Close Encounters

Communication in Relationships

5 EDITION

Laura K. Guerrero
Peter A. Andersen
Walid A. Afifi

Close Encounters

Fifth Edition

To our daughters—Gabrielle, Kristiana, Kirsten, Leila, and Rania
And to Peter's granddaughter—Elise
Our relationships with them bring us great joy.

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PREFACE

We are pleased and privileged to release the fifth edition of *Close Encounters.* We wrote the first edition of this book in response to the increasing number of upper-division courses on relational communication and advanced interpersonal communication being taught at colleges and universities across the country. Since then, more courses in relational communication are being offered, and research on close relationships has continued to flourish. Indeed, it is challenging to update the content in this book because there is so much new research on relational communication published each year. Because of space limitations, we could not include everything we wanted to include. Nonetheless, we believe that this edition contains an appropriate mix of recent and classic research related to communication in relationships.

Our goal in writing *Close Encounters* continues to be to produce an informative yet readable textbook that will help students understand their relationships better and be more critical consumers of information about relationships. This book is research based. We strive to present concepts and theories in more depth than the average textbook on interpersonal communication while writing in an accessible style. For us, writing this textbook is a rewarding experience; it lets us reach beyond the pages of scholarly journals to share information with students who are eager to learn more about relationships.

APPROACH

The book takes a relational approach to the study of interpersonal communication by focusing on issues that are central to describing and understanding close relationships, particularly between romantic partners, friends, and family members. One of the most exciting trends in the field of personal relationships is the interdisciplinary nature of research and theory. Scholars from fields such as communication, family studies, psychology, and sociology, among other disciplines, have all made important contributions to scholarly knowledge about relationships. This book reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the field of personal relationships while focusing strongly on interpersonal communication.

ORGANIZATION

Close Encounters is organized loosely around the concept of relationship trajectories. However, we use the term *trajectory* loosely because all relationships are different, and no two follow exactly the same path. Nonetheless, from a developmental perspective it is helpful to think of how relationships progress from initial meetings toward farewells. It is also important to acknowledge, however, that there are different perspectives on how relationships change and develop over time. Thus, we include a chapter on relational stages, turning points, and dialectics to show students how these different perspectives complement one another. The organization of the book also reflects that various forms of communication, such as disclosure and conflict, can occur during any point in a relationship. For example, conflict can be studied in terms of a couple's first big fight, the mundane disagreements that people have on

a fairly regular basis, the conflicts that enhance relational functioning, or the argument that ultimately marks the destruction of a relationship. Some topics are also related to one another in important ways that guided our organization of *Close Encounters.* For example, theorists taking a dialectical perspective have argued that both disclosure and privacy are important in relationships. Thus, we include information on "revealing ourselves" and "hiding ourselves" in the same chapter. Similarly, relational scholars have long recognized that conflict is not inherently good or bad; rather, it is how conflict is managed that determines positive or negative outcomes. Accordingly, the conflict management chapter now follows the relational maintenance chapter so that instructors can emphasize that both relational maintenance behaviors and constructive conflict management are key ingredients in happy relationships. The three chapters that focus on relational transgressions, relationship repair, and relational disengagement are packaged together at the end of the book to showcase how people deal with challenges in their relationships. Although these chapters may be considered to reflect the "dark side" of interpersonal communication, we believe that most topics covered in this book have a dark side and a bright side. For example, affection is generally seen as a positive behavior, but too much affection can be smothering; breakups are generally seen as negative actions, but ending a bad relationship can pave the way for a better one in the future. These are examples of the complexities highlighted throughout this book.

FEATURES IN THIS EDITION

For this edition we retained the features that have made *Close Encounters* successful. Each chapter starts with a scenario that features fictional characters dealing with communication issues, and each chapter ends with a section called "Summary and Application." These chapter endings tie back to the scenarios at the beginning of each chapter so that students can see how the information they learned can be applied to a specific situation. Throughout each chapter, we refer to the opening scenarios at various times to provide examples of how the concepts we discuss relate to real-life situations. With the exception of Chapter 1, all chapters include at least one Put Yourself to the Test box that enables students to find out how they rate on a particular concept. Our students have told us that they find these boxes very helpful in identifying their communication style as well as some of the characteristics of their relationships. Some instructors incorporate these self-tests into their course assignments. For example, students may complete some of these tests and then write self-reflection papers about their own communication style.

Each chapter includes an Around the World box, featuring ways that relational communication is similar and different across cultures or within intercultural versus intracultural couples. Every chapter also includes a Tech Talk box that highlights research showing how various aspects of communication using technology and new media, such as texting, Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram, function within close relationships. Highlights boxes throughout provide definitions and details for key concepts discussed in the book. There is also a word list at the end of each chapter, as well as a glossary at the end of the book, to help students identify and define key concepts.

Content has been updated throughout this edition, with new material added on topics such as on-again off-again relationships, different types of friends with benefits and cohabiting relationships, pillow talk, and identity issues in generation Z. More research on

new technologies, such as Facebook and Snapchat, as well as texting, was added throughout the book. In Chapter 5, for example, the discussion of relational stages includes the role that texting, Snapchat, and other new technologies play in developing, maintaining, and ending relationships. This edition of the book also includes updated versions of privacy management theory, the four horsemen of the apocalypse in conflict interaction, and relational goal pursuit theory. As was true in past editions, our goal is to present topics that are at the forefront of relational communication research and that are of high interest to students.

FEATURES

In addition to the features already discussed, *Close Encounters* is designed to appeal to students and professors alike based on the following features:

Current, interdisciplinary research: The research in *Close Encounters* reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the study of personal relationships and draws from across the social science disciplines while maintaining a focus on communication. This edition has been carefully updated to include recent cutting-edge research on interpersonal communication.

High-interest topics: Intriguing subjects, such as long-distance relationships, cross-sex friendships, friends with benefits, flirting, sexual interaction, on-again off-again relationships, cohabitation, and the dark side of relational communication are explored in depth.

Put Yourself to the Test boxes: These boxed exercises, found throughout the book, assess various aspects of students' own relationships and communication styles.

Around the World boxes: These boxes help students understand and appreciate that relational communication is partially determined by culture and that they should not assume that someone from another culture thinks or communicates the same as they do.

Tech Talk boxes: These boxes feature research that looks at how people use technology and new media (such as cell phones, social networking sites, the Internet, and blogs) to develop and manage relationships.

Highlights boxes: These boxes take a closer look at issues in relational research and challenge students to think critically about research and popular concepts.

Discussion Questions: These questions, found at the end of each chapter, can help students prepare for class or can be used as springboards for classroom discussion. Some instructors also have students write position papers in response to some of the discussion questions.

DIGITAL RESOURCES

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- Full-text SAGE journal articles support and expand on the concepts presented in each chapter

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- Video and multimedia links, which appeal to students with different learning styles
- Lecture notes that summarize key concepts by chapter to aid in preparing lectures

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing a textbook is an exciting challenge and a daunting task. As we worked on this edition of *Close Encounters,* our dens were cluttered with articles and our families had to listen to the click-click-click of our computer keyboards even more than usual. The support of our families and colleagues was critical in helping us complete this project, and we owe them our sincere gratitude. We are especially indebted to our partners—Vico, Janis, and Tammy—and our daughters—Gabrielle, Kristiana, Kirsten, Leila, and Rania—who provide social support as well as examples and feedback.

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Finally, we would like to thank all the students we have had in our classes over the years. We use some of their examples in this book, and we have incorporated their feedback into every new edition. Just as importantly, lively dialogue with students has helped sustain our enthusiasm for teaching courses on interpersonal communication and relationships. We hope this book contributes to spirited discussions about relationships in your classrooms as well.

—L. K. G.
—P. A. A.
—W. A. A.

1 CONCEPTUALIZING RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Definitions and Principles

People accomplish a lot by communicating with others. For example, take these three situations. Jake is having trouble with his statistics homework, which is due tomorrow. His friend and roommate, Dave, is a whiz at math, so Jake tries to persuade Dave to stay home (rather than go to a party) and help him. Meanwhile, Su-Lin recently arrived in the United States as an international student and feels a lot of uncertainty about the university and student life. However, after joining a couple of student clubs and getting to know some of her classmates, she starts to feel more comfortable in her new surroundings. Kristi's husband moves out of the house and tells her he wants a divorce. Rather than sitting at home alone, moping around and feeling sorry for herself, Kristi drives over to her parents' house where she receives comfort and support from her mother.

Personal **relationships** are central to being human. McAdams (1988) suggested that "through personal relationships, we may find our most profound experiences of security and anxiety, power and impotence, unity and separateness" (p. 7). People are born into relationships and live their lives in webs of friendships, family networks, romances, marriages, and work relationships. In fact, research shows that when people talk, the most common topics are relationship problems, sex, family, and romantic (or potential romantic) partners (Haas & Sherman, 1982). The capacity to form relationships is innate and biological—a part of the genetic inheritance that has enabled the human race to survive over time. Humans have less potential for survival, creativity, and innovation as individuals than they do in relationships. Personal relationship experts have begun to unlock the mysteries of these universal human experiences, to assist people with problematic relationships, and to help people achieve greater satisfaction in their close encounters.

As Jake, Su-Lin, and Kristi illustrate, communication plays a central role in relationships. When we need help, comfort, or reassurance, communication is the tool that helps us accomplish our goals. Relationships cannot exist unless two people communicate with each other. "Bad" communication is often blamed for problems in relationships, whereas "good" communication is often credited with preserving relationships. In this introductory

chapter, we take a close look at what constitutes both communication and relationships. First, however, we provide a brief history of the field of personal relationships. Then we define and discuss three important terms that are central to this book: (1) **relationships**, (2) **interpersonal communication,** and (3) **relational communication.** The chapter ends with principles of interpersonal and relational communication.

THE FIELD OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS: A BRIEF HISTORY

People have been curious about their relationships for thousands of years, but the formal study of personal relationships is a fairly recent phenomenon. Today we take the study of personal relationships for granted, but a few decades ago the scholarly investigation of relationships was considered unscientific and a waste of resources. In 1975 Senator William Proxmire of Wisconsin publicly criticized two of the finest and earliest relationship researchers, Ellen Berscheid and Elaine Hatfield (formerly Elaine Walster), for their research on love. Proxmire gave the "golden fleece award" for wasteful government spending to the National Science Foundation for supporting Berscheid and Walster's research on love with an $84,000 grant. The senator's objections to "squandering" money on love research were twofold: (1) Scientists could never understand the mystery of love, and (2) even if they did, he didn't want to hear it and was confident that no one else did either (E. Hatfield, personal communication, August 20, 1999). Of course, like many Americans Proxmire had problematic relationships of his own and had just been divorced at the time he gave his "award." Months of harassing phone calls and even death threats to Berscheid and Walster followed (E. Hatfield, personal communication, August 20, 1999).

Now most people, including politicians, realize that close relationships are as important to study as earthquakes or nutrition, especially since having good relationships is associated with better mental and physical health (Ryff, Singer, Wing, & Dienberg Love, 2001; Taylor et al., 2006; Willitts, Benzeval, & Stansfeld, 2004). People now find social scientific knowledge compatible with personal political and religious beliefs. In fact, some churches conduct premarital workshops and marriage encounters based on relationship research. Bookstores and newsstands are crammed with books and magazines that focus on every aspect of relationships, providing advice (of variable quality) on topics such as the "These are the Qualities Men *Actually* Look for in Women" (Keong, 2016) and why "My Husband and I Text More Than We Talk—and That's OK" (Wright, 2015), as well as offering "11 Things You Need to Do to Have a Lasting Relationship" (Moore, 2016), "20 Body Language Signs That Mean He's Into You" (Narins, 2015), and "10 Things You Should Never, Ever Say In a Fight With Your Girlfriend or Wife" (Walgren, 2016), just to name some of the advice in the popular press. One critical function of scientific research on relationships is to provide a check-and-balance system for the popular advice given in the media. Critical consumers can compare the scientific literature to the popular, often inaccurate, advice in magazines, best-selling books, and television shows. Box 1.1 presents one such comparison.

