn communication that degrades others. Deciding whether these principles are possible in an increasingly diverse and technologically connected world remains critical.

Finally, in addition to these suggestions, we add one more directly related to the book you're about to read: If a theory is a bit difficult to understand at first, don't gloss over it. Delve into the explanation once more to gain a clearer picture of the theorists' intentions. You may feel inexperienced or unprepared to challenge these theories. Yet we offer the theories for review, application, and comment and want you to ask questions about them. Although we would like to think that all theorists are open and receptive to multiple ways of knowing, the reality remains that theory construction is bound by culture, personality, time, circumstance, and the availability of resources. As students of communication theory, we all must be willing to ask some difficult questions and probe some confusing areas.

The Value of Understanding Communication Theory

Although we've alluded to this throughout the chapter, we'd like to emphasize the importance of communication theory to all of our lives. We realize that many of you may not be immediately aware of the value of this topic. Therefore, we want to give you a glimpse into the significance of communication theory. Remember: You can understand all sorts of issues in life (e.g., divorce, a job interview, your self-concept) through communication theory. As you read and understand each chapter, you will likely develop your own personal understanding of the importance of communication theory. That is, you'll likely develop your own theoretical lens of understanding human behavior. We encourage you to be open as you explore this exciting area.

Understanding Communication Theory Cultivates Critical Thinking Skills

One important value you glean from studying communication theory relates to your critical thinking skills. Without doubt, as you read and reflect on the theories in this book, you will be required to think critically about several issues. Learning how to apply the theory to your own life, recognizing the research potential of the theory, and understanding how a particular theory evolved will be among your responsibilities in this

course. In addition, understanding communication can aid in your skill set. If only every Hollywood celebrity going through a divorce had read **Chapter 25** (Relational Dialectics Theory), perhaps there would be a better understanding of relational pushes and pulls. The various decision-making groups of global governments might be more effective in-group if they had about Groupthink (**Chapter 18**). Even motivational speakers would find value in what Aristotle had to say (The *Rhetoric*; **Chapter 20**). These skills notwithstanding, as Tapas Ray (2012) notes, many theories and communication traditions have a Western cultural bias, so we need to be cautious in a universal application of the theory. These activities require that you cultivate your critical thinking skills—skills that will help you on the job, in your relationships, and as you try to understand the world around you.

Understanding Communication Theory Helps You to Recognize the Breadth and Depth of Research

In addition to fostering critical thinking skills, being a student of communication theory will help you appreciate the richness of research across various fields of study. Regardless of what your current academic major is, the theories contained in this book are based on the thinking, writing, and research of intellectually curious men and women who have drawn on the scholarship of numerous disciplines. For instance, as you read about the Relational Dialectics Theory (**Chapter 25**), you will note that many of its principles originate in philosophy. Groupthink (**Chapter 18**) originated in foreign policy decision making. In Communication Accommodation Theory (**Chapter 24**), you will find that many of its principles originate in cultural anthropology. And, Face-Negotiation Theory (**Chapter 14**) was influenced by research in sociology. As you pursue a particular degree, keep in mind that much of what you are learning is a result of theoretical thinking and this thinking is often interdisciplinary in nature.

Understanding Communication Theory Helps to Make Sense of Personal Life Experiences

Understanding communication theory also helps you make sense of your life experiences. It's impossible to find a theory in this book that does not in some way relate to your life or to the lives of people around you. Communication theory aids you in understanding people, media, and events and helps you answer important questions. Have you ever been confused about why some men speak differently from some women? Chances are that reading Muted Group Theory (**Chapter 28**) will help you understand why that may be the case. Do the media promote a violent society? Cultivation Theory (**Chapter 26**) will likely help you answer that question. What role does technology play in society? Media Ecology Theory (**Chapter 23**) responds to that question. And what happens when someone stands too close while talking to you? Expectancy Violations Theory (**Chapter 4**) explores and explains this type of behavior. Some of you may have entered this course thinking that communication theory has limited value in your life. You will see that much of your life and your experiences in life will be better understood because of communication theory.

