COMMUNICATING TO CONNECT - INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION FOR TODAY

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Communicating to Connect - Interpersonal Communication for Today (Usera)

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About the Authors

The content of this text was created by the following contributors:

Tim Appignani is a graduate of the University of Illinois at Chicago, Temple University, and Pennsylvania State University. His doctorate focused on studies of new media, gender, and communication; the synthesis of which exists in the areas of masspersonal and gender communication. For this reason, he was thrilled to co-author the units on these two topics for an open educational resource like this one that provides equitable access to information about these important concepts.

Shannon DeBord has been an instructor in the communication field for 20 years, at multiple community colleges and universities, including Austin Community College. Holding a bachelor's degree from University of Texas at Austin and a master's degree from University of Houston-Victoria, DeBord has additional coursework in organizational communication, and is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in community college policy and administration from University of Maryland Global Campus. "The community college, with all the students from different ages, races, genders, disabilities, is a place where everyone learns from everyone," she said. DeBord grew up in the Alief area of Houston, Texas, which touts itself as the most international community in the world. She grew up interested in other cultures and experiencing them through meeting people from other cultures and countries and listening to their experiences, traveling, and studying. DeBord has recently begun recording as a co-host for a podcast called Interculturaling, the brainchild of her friend Elda Acevedo. DeBord thanks Sara Hougham for reading the chapter and giving insightful comments in the writing process

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Lingzi Zhong is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Communication Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. She studies interpersonal and health communication, particularly individuals' communication and experiences of uncertainty. She loves the idea of writing an OER book in interpersonal communication for undergraduate students, as she believes that they should have an easy access to a high-quality textbook that shares the wonderful research and theories about interpersonal communication

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About this Text

DESCRIPTION

Communicating to Connect: Interpersonal Communication for Today introduces an undergraduate to a whole new world of concepts with an in-depth exploration of interpersonal communication. Theory and research that reflect what is currently known about interpersonal communication complement practical skills explaining why course concepts are important in an undergraduate's everyday life. The narrative voice and culturally diverse examples, as well as relevant pictures, charts, graphs, videos, and multimedia enhance reading comprehension. In 13 units, this easy-to-navigate OER (Open Educational Resource) promotes the study of interpersonal communication to the world in the most accessible way possible. Ancillary materials are available upon request to support student learning and instructional planning.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Acknowledgements

This project was made possible and achievable thanks to Jack O'Grady, Carrie Gits, Robert Foster, and Theresa Glenn. Though much of their work may be considered "behind the scenes," it clearly abounds in every page.

Call for submissions, ideas, and edits

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Fundamentals of Interpersonal Communication

Learning Objectives

- Recognize the characteristics of competent communication in dyadic interactions.
- Recognize the ethical dimensions of interpersonal communication.
- Recognize communication differences between individuals in cultures that affect interpersonal interactions and recall strategies for adapting to cultural differences.
- Understand the basic components in the communication process.
- Be familiar with the basic process models of communication.
- Understand the dimensions of competent communication.

1.1: What is Communication?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Define communication.
- Recognize different characteristics of communication.

DEFINING COMMUNICATION

What is communication?

Beginning from the womb when we respond to movements and sounds, to the time we are born and learn to talk, and until the moment we perish; we communicate. It is an essential part of being human. You cannot not communicate. Even when you are "not talking with someone" you are sending them a message. Scholars have been trying to understand and define communication for thousands of years.

From Aristotle's *Rhetoric and Poetics* (est 384 B.C.) to the present, communication has played an important part in the lives of people across the globe. Research has also shown that losing or not having close, healthy relationships can lead to sickness and even death. Argyle (1987), in *The Psychology of Happiness*, in surveying physicians, found that those who are widowed or divorced experience more medical problems than do married people. Understanding more about communication and improving your skills can help you foster close relationships that can improve your health. Not only does communication help our physical needs, it also helps us meet relational and identity needs.

So, what exactly is communication? Communication means different things to different people in different contexts and situations. Many living creatures communicate: animals communicate with one another, flowers attract bees, even our lunar cycle communicates the passing of time. However for the purposes of our course, we are going to focus on human communication. One team of researchers found more than 126 different published definitions of communication (Webb & Thomas-Hayes, 2002). While that may seem overwhelming, there are some basic elements that were common between the various definitions.