Several major tributaries have contributed to the steady stream of scholarly research on personal relationships. The early pioneers in the field could not have envisioned the vast amount of research on relationships that exists in several disciplines today. The young field of personal relationships has always been transdisciplinary, although it sometimes took years for scholars from different disciplines to discover one another's work. Duck (1988) commented that the field of personal relationships is unusual because it is truly interdisciplinary and has the power to impact people's everyday lives. Scholars from disciplines such as communication, social psychology, child development, family studies, sociology, and anthropology are all in the business of studying human relationships. In particular, research in interpersonal communication, social psychology, and other

BOX 1.1 HIGHLIGHTS

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING A CRITICAL CONSUMER: COMPARING JOHN GOTTMAN TO JOHN GRAY

People are bombarded with advice about relationships from best-selling books, magazine articles, and talk shows. How accurate is this advice? The answer is, "It depends." Sometimes the advice given in the media is consistent with social scientific research; other times it is not. In a *Psychology Today* article, Marano (1997) put John Gray to the test by comparing his credentials and conclusions to those of John Gottman. John Gray is the author of the number-one best seller in nonfiction, *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus.* John Gottman is one of the premier social psychologists in the study of personal relationships. So how did Gray stack up to Gottman? Here is what *Psychology Today* reported after researching and interviewing both men.

	John Gray	John Gottman
Education	PhD through correspondence school	PhD from the University of Illinois
Licensing	Driver's license	Licensed psychologist
Number of journal articles	None	109
Number of couples formally studied	None	760
The cardinal rule of relationships	Men and women are different.	What people think they do in relationships and what they actually do are very different.
Defining statement	"Before 1950, men were men and women were women."	"It's the everyday mindless moments that are the basis of romance in marriage."
What makes marriage work?	Heeding gender stereotypes	Making mental maps of each other's world
What makes marriage fail?	Gender differences in communication style	Gender stereotypes and reactions to stress
What they say about each other	"John who?"	"I envy his financial success."

Source: Adapted from Marano, H. E. (1997). A Tale of Two Relationship Gurus. In H. E. Marano, *Gottman and Gray: The Two Johns.*

disciplines has contributed to the establishment and evolution of the field of personal relationships.

Contributions of Interpersonal Communication Research

The earliest research in this area dates back to the 1950s, but interpersonal communication research began in earnest in the 1960s and 1970s (Andersen, 1982). Previously, communication scholars were preoccupied mainly with public speeches, political rhetoric, and mass communication. In the 1960s scholars realized that most communication takes place in small groups and dyads consisting of close friends, family members, and romantic partners (Miller, 1976). In the early 1970s the first books on interpersonal communication emerged (e.g., McCroskey, Larson, & Knapp, 1971). The study of interpersonal communication thus began with

a focus on how people communicate in dyads and small groups.

Scholars also realized that interpersonal communication differs based on the type of relationship people share. Miller and Steinberg (1975) proposed that the defining characteristics of an **interpersonal relationship** are that it is unique, is irreplaceable, and requires understanding of the partner's psychological makeup. By contrast, noninterpersonal or role relationships, like those with store clerks or tech help-line staff, possess few unique qualities, are replaceable, and are relatively impersonal. These shifts in communication scholarship reflected broader societal changes. The youth movement of the 1960s represented a rebellion against a society thought to be impersonal and manipulative. Sensitivity training, encounter groups, and other personal growth movements of the 1960s and 1970s turned people's attention inward to the dyad and to close relationships.

The evolution of interpersonal communication as a primary emphasis in the communication discipline was an outcome of the recognition that relationships are the primary locus for communication. Scholars also realized that relationships are an inherently communicative phenomenon. It is difficult to imagine how human relationships might exist in the absence of communication. Miller (1976) stated, "Understanding the interpersonal communication process demands an understanding of the symbiotic relationship between communication and relational development: communication influences relational development, and in turn (or simultaneously) relational development influences the nature of the communication between parties to the relationship" (p. 15). By the 1980s interpersonal and relational communication research had become increasingly sophisticated and theoretically driven (Andersen, 1982).

Contributions of Social Psychology

Early research in social psychology also laid the groundwork for the scientific investigation of interpersonal relationships, with much of this work focused on social development and personality. From the late 1950s through the mid-1970s, however, social psychologists increasingly began studying interaction patterns related to group and dyadic processes. (For some of the major early works, see Altman & Taylor, 1973; Berscheid & Walster, 1969; Heider, 1958; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959.) This movement was not limited to social psychologists in the United States; in Great Britain, Argyle and his associates spent several decades studying aspects of relationships (see Argyle & Dean, 1965; Argyle & Henderson, 1985).

During the mid-20th century, several highly influential books were published. For example, Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) *The Social Psychology of Groups* eventually led to an explosion of research on social exchange processes in groups and dyads, bringing issues such as rewards (the positive outcomes people get from relationships) and reciprocity (the way one person's behavior leads to similar behavior in another) to the forefront. Berscheid and Walster's (1969) *Interpersonal Attraction* also had a major impact on both interpersonal communication research and the study of dyadic behavior in social psychology. This book focused on emerging relationships between strangers, as did much of the early research in social psychology (see Altman & Taylor, 1973). A short time later, however, relational research began to focus on love, and the study of close relationships began to flourish (see Berscheid & Walster, 1974; Rubin, 1970, 1973). Finally, Altman and Taylor's (1973) *Social Penetration: The Development of Interpersonal Relationships,* which examined the role of self-disclosure in relationships, helped generate research in communication, relationship development, and relationship disengagement.

The prestigious *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* also included a section on "Interpersonal Processes"; this journal still publishes some of the best research on relationships. However, until the mid-1980s there were no journals that focused exclusively on relationships. In fact, the first professional conference devoted entirely to interpersonal relationships was held in the 1980s, again indicating the

youthfulness of the field of personal relationships compared to other academic disciplines (see Kelley, 1986). This conference, which was organized primarily by social psychologists, laid the roots for the creation of two organizations that focused exclusively on personal relationships: the International Network on Personal Relationships (INPR), which was established by Steve Duck; and the International Society for the Study of Personal Relationships (ISSPR), founded by Robin Gilmour and Steve Duck. In 1984 the INPR established the first journal dedicated solely to the study of personal relationships, the prestigious *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships.* A decade later the ISSPR launched a second journal, called *Personal Relationships.* Now these two scholarly societies have merged into one professional association, the International Association for Relationship Research (IARR).

Roots in Other Disciplines

Disciplines such as family studies, sociology, developmental and child psychology, clinical psychology, humanistic psychology, and anthropology also have made important contributions to the field of personal relationships. One study reported that approximately 37% of the research on personal relationships comes from social psychologists, another 37% from communication scholars, and much of the rest from sociologists and family studies scholars (Hoobler, 1999). Sociologists' relationship research often focuses on issues such as cultural values, class, religion, secularization, divorce, marriage, gender equality, political attitudes, and generational differences—with an eye toward determining how relationships are embedded within the larger society. Family studies scholars examine relationships from a different lens, looking more at the internal dynamics of relationships between family members, either as a family system or as an interpersonal dyad within the broader family structure (e.g., parent–child or spousal relationships). Family scholars also examine developmental issues, such as determining how relationships within one's family of origin influence later relationships in adulthood.

Personal relationship research draws from these different disciplines, so a level of richness and diversity that is often absent in other fields characterizes the field of personal relationships. It is precisely because scholars in the various disciplines—communication, social psychology, sociology, family studies, and so on—have different theoretical and methodological approaches that the field of personal relationships has been so vital and is evolving so quickly (Duck, 1988). Although this book draws on knowledge from various fields, the primary focus is on communication in close relationships, with three terms central to this book: (1) relationships (including role relationships, interpersonal relationships, and close relationships), (2) interpersonal communication, (3) relational communication (see Box 1.2 for definitions of these terms).

BOX 1.2 HIGHLIGHTS
DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

1. *Relationships:*
   a. Role relationships: Two people who share some degree of behavioral interdependence—although people in such relationships are usually interchangeable and are not psychologically or behaviorally unique. One person in a role relationship can easily replace another.
   b. Interpersonal relationships: Two people who share repeated interactions over time, can influence one another, and have unique interaction patterns.
   c. Close relationships: Two people in an interpersonal relationship characterized by enduring bonds, emotional attachment, personal need fulfillment, and irreplaceability.

(Continued)

BOX 1.2 (Continued)

2. *Interpersonal communication:* The exchange of nonverbal and verbal messages between people, regardless of the relationship they share.
3. *Relational communication:* A subset of interpersonal communication focused on the expression and interpretation of messages within close relationships. Relational communication includes the gamut of interactions from vital relational messages to mundane everyday interactions.

RELATIONSHIPS

Think about all the different people with whom you interact in a given day. Do you have relationships with all of them or only some of them? With how many of these people do you have close or personal relationships? Defining the term *relationship* can be tricky. When do we cross the line from interacting with someone to having a relationship? And when do we move from having a casual or functional relationship to having a **close relationship**?

General Types of Relationships

Take a moment to think of all the different relationships you have. Now imagine a piece of paper with a circle representing you in the middle of the page. If you draw additional circles that represent each of the people with whom you have relationships, where would you place those circles in comparison to yourself? You would likely place some individuals nearer to yourself than others based on the closeness you share with each person. How many people would be really close to you, and how many would be near the margins of the paper? Would anyone's circle overlap with yours? Research suggests that among the many relationships most of us have with friends, coworkers, family members, romantic partners, and others, only a select few of those relationships become really close. Most of these relationships stay at an interpersonal level, and others may never really progress beyond a role relationship.

ROLE RELATIONSHIPS According to many relationship scholars, the basic ingredient for having a relationship is that two individuals share some degree of **behavioral interdependence** (Berscheid & Peplau, 1983). This means that one person's behavior somehow affects the other person's behavior and vice versa. Based on this definition, we have relationships with a variety of people, including the salesclerk who helps us make a purchase, the waiter who takes our orders and serves us dinner, and the boss whom we rarely see but whom we depend on for leadership and a paycheck. These basic role relationships are not true interpersonal relationships. Rather, **role relationships** are functional or casual and often are temporary; also, people in such relationships are usually interchangeable and not unique. An interpersonal or close relationship with someone requires more than simple behavioral interdependence.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS In addition to basic behavioral independence, interpersonal relationships require that two individuals influence each other in meaningful ways. This type of **mutual influence** goes beyond basic tasks such as exchanging money for coffee at Starbucks or thanking your hygienist after she cleans your teeth. In interpersonal relationships, influence extends beyond mundane tasks to activities that create connection at a social or emotional level rather than a task level. For example, while helping Jake with his statistics homework, Dave might offer words of encouragement to boost his confidence. After the homework is finished, they may start talking about a political issue and in doing so affect one another's thinking. Knowing that Dave dreads public speaking, Jake may later reciprocate

by offering to listen to a speech that Dave is preparing. These tasks take extensive time and effort and include providing emotional support and engaging in self-disclosure rather than just getting something done. Thus, these activities imply that Dave and Jake have moved beyond a simple role relationship.

Interpersonal relationships also have repeated interaction over time. Because they interact with one another frequently, Jake has the time and opportunity to reciprocate by helping Dave, which can strengthen their friendship further. Interactions that are limited in length or frequency rarely develop into interpersonal relationships. Finally, interpersonal relationships are characterized by **unique interaction patterns**. This means that the way Jake communicates with Dave will be different in some ways from how he communicates with other friends. They have a unique relational history, including shared experiences, inside jokes, and knowledge of private information; this history shapes how they communicate with each other.

CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS Close relationships have all the features of interpersonal relationships plus three more: (1) **emotional attachment**, (2) **need fulfillment**, and (3) **irreplaceability.** In a close relationship, we feel emotionally connected; the relationship is the basis of why we feel happy or sad, proud or disappointed. Similarly, close relational partners fulfill critical interpersonal needs, such as the need to belong to a social group, to feel loved and appreciated, or to care for and nurture someone. When a relationship is irreplaceable, the other person has a special place in our thoughts and emotions, as well as in our social network. For example, you may have only one first love and one best friend, and there may be one person in particular whom you reach out to in times of crisis.