Communication Theory Fosters Self-Awareness

Thus far, we observed that learning about communication theory helps your critical thinking skills, informs you about the value of research across different fields of study, and aids you in understanding the world around you. One final reason to study theories of communication pertains to an area that is likely to be most important in your life—you. Learning about who you are, how you function in society, the influence you are able to have on others, the extent to which you are influenced by the media, how you behave in various

circumstances, and what motivates your decisions are just a handful of the possible areas that are either explicitly or implicitly discussed in the theories you will be introduced to in this book. We are not suggesting that you should be central to whether a theory has relevance. Rather, we are stating that theories related directly to you—your thoughts, values, behaviors, and background. For instance, Social Penetration Theory (**Chapter 7**) will help you consider the value of self-disclosing in your relationships. **Chapter 15** (Symbolic Interaction Theory) will assist you in thinking about the meaning of the various symbols surrounding you. In addition, in **Chapter 30**, Co-Cultural Theory will help you understand your cultural connections with others who function in dominant society. Yet these are not “self-help” communication theories; they do not provide easy answers to difficult questions. What you will encounter are theories that will help you as you try to understand yourself and your surroundings.

You are about to embark on an educational journey that is likely new to you. We hope you persevere in unraveling and unpacking the various issues related to communication theory. The journey may be different, challenging, and tiring at times, but it will always be applicable to your life. Stick with it!

Conclusion

In this chapter, we introduced you to the communication process. We presented our definition of communication and provided you various elements embedded in that process. In addition, we identified three prevailing models of communication: the linear model, the interactional model, and the transactional model. Moreover, to address the infusion of technology, we also proposed the holistic model of communication. The chapter also addressed ethics and its relationship to communication theory. Finally, we provided several reasons why it is important for you to study communication theory.

You now have an understanding of the communication process and some sense of how complex it can be. As you read the many theories in this book, you will be able to view communication from a variety of perspectives. You will also gain valuable information that will help you understand human behavior and give you a new way to think about our society. We continue this examination in **Chapter 2** when we present the traditions in communication study and important contexts in which communication takes place.

Discussion Starters

1. Identify the conditions that led to the blowup between Eddy Hernandez and his parents. Do you believe that Eddy and his parents were trying to handle his situation in an ethical way? Why or why not?
2. Do you believe that all slips of the tongue, conversational faux pas, and unintentional nonverbal behaviors should be considered communication? Why or why not? What examples can you provide to justify your thoughts?
3. Explain why the linear model of communication was so appealing years ago. Explain the appeal of both the transactional and holistic models using current societal events.
4. Discuss the value of looking at communication theory from a variety of different disciplinary angles, including psychology, medicine, and politics.
5. What are some recent ethical dilemmas related to communication? How was each dilemma resolved, if it was?
6. Comment on why so many definitions of communication exist.
7. Discuss how different family members might have different fields of experience.

Key Terms

abstract symbol symbol representing an idea or thought (p. 5)

channel pathway to communication (p. 6)

communication a social process in which individuals employ symbols to establish and interpret meaning in their environment (p. 3)

concrete symbol symbol representing an object (p. 5)

context the general environment in which communication takes place (p. 10)

cultural context the environment in which unique cultural patterns of communication take place (p. 10)

effect a condition that inevitably follows a causative condition (p. 11)

environment situation or context in which communication occurs (p. 5)

ethics perceived rightness or wrongness of an action or behavior (p. 12)

feedback a subprocess of calibration; information allowing for change in the system (Ch. 3) (p. 8)

field of experience overlap of sender's and receiver's culture, experiences, and heredity in communication (p. 8)

historical context the environment in which communication can be understood via its historical period (p. 10)

holistic model of communication view of communication suggesting that communication occurs in a context, with overlapping fields of experiences, and having an effect (p. 10)

interactional model of communication view of communication as the sharing of meaning with feedback that links source and receiver (p. 8)

linear model of communication one-way view of communication that assumes a message is sent by a source to a receiver through a channel (p. 6)

meaning what people extract from a message (p. 5)

message words, sounds, actions, or gestures in an interaction (p. 6)

models simplified representations of the communication process (p. 6)