Human communication involves the process of generating meaning by sending and receiving verbal and nonverbal messages that are influenced by contexts. Masterson, Beebe, and Watson (1989) define **human communication** as the process of making sense out of the world and sharing that sense with others by creating meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbal messages. The National Communication Association, a scholarly organization that helps govern the discipline, defines communication as twofold. It is, "how people use messages to generate meanings within and across various contexts, and is the discipline that studies all forms, modes, media and consequences of communication through humanistic, social scientific and aesthetic inquiry" (National Communication Association, n.d., "What is communication?" section). The best way to understand these two definitions is by considering our class. This class is a communication course, meaning it is taught within the discipline of Communication, and in this class we are learning about the process of communication at the interpersonal level.

The words communication and interpersonal both have Latin roots. Communication is derived from the Latin verb *communicare* which means "to share" while the word interpersonal means "between persons." When we put interpersonal and communication together, we have the interactive transactional sharing that happens between humans as they negotiate an understanding of each other. This is why we define interpersonal communication as the exchanges of information between people for the purpose of sharing, understanding, and influencing one another.

Characteristics of communication

There are several characteristics to consider when thinking about how humans communicate interpersonally with each other. We must look at the context, the relationships, and the goals of the communication transaction. Context can affect how we communicate and with whom we communicate. **Context** refers to the setting in which communication takes place. The context helps establish meaning and can influence what is said and how it is said.

Traditionally, there were five contexts to consider. The smallest interaction occurs between two people, known as a dyad. These interactions between two people who have a relationship with each other is referred to as the **interpersonal context.** Relationships evolve through various stages fueled by our interpersonal interactions with each other. The **intercultural context** looks at interactions between people from different cultures.

Group context refers to the communication that occurs between members of a group. Groups form for a variety of reasons such as problem solving, learning, advising, or decision-making. The **organizational context** includes interactions between interrelated

individuals within a particular environment as they work towards achieving specific goals, within an organization or company. Lastly, **mass communication** occurs when a message is transmitted to a large audience simultaneously by a small group of elite gatekeepers. Radio and television broadcasts are examples of mass communication.

Today, these contexts are no longer as distinct. As you will read later, new media technologies have collapsed and distinctions between many of these contexts in what is today known as **masspersonal communication** (O'Sullivan & Carr, 2018). By understanding the context, we can shape our messages to fit our interactional goals.

Communication is such a vital and important part of our existence. Understanding more about the way that you and others communicate can help improve relationships with families, colleagues, and friends. Everyone can benefit from improving their communication skills and knowledge.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: The Name Game

Ask for a volunteer, then have the person start a line of the students across the room. Depending on the size of your room and class, it may curve around the front and sides of the room. The key is that it is a single line and everyone can see each other. Have students identify an adjective that fits them and starts with the same sound as the name they prefer to go by in class. The volunteer will start by introducing themselves, saying "I'm Cheerful Christina" and the class will say "hi Cheerful Christina." Then move to the second person in line. This person will re-introduce the first person and then introduce themselves. They will say for instance, "This is Cheerful Christina and I am Athletic Aaron." Then move to the third person, this person will introduce the first and second people, then themselves. It may sound like this, This is Cheerful Christina, Athletic Aaron, and I am Singing Sally."

This will continue until the last student has introduced everyone. You can also be the last person. When giving the rules, make sure to let the students know they can help using nonverbal communication, but that they should let the students figure out each person's adjective and name. Afterwards you can have them sit down and debrief asking questions such as:

- What was challenging about this activity?
- What helped you to remember?

It is important to mention how this was intense communication and how when we are in a situation like this we often are very focused. We look at each person, we listen, we interpret the messages, and we share communication out when it is our turn. It is a rich activity that illustrates basic communication elements and can get the class to know each other at the same time.

Activity 2: NON-Human Communication

Play the trailer for the class and then ask them to break into small groups and discuss what they would do if they were in a task force to meet for the first time with an alien that had come to earth. What would the students' goals be? How would they physically approach the aliens? What if the aliens don't share our language or culture? All of these considerations will help the students to understand the complexity of communication behaviors they may have previously taken for granted.