It is important to recognize that distinctions between these three types of relationships are often blurred. Our close relationships contain some of the same features as interpersonal and role relationships. For instance, Kristi's close relationship with her mother is partially defined by her role as a daughter. Behavioral interdependence also characterizes all relationships, but as people move from role to interpersonal to close relationships, interdependence becomes more enduring and diverse (Berscheid & Peplau, 1983). Diverse means that partners are interdependent in many ways, such as needing each other for emotional support, striving to reach shared goals, and influencing each other's beliefs and attitudes. In role relationships, such as those we have with salesclerks or waiters, behavioral interdependence is temporary, and defined by the situation. Need fulfillment is also part of all three relationship types, but the needs that our closest relationships fulfill are more central and personal than the needs other relationships fulfill.

Need Fulfillment in Close Relationships

Researchers suggest that a plethora of human needs are satisfied in close personal relationships, with the three most central interpersonal needs being affection, social inclusion, and behavioral control (Schutz, 1958). In the scenario at the beginning of this chapter, each person used communication to fulfill one of these needs. Kristi went to her mother for affection and social support. Su-Lin joined student clubs and talked with classmates to satisfy inclusion needs. Finally, Jake tried to exert behavioral control by persuading Dave to stay home and help him with his statistics homework.

AFFECTION Throughout life, our need for affection is satisfied through our ability to love other people and through having other people love us (Schutz, 1958). Neglected infants who are never touched suffer from failure-to-thrive syndrome, which can be fatal (Andersen, 2008; Montagu, 1971/1978). Adults who regularly give and receive affection report more psychological and physical health, as well as better relationships (Floyd, 2006). Affectionate communication is a resource that strengthens relationships and makes people feel better about themselves and others. Affection, according to Schutz (1958), occurs in dyads. Inclusion and control, by contrast, can occur either

"between pairs of people or between one person and a group of persons" (p. 23). Affection forms the basis for our most powerful and closest relationships (see Chapter 7).

SOCIAL INCLUSION Feeling part of a group is another crucial need (Schutz, 1958). It is through primary group relationships that basic needs such as safety and survival are satisfied. Ruesch (1951) observed the following:

> In the fold of the family, clan or group or in the widest sense of the world, the herd, he [or she] feels secure. Reliance on other members of the group increases his [or her] chance for survival in a troubled world. (p. 36)

Humans evolved as members of hunting and gathering bands of 100 to 200 people (Donald, 1991). This may explain why belonging to groups—from youth groups to corporations, from sports teams to service clubs, from street gangs to fraternities and sororities—is so important to most people. In any case, Schutz (1958) suggested that feeling included is a crucial part of social development that enables us to have successful interactions and associations with other people. A lack of social interaction and inclusion can contribute to loneliness and low self-esteem (Segrin, 1998).

BEHAVIORAL CONTROL The third basic interpersonal need revolves around the desire to feel in control of one's life (Schutz, 1958). People in successful interpersonal relationships share control (Scott & Powers, 1978), including making decisions together involving work, money, sex, children, and household chores. Indeed, a whole body of research suggests that partners who share tasks and resources in a fair manner are more satisfied with their relationships (see Chapter 10). By contrast, partners who believe they lack control or who are denied free choice may deliberately sabotage their relationships, defy rules, and engage in other destructive behavior. For example, if you have a friend who always shows up late, you might retaliate by leaving before he or she arrives. Prohibition of a relationship by parents sometimes increases the attractiveness of the relationship. According to Cialdini (1988), this effect is based on the idea that scarce objects or people are most attractive. This explains why advertisers offer "limited time offers" and sales "while the supply lasts" and why people who are "hard to get" are more attractive than people who are "easy to get"—except, of course, if they are easy for us to get but hard for others to get.

Relationship Categories

Another way to think about relationships is to categorize them based on type. We do this every day; in our ordinary talk, we refer to some relationships as "friendships," and to others as "romances" or "marriages." We introduce someone as our "best friend," "brother-in-law," "wife," and so forth. These categorizations, although simple, help people understand the relationships we share. Within the broad category of romantic relationships, there are also many subtypes. Indeed, sometimes partners are unsure about which of these subtypes their relationships fall under, especially if their relationship is not "official." When partners are officially dating, other labels, such as "boyfriend," "girlfriend," and "significant other," come with the designation of being an official couple. But sometimes partners just "have a thing" or end up in an "almost relationship" where they repeatedly talk, flirt, and maybe even spend time together or have sexual activity, but never actually date.

When college students think about what constitutes a close relationship, they typically think about dating or romantic relationships. However, as the categories just listed suggest, we live in a network of relationships that includes family members, lovers, acquaintances, coworkers, employers, and so forth. We also have blended relationships, such as having a friend with benefits or a sibling who is also your best friend. Some relationships fit into neat categories such as boyfriend, coworker, wife, or student, but others fit into overlapping categories. As Wilmot (1995) put it, "Relational types are not

necessarily mutually exclusive—their boundaries are often fuzzy" (p. 28). Moreover, relationships often move from one category to another, such as when a coworker becomes a friend, a friend becomes a dating partner, or a fraternity brother becomes an employee. In these "fuzzy" relationships, people can be uncertain about how to behave appropriately, especially if they use different relational definitions.

Another way to categorize relationships is based on how typical or mainstream they are. When most people think about a romantic relationship, they think of a man and a woman. When asked to imagine a pair of best friends, most people picture two men or two women as opposed to cross-sex friends. Even in an age where nontraditional families are increasingly common, most people envision the typical family as a mom and a dad with a couple of children. Yet romantic relationships, friendships, and families vary immensely, and diversity is increasing. Researchers have acknowledged this diversity by focusing on a variety of relationship types, including gay, lesbian, and bisexual relationships (Huston & Schwartz, 1995; Kurdek, 1991); polygamy (Altman & Ginat, 1996); cohabitation between unmarried individuals (Cunningham & Antill, 1995); single-parent families, stepfamilies, orphans, and interracial couples (Gaines, 1995; Williams & Andersen, 1998); cross-generational and Internet relationships (Lea & Spears, 1995); long-distance relationships (Rohlfing, 1995); and cross-sex friendships (see Chapter 10).

Despite advances, romantic relationship research on gay men and lesbians lags far behind research on heterosexual romantic relationships, although this gap is not as large as it once was. Peplau and Spalding (2000) reported that of 312 articles published in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* from 1980 to 1993, only three examined any aspect of sexual orientation. Similarly, Wood and Duck (1995) noted that most research has focused on the relationships of young, white, middle-class heterosexuals. To determine if the situation has improved, we conducted a search of articles published in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* and *Personal Relationships* from 2000 to 2016, using the keywords *gay, lesbian, homosexual, bisexual, transgender, same-sex couple,* and *sexual orientation*. This search produced 43 articles that focused on these issues, which is a significant improvement compared to the 1980s and early 1990s. Nonetheless, these articles still represent a small portion of the research available on romantic relationships. Similarly, although research on intercultural and interracial relationships has increased as these relationships have become more common in the United States, it still lags behind research that focuses mainly on intracultural couples (Kline et al., 2012). As discussed in Box 1.3, people from different cultures may have varying opinions about what constitutes a good relationship. Thus, more research on intercultural couples would be helpful in understanding similarities and differences in relational communication.

In this book we make an effort to include research about various types of understudied relationships. However, because this book is based on existing research, the majority of the discussion necessarily revolves around heterosexual romantic relationships. We also discuss research related to friendships and family relationships, albeit less often, as well as information on cultural differences. So, as you read this book, keep in mind that so-called traditional models of relationships do not apply to all relationships. Nonetheless, many types of relationships have elements in common: connection and conflict, joy and grief, meetings and departures. Indeed, the more scholars study less-common relationships, the more they conclude that all relationships are patches in the same quilt.

Of course, there are important differences sprinkled in with the similarities. Relationships are as unique as the different combinations of patchwork that create a quilt, and individuals in certain types of relationships do encounter particular difficulties that can affect communication processes. For example, Huston and Schwartz (1995), in their research on gay men and lesbians, stated, "The relationships formed by lesbians and gay men are in many ways very similar to heterosexual ones; in

BOX 1.3 AROUND THE WORLD
CULTURE AND EXPECTATIONS ABOUT MARRIAGE

Given the increase in romantic intercultural relationships in the United States and Asia, Kline and her colleagues (2012) set out to determine if young adults from six countries—China, Japan, India, Malaysia, South Korea, and the United States—have different values and expectations about what characterizes "good" versus "bad" marriages.

Kline and colleagues (2012) looked at four concepts related to the qualities people value in relationships in various parts of the world. These concepts are (1) *traditional family–home focus,* where the wife is seen as the nurturer who takes care of the home and children, and the husband is seen as the provider and protector; (2) *mutual love and caring,* which involves being kind, loving one another, and being able to talk together; (3) *respectfulness and gentleness,* which represents a cultural stereotype that the "good wife" is modest, humble, considerate, and respectful to others as well as loyal and of good moral character; and (4) *disrespect and control,* which represents a conception of a "bad" husband or wife as someone who inhibits partner rights or is hurtful by being disrespectful, rude, possessive, or controlling. Kline and others also examined the extent to which young adults from different cultures valued positive relational communication, which included displaying trustworthiness, being supportive and understanding, and highlighting similarities showing compatibility.

Results revealed both similarities and differences in what young adults from various cultures value in their relationships. People from China, India, Korea, and the United States all endorsed mutual love and caring as well as positive relational communication as central to a good marriage. Young adults from China and Korea also believed that respectfulness and gentleness were important qualities of a good wife. The lack of a family home focus was more frequently seen as a sign of a bad relationship in China, Korea, and Japan than in the United States. Across all six cultures, disrespect and control was seen as a negative attribute of marriage.

This study shows that people from different cultures all value positive relational communication. However, compared to those from the United States, young adults from some Asian countries hold conceptions of marriage that are linked to more traditional values and religious beliefs. Intercultural couples who have different value systems need to be accepting of one another's beliefs so they can find ways to honor both individuals' cultural traditions while also coming together as a couple.

other ways distinct factors influence relationship formation and survival" (p. 120). Gay and lesbian couples, as well as interracial couples, often have to deal with societal prejudices and pressures with which opposite-sex and same-culture couples do not have to cope.

Characteristics Distinguishing Different Relationship Types

Relationships vary on many characteristics or dimensions. For example, some relationships are more satisfying or committed than others, and some families are traditional whereas others have more liberal values. When it comes to putting relationships into categories, such as friend, romantic partner, or family member, at least five characteristics are relevant: (1) how voluntary the relationship is, (2) the degree to which people are genetically related, (3) whether the relationship is sexual or platonic, (4) whether the relationship is romantic, and (5) the sex or gender of the partners.

VOLUNTARY VERSUS INVOLUNTARY Relationships can be voluntary or involuntary. People make a conscious choice to be involved in some relationships, but they enter other relationships without volition. For instance, children cannot choose their family; rather, they are born or adopted into relationships with parents, siblings, aunts and uncles, grandparents, and other relatives. People also have little choice in choosing steprelations and in-laws; these relationships often emerge based on other people's choices (e.g., your father or brother gets married).

By contrast, people usually choose their friends. In most Western cultures, people also choose their romantic partners, whereas in some other cultures spouses are selected through arranged marriages, thus making them less voluntary. In many ways, voluntary and involuntary relationships develop differently. When developing friendships and other involuntary relationships, we often use communication to determine whether we want to be in the relationship in the first place. If the conversation flows, similarities are uncovered, and trust develops, then a friendship emerges. With family relationships, the relationship is there regardless of the type of communication we share, although communication will have an enormous impact on the quality of that relationship.

GENETICALLY RELATED VERSUS NONRELATED The degree to which two people are genetically related also defines the type of relationship they share. Unless someone has an identical twin, people share the most genes (around 50%) with their biological parents and siblings; followed by their biological grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews (around 25%); and their biological first cousins (at around 12.5%). Some researchers have suggested that people communicate somewhat differently depending on how genetically related they are. For example, some studies have shown that people are more likely to give affectionate communication to relatives than nonrelatives, beyond what is predicted by relational closeness (Floyd, 2006; see also Chapter 7). To some extent, the degree of genetic relatedness is also associated with how voluntary or involuntary a relationship is. For instance, even if you do not get along with your cousin, your cousin is your cousin for life, making the relationship involuntary. Genetic relatedness also differentiates biological children from adopted children or stepchildren and helps researchers better understand the dynamics of blended families such as those that include stepsiblings.