noise distortion in channel not intended by the source (p. 7)

physical (external) noise bodily influences on reception of message (p. 7)

physiological noise biological influences on reception of message (p. 7)

process ongoing, dynamic, and unending occurrence (p. 4)

psychological noise cognitive influences on reception of message (p. 7)

receiver recipient of a message (p. 6)

semantic noise linguistic influences on reception of message (p. 7)

situational context the tangible environment in which communication occurs (p. 11)

social the notion that people and interactions are part of the communication process (p. 4)

source originator of a message (p. 6)

symbol arbitrary label given to a phenomenon (p. 5)

transactional model of communication view of communication as the simultaneous sending and receiving of messages. (p. 9)

CHAPTER 2

Thinking About the Field: Traditions and Contexts

Theory, in my understanding of theory, is a form of discourse.

—Robert T. Craig

Jenny and Lee Yamato

As the 18-year-old daughter of a single parent, Lee Yamato knows that life can be difficult. She is the only child of Jenny Yamato, a Japanese American woman whose husband died from a heart attack several years ago. Jenny raised her daughter in Lacon, a small rural town in the South. It was stressful being a single mom, and Jenny was sometimes the target of overt racist jokes. As a waitress, Jenny knew that college would be the way to a better life for her daughter. She saved every extra penny and worked at the children's library for several months to bring in extra income. Jenny knew that Lee would get financial aid in college, but she also wanted to be able to help her only child with college finances.

As Lee finished her senior year in high school, she knew that before too long, she would be leaving to attend a public university. Unfortunately, the closest college was over 200 miles from Lacon. Lee had mixed feelings about her move. She was very excited to get away from the small-town gossip, but she also knew that leaving Lacon meant that her mom would have to live by herself. Being alone could be devastating to her mom, Lee thought. Still, Lee recognized that her education was her first priority and that in order to get into veterinary school, she would have to stay focused. Thinking about her mom would only make the transition more difficult and could sour her first year as a college student.

Jenny, too, felt ambivalent about Lee leaving. When Jenny's husband died, she didn't think that she could raise a 13-year-old by herself. In fact, given that single moms were not looked at with a lot of respect, Jenny felt even more overpowered. However, her own tenacity and determination had paid off, and she was extremely proud that her child was going away to college. Like her daughter, though, Jenny felt sad about Lee's departure. She felt as if her best friend was leaving her, and she couldn't imagine her life without her daughter. She knew that they would talk on the phone, but it couldn't replace the hugs, the laughter, and the memories.

On the day that Lee was to leave, Jenny gave her a box with chocolate chip cookies, some peanut butter cups (Lee's favorite), a photo album of Lee and Jenny during their camping trip to Arizona, and a shoe box. Inside the shoe box were old letters that Jenny and her husband had written to each other during their courtship. Jenny wanted Lee to have the letters to remind her that her dad's spirit lives on in her. When Lee looked at the first letter, she put it down, hugged her mom, and cried. She then got into her car and slowly drove away, leaving her house and her only true friend behind.

The communication discipline is vast, and its depth is reflected in the lives of people across the United States, people like Lee and Jenny Yamato. Their relationship is obviously a close one, marked now by a common and often emotional point in a family's development: college. As the two begin to adapt to a new type of relationship characterized by distance, their communication will also take on new levels of importance. The Yamato family will likely communicate with an appreciation for the full impact that communication can have on their lives. Let's begin our discussion of the communication field by looking at seven traditions in communication. We will then examine various settings in which communication occurs. These two approaches guide this chapter. The first approach (the seven traditions) is theoretical in nature; the second framework (the seven contexts) is more practical in its approach. We describe each in the following pages.

While **Chapter 1** provided a foundation for conceptualizing what communication is and understanding the complexity of the communication process; in this chapter, we further unravel the meaning of communication by articulating two primary models for the field. We first begin with a brief history.

A Historical Briefing

It's impossible to capture the essence and evolution of the communication field in a book of this nature. We encourage you, however, to look at alternative sources for detailed information on how it came to be (e.g., Gehrke & Keith, 2015). For now, however, in addition to providing you various traditions and contexts, we also note the following historical markers for you to get a glimpse into the field's breadth and depth.