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GLOSSARY

- **Human communication:** The process through which human beings make sense of the world through interpretation and share meaning with one another
- **Interpersonal communication:** Communication that takes place between people usually to establish, or manage a relationship.
- **Context:** The frame of understanding through which communication takes place
- **Interpersonal context:** Communication between two individuals
- **Intercultural context:** Communication between people from different cultures
- **Group context:** Communication between people in a group
- **Organizational context:** Communication between people who are part of the same organization
- **Mass communication context:** Communication that is directed to a mass audience

MEDIA

Multi-Media: Look at the following picture. What do you think is taking place? In what context is the communication taking place? Is it intercultural, organizational, or is it interpersonal?

"Woman Wearing Teal Dress Sitting on Chair Talking to Man," by Jopwell, 2019, *Pexels*, (https://www.pexels.com/photo/woman-wearing-teal-dress-sitting-on-chair-talking-to-man-2422280/) is in the public domain, CC0.

1.2: Basic Process Models of Communication

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Identify and define the basic components of different communication models.
- Discuss how various communication models can be applied to real-world situations.

BASIC PROCESS MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

Imagine you are learning how to build your own computer. You are familiar with how to use computer technology and on a functional level you understand how computers work. Have you ever taken the time to examine and learn the process of computing to understand the series of actions necessary to make them work?

Learning about the communication process is like learning about any other process. We are familiar with different ways we communicate through channels like the spoken word or text messaging. What are some of the processes that shape communication? How can we understand these processes to become more competent communicators?

Understanding interpersonal communication is enhanced by internalizing processes of interaction. To continue this process, we turn to interaction models that elucidate the unique phenomena involved in human communication. The basic process models covered in this module do not include every model but focus on important models pertinent to grasping communication.

Transmission models

Transmission models of communication focuses on the transportation of message(s) from one communicator to another to disseminate knowledge over space (Sapienza, et. al., 2016). Transmission models are focuse on communication as a linear process where the sender is projecting a message to a target without much consideration to ongoing process or feedback loops as described in other models.

In 1949 mathematician Claude Shannon and engineer Warren Weaver developed a basic transmission model of communication that serves as a foundational tool to understanding the communication process (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). The Shannon and Weaver model breaks communication down into five parts- **Sender, Encoder, Channel, Decoder, Receiver** (Figure 1).

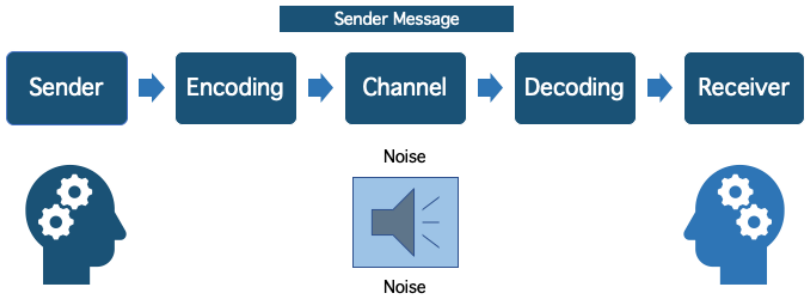

Figure 1.2.1: Shannon-Weaver's Model of Communication

Note. Notice how the sender and receiver both undergo the transaction simultaneously.

The **sender** is the original information source of the message. **Encoder** refers to the transmitter that converts the message into signals. **Channel** is the means by which the message is conveyed. **Decoder** is the location of the signal that converts the message. **Receiver** is the intended target of the message. As a message passes from sender to receiver, it can be impeded by **noise**, which can alter or distort the message meant for the receiver.

For example, let's say that Blake is a chemistry professor who is explaining the periodic table in class. Blake would represent the sender or information source.

Blake's means of encoding or transmitting would be his brain converting the ideas into a message. The channel professor Blake is using is their voice accompanied by writing a diagram on the board.