SEXUAL VERSUS PLATONIC Relationships are also characterized by their sexual versus platonic nature. Typically, friendships and relationships with non-spousal family members are platonic, which means they do not include sexual involvement. Dating and marital relationships, by contrast, are usually marked by sexual activity. Of course, friendships can also include sexual activity, as is the case with friends-with-benefits relationships, which are defined in terms of having repeated sexual interaction with someone who is considered a friend but not a romantic partner (Hughes, Morrison, & Asada, 2005). Sexual activity is an important component of many relationships, but it is helpful to remember that platonic relationships can be just as close and satisfying as sexual relationships. Indeed, many people rank their relationships with their children, parents, siblings, and best friends as especially close and satisfying (Argyle & Furnham, 1983).

ROMANTIC VERSUS NONROMANTIC As the case of friends with benefits illustrates, there is an important distinction between having a sexual relationship and having a romantic relationship. Friends with benefits have sex but not romance. So what does it mean to be in a romantic relationship? Mongeau, Serewicz, Henningsen, and Davis (2006) noted that both romantic relationships and friendships can contain sexual activity and high levels of emotional involvement. The difference is in how the partners mutually define the relationship. Generally, romantic relationships are viewed as being a couple, which may include the possibility of marriage in the future (if they are not already married), as well as sexual exclusivity.

The distinction between emotional closeness and sexual intimacy is reflected in how various relationships develop. Guerrero and Mongeau (2008) suggested that there are three general trajectories or pathways toward developing a romantic relationship. The "traditional" trajectory is acquaintanceship to romantic relationship. Here, two people meet, are physically attracted to one another, start dating, form an emotional attachment, and become a romantic couple. In this case, the sexual and emotional aspects of the relationship tend to develop together. Other times, people follow a trajectory that moves from platonic relationship to romantic relationship. These

individuals develop emotional closeness first as friends; later they add sexual intimacy, which often leads them to redefine their relationship as romantic. The third trajectory moves from being friends with benefits to having a romantic relationship. In this trajectory, sexual activity and emotional closeness are usually present in the friends-with-benefits relationship. Thus, these aspects of the relationship are not what changes when the relationship turns romantic. Instead, it is the definition of the relationship that changes. (Although this trajectory does occur, most friends-with-benefits relationships do not turn into romances.)

MALE VERSUS FEMALE OR MASCULINE VERSUS FEMININE Some scholars label sex or gender as a component that defines types of relationships (Wood, 1996). Sex refers to an individual's biological makeup as male or female, whereas gender refers to how masculine, feminine, or androgynous a person is; androgynous individuals possess both feminine and masculine traits (Bem, 1974). Sex is biologically determined, whereas gender is socially and culturally constructed. Sex helps define family relationships into categories such as father–son or father–daughter, or romantic relationships into categories such as lesbian, gay, or heterosexual. Most research on friendship makes these distinctions by comparing male friendships to female friendships, or same-sex friendships to cross-sex friendships (see Chapter 10). Other research focuses on gender by looking at how masculine, feminine, or androgynous individuals are. For example, a romantic couple consisting of a feminine person and a masculine person functions differently from a romantic couple consisting of two androgynous individuals. In this book, we use the term *sex* to refer to biology (male versus female) and the term *gender* to refer to culturally constructed images of men and women as being either masculine or feminine.

PRINCIPLES OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Now that we have defined various relationship types, we turn to a discussion of the kinds of communication that occur in those relationships. The terms *interpersonal communication* and *relational communication* describe the process whereby people exchange messages in different types of relationships. The goal of message exchange is to cocreate meaning, although—as we shall see shortly—not all message exchanges are effective and **miscommunication** occurs frequently. A broader concept than relational communication, interpersonal communication refers to the exchange of messages, verbal and nonverbal, between two people, regardless of the relationship they share. These people could be strangers, acquaintances, coworkers, political candidate and voter, teacher and student, superior and subordinate, friends, or lovers, to name just a few relationship types. Thus, interpersonal communication includes the exchange of messages in all sorts of relationships, ranging from functional to casual to close. Relational communication, by contrast, is narrower in that it typically focuses on messages exchanged in close, or potentially close, relationships, such as those between good friends, romantic partners, and family members. In this section, we focus on six specific principles related to interpersonal communication.

Verbal and Nonverbal Messages

The first principle is that *interpersonal communication consists of a variety of nonverbal and verbal messages that can be exchanged through different channels, including face-to-face and computer-mediated channels.* Although much of our communication consists of verbal messages, nonverbal communication is at least as important as verbal communication (Andersen, 2008). In fact, some studies suggest that 60% to 65% of the meaning in most interactions comes from nonverbal behavior. In addition, when emotional messages are exchanged, even more of the meaning may be gleaned from nonverbal behaviors (see Burgoon, Guerrero, & Floyd, 2010). Words are not always to be trusted. For example, someone can say "I love you" and not really mean it. But the person who spends time with you, gazes into your eyes, touches you lovingly, tunes into your moods,

interprets your body language, synchronizes with your behavior, and uses a loving tone of voice sends a much stronger message. Nonverbal actions often do speak louder than words.

Nonverbal communication includes a wide variety of behaviors. In fact, nonverbal behavior is particularly powerful because people can send messages using numerous nonverbal behaviors all at once. For example, Kristi's lip might tremble while she wipes a tear from her cheek, gazes downward, slumps back in her chair, and lets out a sigh. These actions prompt Kristi's mom to reach over and hug her. Similarly, in the photo on this page, several nonverbal cues are being emitted simultaneously. Nonverbal behaviors such as these have been studied with the context of relationships and have been classified into the following categories (Burgoon et al., 2010):

- ***Kinesics:*** Facial expressions, body and eye movements, including posture, gestures, walking style, smiling, and pupil dilation, among other kinesic cues
- ***Vocalics:*** Silence and the way words are pronounced, including vocal pitch, loudness, accent, tone, and speed, as well as vocalizations such as crying and sighing
- ***Proxemics:*** The use of space, including conversational distances and territory
- ***Haptics:*** The use of touch, ranging from affectionate to violent touch
- ***Appearance and adornment:*** Physical attributes such as height, weight, and attractiveness, as well as adornments such as clothing, perfume, and tattoos
- ***Artifacts and environmental cues***: Objects such as candles and soft music used to set a romantic mood, and ways the environment affects interaction through cues such as furniture arrangement and the size of a room
- ***Chronemic cues:*** The use of time, such as showing up for a date early or late or waiting a long or short time for someone

Which of these categories of nonverbal behavior are represented in the top photo? The kinesic and haptic cues should be easy to pick out. His hand is on her knee and around her back, so you may guess that they are emotionally close. She is closed off and her facial expression is hidden, but it is easy to imagine that she looks sad or upset given that her hands are over her face and he is comforting her. His facial expression is a bit difficult to read. He looks calm. Is there a hint of a smile? Is he trying to be empathetic or act concerned? Kinesic and haptic behavior are also evident in the bottom photo. The couple is in an intimate position. She is leaning against him and his leg is around her. Environmental cues and artifacts (such as the computer and phone) provide contextual information. It looks like they may be purchasing something online since he is holding a credit card and she has a computer on her lap. She

Take a close look at the nonverbal cues in these photos. How do these cues influence your perception of this couple, including the emotions they are experiencing and the type of relationship they share? How is technology affecting their interaction in the second picture?

looks caught up in her phone conversation, whereas he looks amused about something. There is also a pillow behind his back, which suggests that he may want to be comfortable while engaging in tasks. From these cues, one might guess these individuals are a young romantic couple (perhaps in their 20s), that they live together, and that they get along well and are quite comfortable with one another. This guess may be right or wrong—the point is that we infer a lot about people based on their nonverbal behavior.

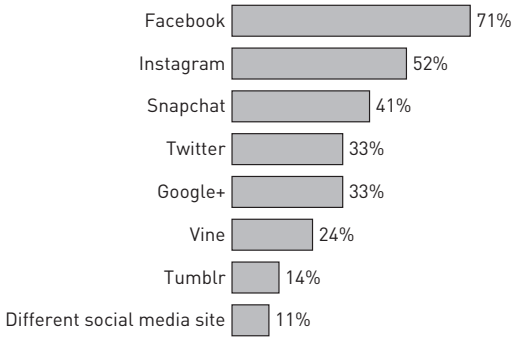
Interpersonal communication also consists of many forms of verbal behavior, including verbal content and self-disclosure. Self-disclosure, a vital form of interpersonal communication, is used to reveal personal information to others (see Chapter 6). The use of formal or informal language, nicknames, and present or future tense are also examples of verbal behavior that affects interpersonal interactions. For example, when dating partners first talk about sharing a future, such communication is likely to reflect a shift toward a more committed relationship.

Finally, various channels are used to exchange interpersonal communication. Traditionally, research on interpersonal communication has focused on face-to-face interaction. But in the 21st century communication occurs in a variety of channels that utilize technology. Think of all the different ways you communicated with people yesterday. It is likely that you used your cell phone to call or text someone, visited your social media, sent and received e-mail, and used apps like Snapchat to keep in touch with others. As Spitzberg and Hoobler (2002) noted, "The digital and information revolution has merged into a communications revolution," which consists of new communication technologies such as the Internet, and advances in old technologies, such as phones and computers becoming wireless (p. 72). One implication of this revolution is that people are more accessible to one another. Another implication is that computer-mediated communication can easily be substituted for face-to-face and voice-to-voice communication. Box 1.4 highlights how important technology and computer-mediated communication are in everyday life.

Computer-mediated communication is different from face-to-face communication in some respects. When people communicate via e-mail and text messaging, for example, nonverbal cues are limited. People can insert emoticons like ☺, type in all caps, italicize certain words, and use initialisms such as lol (laugh out loud) to add a nonverbal component, but channels such as e-mail are primarily text based and therefore verbal. Computer-mediated channels also afford communicators more opportunity to control their messages. During face-to-face interaction, it may be difficult to control one's nonverbal reaction or to think of an intelligent-sounding answer to a question. In contrast, when sending a text or e-mail, a person's facial expressions are absent and there is more time to construct, edit, and revise a well-thought-out message. Other computer-mediated channels of communication, such as social networking sites, allow people to communicate in ways that they could not have prior to the digital revolution. For example, people can simultaneously send the same message to many different people using Twitter or e-mail, and they can meet and "chat" with strangers from across a large geographical distance using the Internet. Thus, technology has opened up new ways for people to relate to and interact with one another.

Smartphones and other technology change drastically from generation to generation. In the U.S., most teens (88%) have cell phones, with 73% of them smartphones (Lenhart, 2015a). About a third of teens also use messaging apps such as Kik or WhatsApp, with the average teen sending and receiving around 30 text messages per day (Lenhart, 2015a). U.S. college students involved in romantic relationships send their partners an average of six text messages a day and call them on their cell phones three to four times a day (Duran, Kelly, & Rotaru, 2011). Older adults tend to stick to text messages and just one social media platform (usually Facebook), whereas many younger adults and teens engage a variety of social media platforms on a frequent basis. Figure 1.1 provides data from 2014 and 2015 on the social media platforms that are most popular among teenagers. Each of

FIGURE 1.1 ■ Top Social Media Platforms for Teens



Source: "Teens, Social Media & Technology Overview 2015," Pew Research Center, Washington, DC (April 2015), http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/04/09/teens-social-media-technology-2015/pi_2015-04-09_teensandtech_01/.

these platforms has unique features that separate them from each other such that savvy communicators know how and when to use each of them. For example, an effective communicator might snap a picture of an event to share with a friend but then later text to share details about the experience. Teenage girls are more likely than teenage boys to use Instagram and Snapchat, and the use of Twitter increases as teens get older (Lenhart, 2015a). Of course, the power of these social media platforms extends beyond the teenage world and beyond the United States, as shown in the statistics presented in Box 1.4.

Communication as Inevitable

The second principle is that *one cannot not communicate in face-to-face settings.* In one of the important early works on communication, Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967) stated, "Activity or inactivity, words or silence, all have message value: they influence others and these others, in turn, cannot not respond to these communications and thus are themselves communicating" (p. 49). Unless two people simply do not notice each other, some

BOX 1.4 TECH TALK
COMMUNICATING TECHNO-STYLE

In today's world, face-to-face interaction is only one of many ways people communicate with one another. Here are some statistics and information about the four most popular social platforms that help illustrate just how prevalent computer-mediated communication is.