Since the beginning of recorded history, communication has been on the minds of philosophers, teachers, scholars, practitioners, poets, and people of all backgrounds. According to Sherry Morreale and Matt Vogl (1998), "systematic comment on communication goes back at least as far as *The Precepts of Kagemni and Ptah-Hopte* (3200–2800 B.C.)" (p. 4). Clearly, the long and storied history of the communication discipline has evolved over the centuries, and this narrative has affected billions of people along the way. Again, however, we reiterate that this information is simply a snapshot to give you an overview of our legacy.

Classical Origins (466 B.C.–A.D. 400)

This period is best characterized by communication in ancient Greece, a society in which oral communication skills were revered and speaking well was viewed as a practical and necessary skill. This reverence for oral communication coincided with the spread of democracy throughout the Greek world. The ideals of democracy placed a premium on learning to communicate effectively as well as understanding the nature of persuasion. Indeed, citizens used communication daily, most notably in pleading their own judicial cases related to land disputes. Citizens also needed to be articulate as they argued their political values while running for office or as they served as jurors or adjudicators of city boundaries (Golden, Berquist, & Coleman, 2011).

All of these sorts of public speaking activities required some knowledge in persuasion, which, as we will learn in **Chapter 20**, is the central cornerstone of democracy in early Greek times.

The Post-Classical Period (A.D. 400–1600)

What we are identifying as the post-Classical period comprises two major epochs of Western history: the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. During this period, which lasted from approximately 400 to 1400, Christianity became a critical component of living. With the rise in power of religion came the decline of practices seen as irreligious or pagan. Thus, oral communication was only needed to reveal the will of God by preaching well.

During the Renaissance (1400–1600), people turned again to an interest in the Classical roots of rhetoric. The Renaissance provided a focus on the individual (in place of the group or institution focus fostered in the Middle Ages) and on art. Communicating persuasively was seen as an art. Despite this more hospitable climate for rhetorical thought, the Renaissance was a relatively quiet time in the development of rhetoric.

The Modern Period (1600–1942)

In the early part of the modern period, the world became more secular, and religiosity did not play as substantial a role as it did in earlier times (Golden et al., 2011). This led to embracing more scientific examination and less religious influence in those viewpoints. Consequently, this interest in science led to the rise in the empirical method, which paved the way for seeing communication as a social science. But not all those who studied communication during this time were interested in the same things.

First, during that time, some modern thinkers continued to foster the thinking of Classical scholars such as Aristotle, applying its principles to contemporary situations of the day. Others, however, were applying scientific approaches to the study of communication, creating the field as a social science. Still others in this period were primarily interested in style and presentation. The early nineteenth century saw the rise of what is called the *elocution movement*. This movement also harkened back to the Classical Period, but its emphasis was strictly on elevating the notion of speech delivery. Those in the elocution movement were most interested in the nonverbal aspects of oral communication. They were quite interested in their prescriptions for effective gestures and vocal behaviors (such as pitch, volume, and speaking rate). Emerson College in Boston and Northwestern University in Illinois were two primary examples of where the elocution movement took hold and both established schools of oratory (speech communication). Interestingly, your authors have affiliations with both, in that Rich is currently a professor at Emerson, and Lynn received her doctorate at Northwestern. We both are clearly immersed in communication's legacy!

Students Talking: Jackson



I had NO idea that communication can be traced all the way back to ancient times! I always wanted to be a COMM major, but I didn't know that my major pretty much started with Aristotle. I've read the short history and looked up some more stuff because I eventually want to get a master's. I'm amazed at how much the field has changed over the years.

The Contemporary Period (1942–Present)

Today, the field of communication both honors its Aristotelian legacy and contemporary ways of thinking about communication. In addition, communication now embraces more multidisciplinary ways of looking at phenomena, including research imported from such fields as psychology, education, sociology, anthropology, and business, among others. Further, the diversity of the discipline can best be exemplified by looking at the National Communication Association (NCA), the nation's largest organization dedicated to the teaching and