The decoders would be the ears and eyes of the students in the class. The receivers or destinations are the brains of the students. In this chemistry class there is an abundance of noise that is inhibiting the transmission of the message that Professor Blake is sending. Jamie and Dakota are mischievous class clown types who are intent on derailing the learning experience by making various animal noises at their lab station.

Alex is more interested in watching YouTube videos on a phone with one earbud in and one out, feigning attention to Professor Blake's message. Meanwhile, Jordan who is desperately attempting to learn chemistry is internally enraged at the inattentive classmates and periodically sneers and makes gestures imploring others to be silent.

In mass mediated communication, messages are encoded into various channels. In a State of the Union address, the President of the United States has a target audience- the American public. The President and his team craft the speech over a period to be delivered to Congress and broadcast live to a television audience. This speech will be simultaneously broadcast through radio and internet channels.

The process described above differs from the immediate interpersonal context of transaction because it is not as dependent on immediate feedback. Yes, people will respond in real time through discussions and social media posts. However, this has no impact on the original message created as it was designed as a one-way communication event. How the President's message is interpreted will differ significantly due to subjective interpretations based on identity.

Even in a process that is more one-way than immediately interactive, human beings are still communicating meaning to each other. Understanding the differences in structure, code and channel help us gain insight in how these processes influence our interactions on a macro and micro level. In a State of the Union address the President is speaking to the entire country with specific ideas and declarations to embolden ardent supporters.

All of these examples show how noise can impede the quality of a message. Now that we have briefly discussed the Shannon and Weaver model, we will turn to Berlo's adaptation of the Shannon and Weaver model.

Berlo's SMCR Model

In 1960, David Berlo expanded the Shannon and Weaver model to more accurately reflect the communication process (Turaga, 2016). Berlo's model is divided into four basic components: source, message, and channel and receiver. In each pillar of Berlo's model are subcategories that describe the interaction process in greater detail (Figure 2).

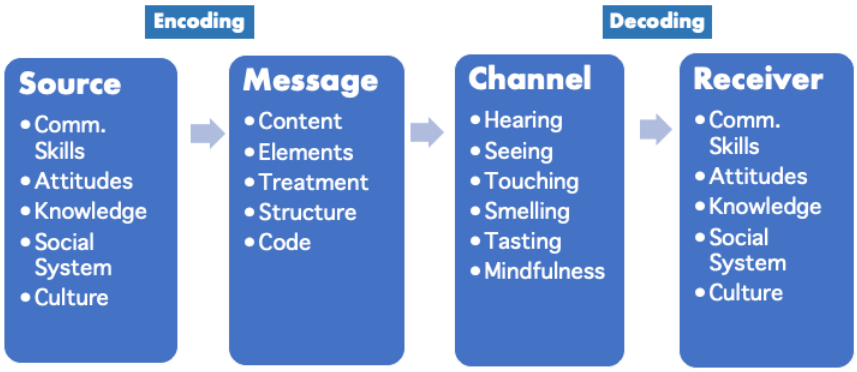

Figure 1.2.2: Berlo's SMCR Model of Communication

Adapted from Berlo's SMCR Model of Communication, by Communication Theory (https://www.communicationtheory.org/...communication/)

Source

The **source** is the origin of the message. Source can also be analogous to sender as the messenger provides the initial context of the interaction. The source must have basic communication skills such as reading, speaking and listening to be an effective communicator. In addition, the attitude of the sender is important in developing a relationship with the audience. The sender must also be knowledgeable regarding the subject matter she/he is discussing.

Inherent in every message are the social systems (values, beliefs, religion) the sender is immersed in, which impacts the rhetorical choices the sender makes. Culture also influences the sender's message as messages can be interpreted differently depending on an individual's cultural background.

Message

The first element to consider in a message is content. What is included in the message from beginning to end? **Elements** are additional aspects such as gestures and signs, that accompany the transmission of the message. **Treatment** is the way the message is sent, similar to gift wrapping of a present where the message itself is wrapped inside the treatment.

Structure refers to the framework of the message or how the message is constructed. **Code** refers to form, i.e. text or language that the message is conveyed in.