- Facebook was created in 2004. By 2016, Facebook had more than 1.3 billion daily users, with 84.5% of these users residing outside North America ("Company Info | Facebook"). The typical Facebook user averages about 20 minutes per day on the social networking site; approximately 66% of users log in at least once per day (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Canadian college students who use Facebook spend nearly 40 minutes a day on the social networking site (Christofides, Muise, & Desmarais, 2009).
- Instagram was launched in 2010. By 2016 it had more than 300 million daily users, with over 80% of those users residing outside the United States. More than 95 million photos and videos are posted on Instagram every day ("Instagram Press"). The average user has around 150 followers (Lenhart, 2015a).
- Snapchat became available in 2011 and by 2016 boasted 150 million daily users worldwide. Snapchat is the fastest-growing social media platform, and is especially popular with teens and young adults ("Snapchat Daily").
- Twitter become available in July 2006. More than 1.3 billion accounts have been opened, with about 44% of these accounts currently active (Smith, 2016). Many people browse Twitter for news. In fact, almost a quarter of active accounts on Twitter are owned by journalists, and 83% of world leaders have Twitter accounts. Only 550 million people have sent a tweet on Twitter, suggesting that many people browse the site without posting anything (Smith, 2016). However, Twitter is growing in popularity with teens and young adults (Lenhart, 2015a) who use the site to post pictures, retweet quotes and news, and send subtweets (e.g., messages that are ambiguous but understood by certain people, such as tweeting "I'm done" or "Couldn't be happier after yesterday").

communication is inevitable. Even if someone does not intend to send a message, something that person says or does is often interpreted as meaningful by the other person. This does not mean, however, that everything people do is communication. For communication to occur, a person has to send a message intentionally or a receiver has to perceive and assign meaning to a behavior. For example, if you are blinking while interacting, your friend is unlikely to attach any meaning to such an ordinary, involuntary behavior. Similarly, not all body movements are communication since many go unnoticed. But some movements you make and most words you say will be received and interpreted by others, making it impossible not to communicate at some level (Andersen, 1991).

To illustrate, recall the last time you sat next to a stranger—perhaps at the mall, at the movies, or on a bus. What did you notice about the person? Did you check to see if the person looked friendly or did you notice the stranger's appearance? Did the person look older or younger than you? If you can answer any of these questions, Andersen (1991) argued that communication took place because you perceived and interpreted the stranger's behavior. In our relationships, our partners interpret much of what we do as meaningful. For example, a smile might be perceived as heartfelt or condescending, while a neutral facial expression might be perceived as reflecting boredom or anger. Even silence can communicate a message. For instance, if a close friend stops calling you and fails to return your messages, you will likely suspect that something is wrong. You could attribute your friend's lack of communication to a variety of causes, including being ill, depressed, or mad. In any case, the way you interpret your friend's silence will probably lead you to communicate in particular ways that will further influence the exchange of messages between you and your friend.

Although this principle is most applicable to face-to-face situations, it can also apply to computer-mediated communication. People can choose not to respond to a stranger's post on a website or decide to passively read but not participate in a chat room discussion. In these cases, people are choosing not to communicate and others are unlikely to know it. However, when people delay answering a text message or stop posting on their Facebook timeline for an extended time, others are likely to interpret their inactivity as meaningful. A student once noted that her phone broke when she was in the process of moving. Her computer was packed up, so she wasn't able to access her Facebook or e-mail accounts either. After not hearing from her for about 48 hours, a group of friends came looking for her (first at her old place, then at her new place) to make sure that she was all right.

Interpersonal Communication Goals

The third principle is that *people use interpersonal communication to fulfill goals.* This does not mean that all communication is strategic. As discussed earlier, people often send spontaneous messages that are interpreted by others as meaningful. In addition, much of our communication is relatively mindless and routine (Burgoon & Langer, 1995; Langer, 1989). However, interpersonal communication likely developed as a way to help people meet their everyday goals. Communication helps people make good impressions, connect with others on a social level, and get things done. Even mundane communication, such as saying "hi" to acquaintances when passing by them on campus, fulfills goals related to being civil and polite. Although communication fulfills numerous specific goals, many of those goals fall under one of three overarching categories—**self-presentational, relational,** or **instrumental goals** (Canary & Cody, 1994).

SELF-PRESENTATIONAL GOALS relate to the image we convey. Andersen (2008) claimed that the most common objective of persuasion is selling ourselves. Other scholars contend that people resemble actors on a stage, presenting themselves

in the most favorable light (see Chapter 2). Indeed, a central set of communication principles suggests we are only as attractive, credible, competent, or honest as others think we are. Objective personal qualities have little to do with our image, especially when we first meet people. From an interpersonal standpoint, we are what people think we are. Predictably, people spend a lot of time trying to look and act just right for that big date or that important interview. For example, before attending her first student club meeting, Su-Lin might purposely dress like a student from the United States so that she will fit in.

RELATIONAL GOALS have to do with how we communicate feelings about others, including the type of relationships we desire. Canary and Cody (1994) maintained that "nothing brings us more joy than our personal relationships. We spend significant amounts of time, energy and emotion in the pursuit of quality relationships" (p. 6). At every stage in a relationship, we have goals and plans for the future of that relationship. For example, you might want to meet that attractive student in your class, impress your date, avoid the person who won't leave you alone, or spend time with your sister whom you haven't seen all year. Canary and Cody (1994) described three primary sets of relational goals. The first set of goals is activity based and involves doing things with someone, such as attending a party or going skiing. The second is relationship based and involves wanting to initiate, escalate, maintain, or de-escalate a relationship. The third is advice based and involves giving advice to peers and parents.

INSTRUMENTAL GOALS are task oriented. For example, making money, getting good grades, buying a car, getting a ride to school, and completing a homework assignment are all instrumental goals. People often facilitate attainment of instrumental goals by asking for advice or assistance from a friend, getting permission from a parent or boss, eliciting support from a friend, or influencing someone's attitudes or behaviors (Canary & Cody, 1994). Achieving relational goals involves *giving* advice to others; achieving instrumental goals involves *seeking* advice and assistance to meet one's own task-related goals. Thus, in the scenario involving Kristi and her mother, Kristi may reach instrumental goals related to coping with a divorce by asking her mom for advice. Of course, having a goal and reaching a goal are two separate issues. Goals are most likely to be reached when communication is effective.

Effectiveness and Shared Meaning

The fourth principle is that *interpersonal communication varies in effectiveness, with the most effective messages leading to shared meaning between a sender and a receiver.* When one person sends an intentional message, understanding occurs when the receiver attaches approximately the same meaning to the message as did the sender. Of course, such perfectly effective communication may never occur since people typically attach somewhat different meanings to the same messages. It is impossible to get inside people's heads and to think their thoughts and feel their emotions. Thus, it is difficult to truly and completely understand "where someone is coming from." Nonetheless, communication is most effective when the sender and receiver attach very similar meanings to a behavior. Less-effective (or less-accurate) communication occurs when sender and receiver attach different meanings to a behavior.

Guerrero and Floyd (2006) provided a way to think about how different types of messages are more or less effective. In their model (see Figure 1.2), communication necessitates that a sender encodes a message or a receiver decodes a message. Therefore, behaviors falling in the box labeled **unattended behavior** do not qualify as communication. The exchanges in the other boxes are all relevant to interpersonal communication, but the most effective form of communication—**successful communication**—occurs when a sender's message is interpreted correctly by a receiver. For example,

Jake may ask Dave to stay home and help him with his statistics homework, and Dave may understand what Jake wants him to do.

Other exchanges are less effective. Miscommunication occurs when someone sends an intentional message that is misinterpreted by the receiver. For example, you might teasingly say "I hate you" to someone who takes your message literally. **Attempted communication** occurs when someone sends an intentional message that the receiver fails to receive. For example, you might hint that you want to leave a boring party, but your partner fails to get the message and keeps on partying. **Misinterpretation** occurs when someone unintentionally sends a message that is misconstrued by the receiver. You may be scowling because you are in a bad mood after a trying day at work, but your roommate misinterprets your facial expression as showing anger toward her or him. Finally, **accidental communication** occurs when someone does not mean to send a message, but the receiver observes the behavior and interprets it correctly. For example, you might try to hide your joy at acing an exam while a classmate who studied harder than you did poorly, but your classmate sees your nonverbal reaction and correctly assumes you did well. Although such communication is an authentic representation of your feelings, your emotional expression would be ineffective because it communicated a message you did not intend (or want) to send. All of these forms of communication can thus impact the communication process and people's relationships. Certainly, effectiveness is important to high-quality communication, but it is not an attribute of all interpersonal communication.

Content Versus Relational Information

Another factor influencing whether communication is effective is the extent to which partners have the same relational interpretations of messages. This leads into a fifth principle of interpersonal communication, namely, that *every message contains both content and relational information.* Bateson (1951) observed that messages, whether verbal or nonverbal, send more than literal information: they also tell people something about their relationship: "Every courtesy term between persons, every inflection of the voice denoting respect or contempt, condescension or dependency, is a statement about the relationship between two persons" (p. 213). Building on Bateson's work, Watzlawick and colleagues (1967) discussed two levels of communication. The **content level** of a message conveys information at a literal level whereas the **relational level** provides a context for interpreting the message of a relationship. Both the type of relationship people share and the nonverbal behaviors people use influence the relational level of a message.

The content or literal level of the message, however, should be the same for most people within a given situation. For example, a simple statement, such as, "Hand me your book," contains both a content (namely, the request to hand over the book) and a relational message or messages. The relational

FIGURE 1.2 Types of Communication and Behavior

	Behavior Not Interpreted	*Behavior Interpreted Inaccurately*	*Behavior Interpreted Accurately*
Behavior Sent With Intention	Attempted communication	Miscommunication	Successful communication
Behavior Sent Without Intention	Unattended behavior	Misinterpretation	Accidental communication

message depends on whether the request is delivered in a harsh, polite, sarcastic, bored, or warm vocal tone. It also depends on the communicator's facial expressions, posture, gestures, use of touch, attire, eye contact, and a host of other nonverbal behaviors. Finally, the context or situation can affect how the relational information in a message is interpreted. Thus, a message can have multiple meanings at the relational level.

Another example may be helpful. Suppose that late on Friday afternoon your romantic partner calls and asks, "So what are we doing tonight?" At the content level, this seems to be a fairly simple question. But at the relational level, this question could be interpreted a variety of ways. You might think, "It sure is nice to know that we always do something together on Friday nights even if we don't plan it in advance." Alternatively, you might think that your partner takes you for granted and assumes that you have nothing better to do than wait around for her or him to call before you make plans. Or if you had argued with your partner the day before, you might think that this is his or her way of making up. Yet another possibility is that you might think your partner always leaves it up to you to decide what to do. Based on which relational information you get from the message, you are likely to react in very different ways.

Symmetry in Communication

Finally, *interpersonal communication can be symmetrical or asymmetrical.* This sixth principle of communication, from Watzlawick and fellow researchers (1967), emphasizes the dyadic nature of communication. That is, communication unfolds through a series of messages and countermessages that contribute to the meaning people attach to a given interaction. Symmetrical communication occurs when people exchange similar relational information or similar messages. For instance, a dominant message may be met with another dominant message. (Jake says, "Help me with my homework," and Dave responds, "Do it yourself!") Or an affectionate message may be met with another affectionate message. (Kristi's mother says, "I love you," and Kristi says, "I love you too.") Nonverbal messages can also be symmetrical, as when someone smiles at you and you smile back, or when your date gazes at you lovingly and you touch her or him gently on the arm.

Asymmetrical communication occurs when people exchange different kinds of information. One type of asymmetry arises when people exchange messages that are opposite in meaning. For example, a dominant message such as, "I need you to help me with my homework now!" might be met with a submissive message such as, "Okay, I'll cancel my plans and help you." Or Kristi's declaration of love to her soon-to-be–ex-husband might be met with a guilt-ridden silence and shuffling of feet, after which he says something like, "I'm so sorry that I don't love you anymore." Another type of asymmetry occurs when one person uses more of a certain behavior than another person. For instance, imagine that Su-Lin is from an Asian culture where people generally touch less than do people from the United States. During a social gathering, a new friend of Su-Lin's might casually touch her arm five times, whereas Su-Lin might only initiate touch once. Although there is some symmetry because both Su-Lin and her new friend engage in some touch, the difference in the amount of touch each person initiates constitutes a source of asymmetry. As these examples suggest, the verbal and nonverbal messages that two people send and receive work together to create a unique pattern of communication that reflects their relationship.

PRINCIPLES OF RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION

As mentioned previously, relational communication is a subset of interpersonal communication that focuses on messages exchanged within relationships that are, were, or have the potential to become close. Thus, all of the principles of interpersonal communication

apply to communication in relationships. Relational communication includes the entire range of communicative behaviors from vital relational messages to mundane everyday interactions. Relational communication reflects the nature of a relationship at a particular time. Communication constitutes and defines relationships. In other words, communication is the substance of close relationships. Communication is dynamic. Change and contradictions are constant in relationships. Five principles of relational communication are consistent with these ideas.

Relationships Emerge Across Ongoing Interactions

Relationships form not from thin air but across repeated interactions (Wilmot, 1995). Cappella (1988) argued, "Experience and common sense tell us that relationships are formed, maintained and dissolved in interactions with partners. At the same time interactions reflect the kind of relationship that exists between the partners" (p. 325). According to Wilmot (1995), "Relational definitions emerge from recurring episodic enactments" (p. 25). In part, relationships represent collections of all the communication episodes in which two partners have engaged over time, and each episode adds new information about the relationship. In new relationships, each episode may add considerably to the definition of the relationship. Even in well-developed relationships, critical turning points such as a declaration of love, a heated argument, or an anniversary can alter the course of the relationship. The bottom line is this: without communication, there is no relationship.

Relationships Contextualize Messages

In various relationships, messages have different meanings (Wilmot, 1995). For example, a frown from your partner has a different meaning than a frown from a stranger, a touch from your mom does not mean the same thing as a touch from your date, and disclosure from a coworker communicates something different than disclosure from a good friend. In Wilmot's (1995) words, "Relationship definitions 'frame' or contextualize communication behavior" (p. 27). Thus, the context and relationship are critical to understanding the message. According to Andersen (1989), "It has become axiomatic that no human action can be successfully interpreted outside of its context. The term 'out of context' has become synonymous with meaningless or misleading" (p. 27). This principle reflects the idea that every message contains both a content and a relational meaning.

Communication Sends a Variety of Relational Messages

People send a variety of messages to one another about their relationships. After reviewing the literature from a range of disciplines, Burgoon and Hale (1984, 1987) outlined seven types of relational messages that people communicate to one another: (1) dominance/submission, (2) level of intimacy, (3) degree of similarity, (4) task–social orientation, (5) formality/informality, (6) degree of social composure, and (7) level of emotional arousal and activation. These messages, which have been referred to as the **fundamental relational themes** of communication, all reflect the nature of a relationship at a given point in time. Of these seven dimensions, dominance/submission and level of intimacy are the two main themes that characterize relationships (Burgoon & Hale, 1987). See Box 1.5 for further information on each of these seven themes.

The seven message themes are important within all types of interpersonal interaction but especially in close relationships. In role relationships, relational messages stay fairly constant; people generally follow prescribed rules and scripts. For instance, in manager–employee relationships, a certain level of formality, friendliness, dominance, and task orientation usually prevails across most interactions. By contrast, in close relationships the range and impact of relational messages typically

is much greater. For example, a romantic couple might be hostile during an argument and then be intimate when making up, a parent might act with an unusual level of formality and dominance during a serious talk with a child, or friends might have a hard time switching gears and moving from a conversation to a task. Such messages can have a powerful impact on how relational partners view each other and their relationship.

Relational Communication Is Dynamic

Relationships constantly change, as does relational communication. Successful relational partners—whether they are family members, friends, or lovers—learn how to adjust their communication to meet the challenges and changes that they face. For example, a parent's communication style often becomes less authoritative as a child gets older, friends learn to interact with new people in each other's social networks, and spouses may need to find new ways to show affection to each other when they are preoccupied with their children and careers. Long-distance relationships provide a great example of the dynamic nature of relational communication. Partners in long-distance relationships sometimes idealize each other—in part because they are

BOX 1.5 HIGHLIGHTS
SEVEN FUNDAMENTAL THEMES OF RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION

1. ***Dominance/submission:*** Dominance is often defined as the actual degree to which a person influences someone and submission as the actual degree to which a person gives up influence and yields to the wishes of someone else. Dominance is communicated verbally and nonverbally in a variety of ways (see Chapter 12).
2. ***Level of intimacy:*** Intimacy is a multidimensional construct related to the degree to which people communicate affection, inclusion, trust, depth, and involvement. Intimacy is conveyed in a variety of ways, including through self-disclosure and nonverbal displays of affection and immediacy (see Chapters 6 and 7).
3. ***Degree of similarity:*** Similarity is achieved through a wide array of verbal cues, such as expressing similar opinions and values, agreeing with each other, reciprocating self-disclosure, and communicating empathy and understanding. Nonverbal cues such as adopting the same posture, laughing together, dressing alike, and picking up someone's accent also communicate similarity.
4. ***Task–social orientations:*** This message reflects how much people are focused on tasks versus having fun and socializing. People are generally rated as more task oriented when they seem sincere, reasonable, and more interested in completing the task at hand than participating in off-the-topic conversation.
5. ***Formality/informality:*** When an interaction is formal, people maintain their distance, and the overall tone of the interaction is serious. They are also more likely to feel and look nervous. By contrast, less distance and a more casual approach, including feeling and looking more relaxed, characterize informal interactions.
6. ***Degree of social composure:*** Social composure relates to the level of calmness and confidence people show in a given interaction. When people are socially composed, they appear sure of themselves. Social composure is conveyed through verbal cues such as making strong, convincing arguments and saying the appropriate words at the right time, as well as nonverbal behaviors such as direct eye contact and fluent speech.
7. ***Level of emotional arousal and activation:*** This message theme refers to the degree to which an interaction is emotionally charged. It addresses the types of emotion a person experiences and expresses, as well as how much arousal the person feels. Emotional states such as distress, anger, and sadness can sometimes impede communication, whereas emotions such as happiness, excitement, and interest can lead to more effective interpersonal communication.

always on their best behavior when they spend time together. When the relationship becomes proximal, however, their communication may not always be as positive, leading many couples to break up (Stafford & Merolla, 2007).

Dialectic theory also highlights the dynamic nature of relational communication by emphasizing contradictions in messages (see Chapter 5). For example, a person might say, "I can't wait to see you tomorrow night even though it's been good to be away from each other for a while." This seemingly contradictory message ("I want to be with you sometimes but not at other times") reflects the changing nature of the relationship. Therefore, rather than thinking of relationships as hitting a plateau or becoming completely stable, it is better to conceptualize stability as a relative concept. In other words, relationships can be committed and they can include a lot of routine communication, but they are still ever-changing entities.

Relational Communication Follows Both Linear and Nonlinear Patterns

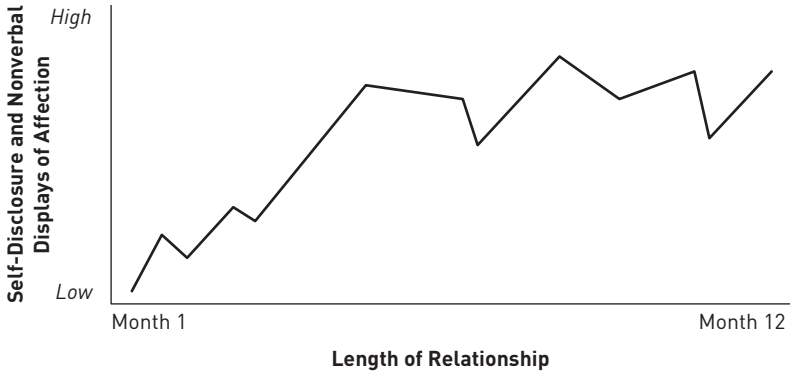
Considerable research has examined how relationships develop over time. In fact, early research on interpersonal communication focused much more on how people begin and end relationships than on how they maintain relationships once they have developed. Some researchers believe that communication follows a linear trajectory (see Chapter 5 for more detail). This means that communication is characterized by increasing self-disclosure and nonverbal affection as a relationship gets closer. Think of this like a diagonal line going upward with the line representing the degree of closeness that is communicated as a relationship moves from being casual to close. If the relationship is ending, the linear approach would predict that there would be a similar line going downward, meaning that closeness is communicated less and less as the relationship de-escalates.

Other researchers believe that relational communication follows a nonlinear trajectory characterized by ups and downs and contradictions (see Figure 1.3 and the turning point approach discussed in Chapter 5). For example, you might show increasing levels of affection to a new romantic partner until you get into your first big fight. When the fight is over, affection might increase again to a new and even higher level. And sometimes, your communication may be affectionate and distant at the same time, as would be the case if you say, "I like you a lot, but I need some time with my friends this weekend." These types of events would not coalesce to create a nice smooth linear pattern; instead, displays of closeness would spike upward and downward at different times depending on what was being communicated.

Most relationships include communication that reflects both linear and nonlinear patterns of development. Take Su-Lin as an example. Figure 1.3 depicts the trajectory that her relationship with a new roommate might take over the first 12 months of their emerging friendship. Notice that the relationship starts out rather low in terms of self-disclosure and affection but that this type of communication increases as they get to know one another, which is consistent with the linear approach. However, rather than consistently displaying more positive communication with each other, there are times when Su-Lin and her new roommate communicate relatively high and low levels of self-disclosure and affection. One relatively low point may occur during final exam week when they are both studying so hard that they don't talk as much to each other. A high point may occur when they have mutual friends over to their dorm room. Looking at the overall pattern of Su-Lin's relationship with her new roommate, it is clear that self-disclosure and affection have increased somewhat linearly, although there is also some nonlinearity (or up-and-down patterns) embedded within the trajectory.

Of course, relationships do not always follow the pattern depicted for Su-Lin and her roommate. Some relationships take more linear or nonlinear paths than others, but it is difficult to conceive of a relationship where all the progress is linear, or where the relationship is all peaks and valleys with no stability. Beyond self-disclosure and affection, other types of communication also follow patterns. Conflict behaviors, and any of the messages falling

FIGURE 1.3 ■ Possible Trajectory of a New Relationship



under the relational themes discussed previously (i.e., intimacy, formality, dominance, and so forth), can also be communicated in linear or nonlinear patterns during various points of a relationship's development. The point is that every relationship has a unique trajectory that reflects the dynamic nature of the communication that occurs between two people.

SUMMARY AND APPLICATION

This chapter introduced you to the field of personal relationships and provided information on key concepts that will be discussed throughout this book. After reading this chapter, you should have a better appreciation for the complexity of your relationships and the communication that occurs within them. Communication does not occur in a vacuum. Rather, communication is shaped by contextual and relational factors, and communication both reflects and influences the nature of a given relationship. In the scenarios that opened this chapter, Jake's communication with Dave reflects his expectation that a good friend should help him in a time of need. Su-Lin's communication is shaped by the context of being in a new cultural environment, and Kristi's communication is embedded within a social network that includes her husband and her family.

Communication is essential for accomplishing personal and relational goals, as well as for fulfilling the basic human needs of affection, inclusion, and control. Only through communication can Jake persuade Dave to help him, and only through communication can Dave give Jake the knowledge that he needs to do well on his statistics assignment. It is through communication that Su-Lin will learn about and adapt to the U.S. culture, and it is through communication that her new friends will learn more about her and her culture. The scenario involving Kristi also highlights how communication reflects people's goals and needs—Kristi's husband used communication to inform her that he wanted a divorce; in turn, Kristi searched for comfort by communicating with her mother. While the importance of communication in these scenarios and in everyday life may be obvious to you, it is amazing to think about how much we rely on communication every day in so many ways.