Channel

Similar to the Shannon and Weaver model, **channel** refers to the medium in which the message is delivered. In order for the message to be received it must be perceived by one or more of the five senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch or taste. Most often, messages are conveyed through sight and sound but non-verbal elements such as touch, taste or smell can also convey meaning, as any chef or dancer will tell you.

Receiver

Receiver is the person, destination or decoder of the message. As we discussed with the sender, attitude, knowledge, social systems and culture must be considered in understanding how this process works.

Berlo's model is a simplistic description of the communication process. All messages begin with a person of origin and destination. Let's return to our scenario involving Professor Blake's chemistry class. Professor Blake needs to relay and important message to students involving next week's test. Blake wants to inform them about changes to the study guide but has noticed a few of the students were absent in the last class meeting.

Professor Blake is the source and the message describes the important changes. To ensure continuity, Blake decides to send the message through the channel of email. The message is marked "URGENT" in capital letters to increase the chances the students will open it.

The tag "URGENT" is an example of an element to punctuate the message. Despite the fact Blake has been frustrated lately with some of the students in class, Blake makes sure to use an upbeat tone to not display frustration. Good teachers need to be balanced and exhibit patience.

Always remember attitude is important in developing and maintaining a relationship with the audience. If Professor Blake does not get the desired feedback then changes may need to be made to the communication channel or code.

Transactional model

The transactional model of communication is a more simplified model for understanding the communication process. Developed by Dean Barnlund (2008), the transactional model can be understood as a circular model of communication, more focused on the simultaneous interaction of participants than a linear process (Figure 3).

Both sender and receiver are continually affected by the messages being sent and received back and forth. The transactional model reflects an exchange of ideas, meaning and feelings. Similar to a relationship between a business owner and a client, communication depends on the giving and receiving of information or content.

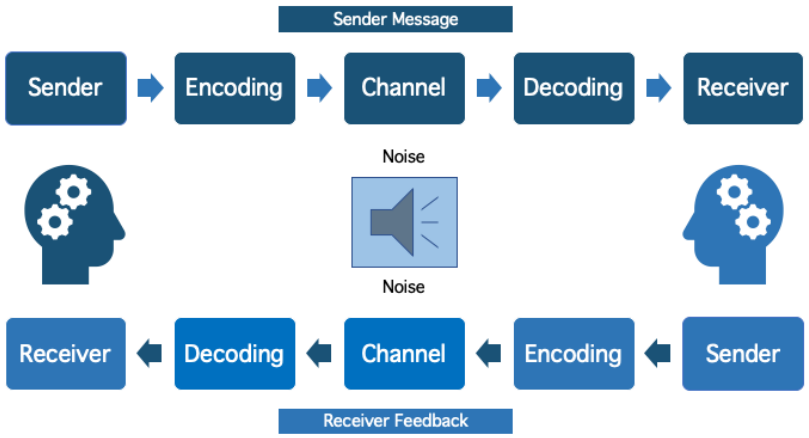

Figure 1.2.3: Transactional Model of Communication

Note. Observe that the Transactional Model recognizes feedback in communication, suggesting the joint activity and meaning-making that occurs between interlocutors.

In the transactional model, communication is simultaneous and interdependent. Riley is a physical therapist who helps clients recover from injuries. Much of Riley's job is to understand the pain and discomfort of the clients in order to effectively help them recuperate. In this situation, both Riley and the clients must exchange information in order to accomplish mutual goals. Riley wants to help the clients recover and the clients want to feel better.

Riley's newest client, Cameron is a challenge to help. Cameron has suffered from several injuries from playing soccer, including a few concussions. The problem is Cameron does not like to verbally disclose the injuries because of the desire to continue playing. This unwillingness to disclose injuries makes it difficult for Riley to properly treat Cameron.

In this situation, both Riley and Cameron are dependent on each other to reach the desired outcome. They both have different goals. While Riley wants to do the job properly and ensure Cameron's health and safety, Cameron is reluctant to disclose information in order to stay on the field. Each person in this situation must mitigate the other's feelings, ideas and goals in real time to come to a shared meaning or mutually beneficial outcome.

The transactional model of communication emphasizes the role of feedback and the ongoing negotiation of participants in an interpersonal context. How is communication different in situations that are less personal and immediate? To help answer this question, we turn to the transmission model of communication.