This book is designed to help you better understand how communication functions within your close relationships. We do not provide a blueprint or list of rules for how to communicate effectively in relationships. Instead, we summarize research related to significant relational communication topics in the hope that you will be able to apply the concepts and theories we discuss to your own life. As this chapter has shown, being able to communicate effectively is a key to good relationships, and having good relationships is a key to a happy life.

KEY TERMS

accidental communication (p. 18)
attempted communication (p. 18)
behavioral interdependence (p. 6)
close relationship (p. 6)
content level (p. 18)
emotional attachment (p. 7)
fundamental relational themes (p. 20)
instrumental goals (p. 16)
interpersonal communication (p. 2)
interpersonal relationship (p. 4)
irreplaceability (p. 7)
miscommunication (p. 12)
misinterpretation (p. 18)
mutual influence (p. 6)
need fulfillment (p. 7)
relational communication (p. 2)
relational goals (p. 16)
relational level (p. 18)
relationships (p. 1)
role relationship (p. 6)
self-presentational goals (p. 16)
successful communication (p. 17)
unattended behavior (p. 17)
unique interaction patterns (p. 7)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What qualities distinguish your close relationships from your casual relationships?
2. In this chapter, we defined interpersonal communication as the exchange of nonverbal and verbal messages between two people, regardless of their relationship. Do you agree or disagree with this definition of interpersonal communication? What types of behavior should not count as communication?
3. As illustrated by the comparison of John Gottman and John Gray, there is a lot of popular press material on relationships that does not necessarily correspond with what academic researchers have found. Why do you think the public is so fascinated with popular books, talk shows, and magazine articles on relationships? What type of role, if any, do you think relationship researchers should play in this process?

2 COMMUNICATING IDENTITY

The Social Self

Emily has a page on Facebook with around 250 people on her friend list. Her favorite quotes are on her page with her personal motto, "carpe diem," featured prominently in her timeline. She posted some quotes in Italian since she is proud of her ethnic background and feels a connection to her relatives who live in Rome. Her page also indicates her current relationship status, which is updated continuously. During a tough stretch with her boyfriend, her status changed from "in a relationship," to "it's complicated" to "single," which caused nearly everyone she knows to "Facebook" her. Emily has posted over 300 pictures; most are of her partying with her friends and sorority sisters or performing in a local dance company. Some are from her trips to Italy. She also has a long history of messages on her timeline with some friends wishing her happy birthday, others making inside jokes, and others reminiscing about the previous night or just saying "hi."

What does Emily's Facebook page say about her? It lets people know if she is dating or not (though the information she posts may or may not be true), gives others a sense of how popular she is (from the number of "friends" on her list), gives strangers a glimpse of who she is, provides a peek into her personal and social life, and facilitates interaction with acquaintances and friends. Whether her **self-presentation** is effective depends on who views her page. Emily's page speaks to her friends in important ways; through her pictures and wall, she identifies herself as a good friend to certain people. Her page communicates to classmates and potential friends; her Facebook profile helps shape their impression of her before they really get to know her. But what if potential employers, professors, or her parents look at her page? Putting our identity out there for everyone to see raises questions about appropriateness, audience analysis, and privacy. Unlike everyday interactions, social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are less nimble in creating multiple identities.

The Internet is but one venue where people present and manage their identities. Identity management occurs in face-to-face interaction, in social networking, on the telephone, in text messages, and even in letters and gifts. Research most often focuses on face-to-face contexts that offer a glimpse into how people create and present their identities.

Identity management is chiefly important at the beginning of relationships when people try to make a good initial impression, but is even important in well-developed relationships.

In this chapter, we explore how people use communication to manage their identities in social interaction. First, we briefly discuss the development of personal identities and the role that relationships play in their development. Second, we discuss general principles of identity management, such as whether trying to make a good impression is deceptive and manipulative or is simply a natural, often unconscious process. Finally, we review literature on three perspectives on identity management, including Goffman's (1959) **dramaturgical perspective,** Brown and Levinson's (1987) **politeness theory,** and research on facework.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL IDENTITY

Communication scholars, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, and family researchers, among others, study how personal identities affect our lives. People are increasingly concerned about many aspects of their identity: popularity, education, relational partners, cars, resumes, homes, income, bodies, attractiveness, styles, sororities, occupations, health, mental well-being, and happiness. But identity is more than a personal experience: it is inherently social, communicative, and relational. Identity is inextricably interwoven with messages—verbal and nonverbal—we send about ourselves, and with how other people respond to those messages.

Defining Identity

We define **identity** as the person we think we are and communicate to others. Specifically, it is the personal "theory of self that is formed and maintained through actual or imagined interpersonal agreement about what self is like" (Schlenker, 1985, p. 67). Identity is the sense of self or the "I" that has been a central topic in psychology and communication for years (Brown, 1965). Identity is the self, the face, the ego, and the image we present to others in everyday life. Identity is composed of self-esteem, continuity, distinctiveness, and meaning (Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Golledge, & Scabini, 2006).

Human Nature and Identity

Human beings are conscious creatures who reflect on who they are and how they fit into the greater social fabric. Indeed, a universal quality of all human beings regardless of culture is a sense of self as being distinct from others (Brown, 1991; Erikson, 1968). Thus, a sense of identity is a genetic legacy of our species that becomes increasing focused as we develop. Of course, our identities are largely shaped by culture and communication, but our essence as humans includes an individual identity.

Communication and Identity

In large part, our identity is formed in interactions with other people. No force is as powerful in shaping identity as the feedback we get and the self-image we form from observing ourselves behave and interact. Indeed, expressing an identity on a public posting, like Facebook or Instagram, has a stronger impact on our personal identity than sharing our identity with a single friend because of the broad audience we reach (Walther et al., 2011). In short, "A person's identity is forged, expressed, maintained, and modified in the crucible of social life, as its contents undergo the continual process of actual or imagined observation, judgment, and reaction by audiences (oneself and other)" (Schlenker, 1985, p. 68). For example, moral identity is created interactively, within the family that teaches the importance of decency, ethics, and honesty (Hardy & Carlo, 2011). Our identity is shaped in interactions with other people, the image we seek to project, our anticipated interactions, and the way they respond to and judge us.

Social identity theory explains how we develop and maintain our identity. Identity does not exist in a vacuum: it is linked to our membership in social

groups as broad as our ethnic, sexual, or religious affiliation or as narrow as small cliques—for example, Italian American, bisexual, Catholic, alumnus of West High School, a resident of the Bronx, a softball player, and a member of "the big four" (a group of childhood friends). Based on Emily's Facebook page, for instance, you would probably associate her with at least two key groups—her sorority and her dance company. A key principle of social identity theory is that membership is characterized by in-group behaviors that signal membership and define someone as being a part of a group (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Group members may dress a certain way, get similar tattoos, talk with an accent, use particular gestures, play the same sports, or have conversational routines that identify themselves as belonging to the group. To maintain positive views of ourselves, we often think of "our" groups as better than other groups who are considered outsiders. We often think that our way of doing things is superior, what we wear looks best, what we say is smartest, our view of the world is most reasonable, our perspective on a conflict is a sensible one, our values are moral and divine, and our beliefs are correct.

Several factors influence the impact a group has on our identity, including how central the group is to our self-view (Oakes, 1987). For example, an ethnic group association may be important for someone like Emily, who has visited relatives in Rome, but unimportant to those who have little connection to their ethnic roots. Several studies have also shown that minority groups are especially likely to identify with their ethnic backgrounds. African Americans or Latinos, for example, see ethnicity as more central to their identity than do Caucasians (Jackson, 1999). People in minority groups are typically more aware of their membership in that group than are majority members. Why is that? Everyday events remind them of their minority status. Think about how many black dolls you see advertised on television. Not many! Even in stores in African American neighborhoods most dolls are white, leaving little black girls to imagine that their dolls look like them.

Think about examples in your textbooks: How many describe the lives of gay, lesbian, or bisexual individuals? Not many. Despite our efforts to include all sexual orientations in this book, research on gay relationships is not abundant, so gay or lesbian students cannot always relate to our examples of heterosexual relationships. In these cases, group identity is more salient to minority group members because their lives are surrounded by reminders that they don't "fit" into the majority group's way of thinking or doing.

To clarify how identities are formed, Hecht (1993) introduced the **communication theory of identity**. He argued that identity construction can be viewed through four "frames of identity" or "lenses" (see also Hecht, Collier, & Ribeau, 1993; Hecht, Warren, Jung, & Krieger, 2004). First, identity is viewed through a **personal frame**. In this sense, identity is an image we construct within ourselves: We perceive ourselves to possess certain characteristics and not others. Second, identity can be viewed through an **enactment of communication frame**. Identities develop through communication; not all communication messages are designed to create our identity, but identity is a part of all messages. Third, identity can be seen through a **relationship frame** developed through interaction over time that defines us in terms of our relationships. Your identity is shaped by the kind of friend, romantic partner, and son or daughter you are. Moreover, you might act and feel differently about yourself depending on whether you are with your best friend, a first date, your spouse, or your parents. Finally, identity can be viewed through a **communal frame**. Identities are partly a function of the groups we belong to and are constrained by cultural group rules that teach us norms regarding the "right" way to behave. These rules become so ingrained that they affect our identities. "Indeed culture is so basic, learned at such a tender age, and so taken-for-granted that it is often confused with human nature itself" (Andersen, 2000, p. 258). See Box 2.1 for an example of how individualism, which is part of U.S. cultural identity, influences individual identity. Something as deep as

BOX 2.1 AROUND THE WORLD
CHANGES IN LATITUDES (AND LONGITUDES), CHANGES IN ATTITUDES

Individuality identity is, in part, a matter of cultural, ethnic, and national identity. What people from the United States value as their personal identity differs from what people value in other parts of the world. For many people from the United States, individualism is at the core of their identity. Individualism is the belief that each person has the right and even the ability to know what is best for oneself (Andersen, 2011b; Hofstede, 2001). In individualist countries like the United States, people have the freedom to express whatever identities they like: they can be outspoken, ostentatious, narcissistic, and dramatic. Relationships in individualistic countries are as much a matter of free choice as a couple's residence and what a person does for a living.

At the other end of the continuum from the United States are Asian countries like Japan or India where collectivism is a central part of an individual's identity. People in collectivist countries believe in decorum and civility, so they are unlikely to express individual identities. Collectivists are respectful, other oriented, selfless, and reserved. Relationships in Asia are often predetermined by location and family, and it is important for families to approve of or arrange a marriage. Relationships are characterized by harmony and one's individual identity is often subsumed by the group. Individual identity in collectivist cultures is summarized by the Japanese proverb, "The protruding nail will be hammered down."

As you journey around the world or meet travelers from other cultures, remember this: The identities that people from the United States portray are often different from the identities of people from many of the world's cultures. People from other cultures may have little appreciation for identities that express fashion, sexuality, materialism, expressiveness, or nonconformity.

ethnicity or culture cannot be easily manipulated. Research suggests that group identity is strongest under conditions of high uncertainty where communal identity serves as a guide to behavior (Grant & Hogg, 2012).

These four frames work together to affect identity development (Hecht, 1993). Recent research has discovered identity gaps both between conflicting frames of identity such as personal and relational frames (Jung & Hecht, 2004) and between different roles within a given frame, such as between a wife and a granddaughter (Kam & Hecht, 2009). All couples routinely deal with identity issues, but interracial or intercultural couples often face special challenges (Williams & Andersen, 1998): they must each deal with who they are as individuals—for example, as a white man and an African American woman (personal frame). They must also deal with how they present themselves to others (enactment frame), what it means to be an interracial couple (relationship frame), and how to best blend their different cultural backgrounds (communal frame). Scholars are increasingly aware of these identity-related challenges in interracial or interethnic relationships. Studies have shown that the difficulties they face may include differences in language, conflict styles, communication preferences, and sexual scripts, as well as pressure from family and friends to dissolve the relationship (see Gaines & Liu, 2000; Williams & Andersen, 1998). In the past, most U.S. states banned interracial marriages, with Alabama most recently removing that law in 2000 (Hartill, 2001). As a result of ethnic norms and of the societal pressures confronting them, U.S. Census data show that interethnic couples in the United States are more likely than same-ethnicity couples to get divorced (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). On the other hand, most research finds very few differences in the quality of inter- and intraracial couples, and emphasizes that the differences within an interracial couple, if managed, may help the bond grow between partners in such relationships (Troy, Lewis-Smith, & Laurenceau, 2006).

Cultural and Ethnic Identity

As the prior discussion indicates, culture and ethnicity are central to our core views of ourselves. Most people, but especially people from minority groups, have some sense of ethnic identity, seeing themselves as, for example, African Americans, Asian Americans, or Latin Americans. Some identities relate to a specific country such as Mexican Americans, Swedish Americans, Chinese Americans, Italian Americans, or Filipino Americans. Groups sometimes identify with the concept of race or color and describe themselves as black, brown, or white (Orbe & Drummond, 2009). "Whiteness," of course, does not literally exist and is a cultural construction of many groups who have tended to be more or less privileged in U.S. society (Lipsitz, 2006); it is also really only a function of how far one's ancestors lived away from the equator, because lighter skin was necessary in northern Europe for greater vitamin D absorption (Jablonsky & Chaplin, 2000). But since most voluntary immigrants to the United States during its first 200 years were "white," it became part of the identity of many people from North America and even a term used by the Census Bureau, despite the fact that most "white people" in the United States choose *American* as their primary identity (Orbe & Drummond, 2009). A more accurate term is *European American*, but most European Americans use the terms *white* or *Caucasian* if they have any racial identity at all (Martin, Krizek, Nakayama, & Bradford, 1996).

Terms are complex; there is almost always controversy over the correct term: *Hispanic* versus *Latina(o)* versus *Latin American*; or *black* versus *Afro-American* versus *African American* (Orbe & Drummond, 2009). The safest and most sensitive move in communication is to use the term that people themselves use in establishing their identity. As the United States has become more diverse, people increasingly have become multicultural and identify with two or more groups. Even the U.S. Census Bureau has begun to permit designation of multiple racial categories on the census form.

Recently, an increasing number of European and American young people with unclear identities have become jihadist terrorists or have identified with and volunteered with ISIS. Research shows that young adults with an unclear identity and weak interpersonal relationships are vulnerable and most likely to become jihadists (Meeus, 2015). Not surprisingly, having a core identity and close relationship is protective against conversion to radical religious cults and terrorist groups.

The Image: Creating an Identity

We are known by our image. Few people know the real us, but they know us by the image we project. Few of us get to peek behind the curtain and learn if other people's image is the real deal. From a communication perspective, images constitute reality, a concept not lost on advertisers, sports figures, celebrities, and even the general public. Today many people employ makeup, nose jobs, boob jobs, or other plastic surgery; workouts; cars; and homes to enhance their physical image. And, in our busy and web-based world, we often do not get to learn much more about people than what they look like, what they wear, and what they drive.

Sports figures such as tennis star Serena Williams, golfer Phil Mickelson, gymnast Simone Biles, and forward LeBron James have become idols who exceed their prodigious athletic accomplishments. They have turned themselves into icons that transcend reality. Their pictures are on television, magazines, in airports, and on the Internet. They rise above their human status into symbols of success and credibility as long as they can avoid scandal, slumps, or debilitating injuries that shatter the facade they and their agents have created. Our political leaders are no different. Andersen (2004) stated the following:

> Neither President Bill Clinton nor President George Bush ever saw military combat, but as commanders in chief they frequently appeared with troops in flight jackets and military uniforms. An image of a president supporting the

> troops, saluting the flag, or dressed in a military uniform communicates patriotism and exudes leadership. (pp. 255–256)

These images trigger involuntary reactions in people, often called *heuristics* or what Cialdini (1984) calls our "heart of hearts," automatic processes that circumvent criticism and analysis.

"Talkin' 'Bout Your Generation": Millennials and Generation Z-ers' Identity

There have always been shifts in communication patterns based on generation. For example, the baby boomer generation (people born in the late 1940s through the early 1960s) communicated more openly about feelings and sex than did any generation before them. Recent generations, specifically, millennials and those in generation Z, differ from past generations in terms of their technology use. **Millennials**, who were born between 1980 and around 1995, grew up at a time when the use of computer-mediated communication (e.g., e-mail, the Internet, cell phones, and eventually social networking sites) was expanding rapidly. **Generation Z**, which includes those born between 1996 and 2010, grew up immersed in these forms of communication, often carrying cell phones in grade school and having multiple social media accounts by middle school and high school (Williams, 2015b). Instagram and Snapchat are viewed by generation Z as ways to maintain both image and relationships. Williams (2015b) distinguished these two generations this way: "Millennials were digital; their teenage years were defined by iPods and MySpace. But Generation Z is the first generation to be raised in the era of smartphones. Many do not remember a time before social media." Millennials grew up adapting to changing technology; generation Z, on the other hand, are digital natives who navigate their smartphones with great speed and ease. For example, Emily's younger sister, Bella, who is a freshman in college (and a generation Z-er) frequently has several applications open on her phone, and is checking Instagram and stories on Snapchat between texting turns or sending and receiving snaps. Although Emily, who is a millennial, is tech savvy, Bella is even more proficient in her media use.

Millennials are very comfortable with texting, "Facebooking," "YouTubing," and tweeting, and think of e-mail as old fashioned. More than 80% of millennials text (dangerously, two thirds do so while driving), over 75% of millennials are on Facebook, and each person has typically "friended" hundreds of people (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). Across the world, millennials spend an average of 7 hours online every day, using phones, tablets, or computers (Telephonica Global Millennial Survey, 2014). As a result, social networking and building interpersonal networks are second nature to millennials. As a group, millennials are also more socially confident than their parents' generation, which, when taken to an extreme makes them more self-absorbed, entitled, and narcissistic than any generation before them (Taylor & Keeter, 2010; Twenge, 2006; Twenge & Campbell, 2009).

Millennials are racially diverse compared to previous generations and are more likely to have interracial relationships, including interracial romantic relationships (Keeter & Taylor, 2009; Taylor & Keeter, 2010). They also report less "work ethic" than prior generations and put marriage and having children ahead of their careers, yet they are less likely to be married at an early age than any prior generation (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). Research shows that when millennials view news articles about their generation, they are most likely to selectively read and remember positive items from the news. However, when baby boomers read these same stories about millennials, they are likely to select and remember negative news; negative news about millennials boosted boomers' self-esteem (Knobloch-Westerwick & Hastall, 2010). This suggests that our identity provides us with a biased lens with which to view the identity of our own and other generations.

Research suggests that millennials have created their own identities and rules for how their identities are displayed (Kelsey, 2007; Taylor & Keeter, 2010;

Telephonica Global Millennial Survey, 2014). These rules about image include the following ideas:

- ***Image Is Indispensable***. Your public persona is where it's at. An identity as an attractive, sexy, successful, popular person is a basic social need. A person is a brand. This brand is portrayed on one's social media.
- ***Entertainment Rules!*** Life is about partying, video games, and social networking.
- ***Success Is About Consumption***. A measure of success for all people from the United States, particularly millennials, is about material success including clothes, cars, residences, vacations, and toys.
- ***Change Is Essential***. Millennials embrace change and have a distain for old, outdated ways of doing things. And millennials throughout the world believe that they can make a difference.
- ***Mediated Presence Is Essential***. Being friended on Facebook, being seen even briefly on television, or being featured on YouTube is the path to a popular, positive identity.
- ***Everyone Is Present***. Millennials almost continuously text, check mail, and talk on smartphones. A walk through any college campus will show almost a majority of students using an electronic device.
- ***No Gatekeepers***. Millennials want to select their own media and create their own messages. In the world of the blogosphere and YouTube, students want to select from a variety of media, not from traditional channels with gatekeepers like television and newspapers.
- ***Privacy Is Uncool if Not Impossible***. Millennials believe that in an electronic society with social media, ubiquitous surveillance cameras, video smartphones, and YouTube, privacy may actually be impossible. For millennials, the need to present a desirable personal identity to others and the convenience of social media for maintaining friendships and sharing information trumps concerns about privacy (Krasnova, Spiekermann, Koroleva, & Hildebrand, 2010; Kuss & Griffiths, 2011; Quinn, 2016).
- ***Jobs Need to Make a Difference***. Millennials need exciting work that makes a difference in the world. Most millennials would take a pay cut for an interesting, self-directed, and socially responsible job.

Research on generation Z is newer, but there are some important differences between millennials and generation Z-ers (Renfro, 2012; Williams, 2015a, 2015b). This generation has lived under the threat of terrorism all or most of their lives, their early images of people in power include an African American president, and they grew up with gay marriage legal in many states. They are therefore more cautious than millennials in some respects, and have fewer prejudices based on ethnic or cultural background, or on sexual orientation.

In terms of communication, one difference between millennials and generation Z-ers is a renewed concern for privacy (Williams, 2015b). Generation Z has had to contend with the unintended consequences of social media use from an early age. For example, a group of girls were expelled from their high school when a photo of them wearing black t-shirts spelling ni**er went viral (Blakinger, 2016), causing national outrage on social media. This incident also created an identity issue for the school, with students trying to repair the school's image by posting statements saying that these girls did not represent them or the rest of the student body. Incidents such as this have taught generation Z that anything posted on social media can go viral, hurt their reputations, and stay visible for future college admissions or prospective employers to see. This realization has taught generation Z to be selective in what and where they post things (Williams, 2015b). Thus, many generation Z-ers shy away from posting certain information on social media sites such as

Facebook, and instead prefer snapping (which disappears eventually) or using subtweets (ambiguous messages that only certain people will understand) to protect their privacy. Unlike millennials who tend to think that privacy is unattainable, generation Z-ers believe that it is possible, at least to some extent, to protect their privacy.

Generation Z-ers are also very individualistic and less tied to gender roles than any other generation (Williams, 2015a). They tend to have the attitude that people should be who they are and do whatever makes them happy as long as they are not hurting other people. The images that this generation post on Instagram, Twitter, and other social media sites often reflects this individualism, especially for young women and teenage girls who post selfies as a way to express their personalities and cultivate an online identity. Observations about generation Z (e.g., Renfro, 2012; Williams, 2015a, 2015b) also reveal the following characteristics specific to that generation, and, to a lesser extent, about millennials:

- ***Social Networks Display Popularity and Extend Beyond One's Social Network.*** People are connected globally through social networks. Pictures posted on Instagram or Twitter, for example, can be seen by people from other schools, states, or countries, creating a lasting impression. In high schools, people can become "social media stars" who amass hundreds of likes on their Instagram and Twitter photos, with others wanting to post pictures with them on social media and on their Snapchat stories.
- ***Communication Through Technology Is Seamless.*** As Renfro (2012) puts it, today's youth are connected to a seamless, cloud-based world of friends, data, and entertainment, mainly through their smartphones. This seamlessness leads generation Z to be flexible and good at multitasking, as well as able to process information quickly. Slower forms of communication, such as e-mail, are rarely used. Generations Z-ers lose interest quickly when information is slow or inaccessible.
- ***Visual Communication Is Valued.*** Just as they rarely use e-mail, generation Z-ers rarely pick up a phone to talk voice to voice. Instead, Facetime is preferred for a fast-paced conversation. Texting typically allows more in-depth conversation than snapping, but even texting is usually supplemented by emojis that add a visual element to the communication. Some media platforms, such as Instagram, are heavily visual.
- ***Instant, Frequent Contact Is Valued.*** Social media make interaction with friends just a click away and give users the ability to efficiently maintain, update, and communicate with a large number of friends and acquaintances with whom it would be impossible to communicate in face-to-face settings. Teens value things like "Snapchat streaks" that show they have been consistently in touch with someone (even though the contact may not be in depth). Snapchat stories allow people to see what others are doing at a given moment without being there. Friends can "see" each other every day through social media with little effort.
- ***Crowdsourcing Is Used to Elicit Opinions.*** Crowdsourcing for generation Z goes beyond going on social media and asking for recommendations for goods or services (e.g., "My car is leaking oil. Anyone know a good mechanic?"). This generation uses social media to get opinions on a variety of things, including whether they should cut their hair or what classes to take. For example, people can post "polls" on Twitter asking people to "vote" on almost anything. Seeing how many favorites or likes a Tweet or Instagram picture receive, respectively, is another way to determine what one's social network prefers and approves of.