Now that we have discussed the idea of communication as transmission we turn to a discussion of rituals. Often, our communication practices depend on a repetitive dynamic of sharing meaning through symbolic interaction and the reinforcement of cultural values.

Ritual model

The ritual model of communication focuses on the sharing of information and preserving that information over time (Figure 5). Ritual communication relies on shared belief systems (Carey, 2009).

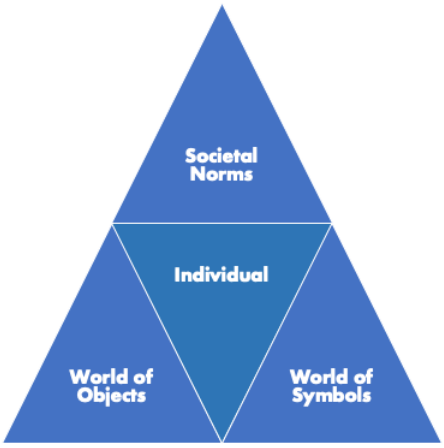

Figure 1.2.4: Ritual model

Note. The ritual model emphasizes how communicators draw from outside sources to establish the meaning of everyday messages.

Developed by James Carey, the ritual model considers symbolism, shared practices and codes which produce a cultural identity. An audience is more participant than receiver in an ongoing dance of familiar steps. Communication is not a simple process of sending a message to a receiver. Communication is shaped by the process itself, rather than the content of the message.

Take the evening news for example. Often these broadcasts begin with morbid subjects like the coverage of a murder or kidnapping. Then the broadcast will cover the weather, sports and a human-interest story. Viewers have an expectation of how this format will proceed because of the familiarity of the format.

Content does not change much from broadcast to broadcast as the same types of stories are plugged into the recognizable format. Evening news broadcasts may be viewed while the family eats dinner and discusses the day's proceedings. Engagement with the evening news serves as cultural currency for the consumer and the messages therein become conversation points to expand on in everyday conversations. Thus, communication content is shaped directly by the evening news ritual.

Conclusion

In closing, we have covered three types of models of communication to understand how interactions work and are affected by feedback and context. Our everyday interactions are shaped by a variety of factors that can alter the meaning or understanding of content. Often, the same message can be understood more effectively by changing the code or channel in which it is presented. By learning process models, we can more effectively encode and decode messaging to become more competent communicators.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Personal Model of Interpersonal Communication

In small groups of 3-5 students, have them develop their own model of interpersonal communication. Include all of the components that are necessary to describe how communication between people works. The model could be a drawing or an object (such as a toaster or slinky toy) that symbolizes the communication process. Prepare to share the model with the class, explaining in detail about the model.

Activity 2: Barriers to Communication

In small groups of 3-5 students, assign each group a different communication context (i.e., verbal, written and/or online). Have them discuss within their group potential communication barriers for their context and ways to reduce those barriers. They should be prepared to discuss their answers with the class. During this discuss, the instructor should highlight common barriers that overlap the varied contexts for further discussion about the communication process (in general).

Examples of different communication contexts that may be used in this activity include:

· *Verbal*: interpersonal conversations with friends, family, co-workers, acquaintances and others; presentations in public settings; and communication business situations.

· *Written*: writing a personal letter; text messaging with family, friends or others; and business writing such as a proposal, memo or presentation.

· *Online*: emailing family or friends; using social media to connect with friends or others; communicating with others via instant messaging or video conferencing software.

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GLOSSARY

- **Sender:** The original information source of the message.
- **Encoding:** The translation of an idea into a message that can be understood by the receiver.
- **Decoding:** The translation of the message into meaning by the receiver.
- **Channel:** The means by which the message is conveyed.
- **Receiver:** The intended target audience of the message.
- **Noise:** Interference that impedes the transmission of a message.
- **Source:** The origin of the message.
- **Element:** An additional aspect that accompanies the transmission of the message (i.e., a gesture or sign).
- **Treatment:** The manner in which the message is sent.
- **Structure:** The framework of the message and how the message is constructed.
- **Code:** The text or language the message is conveyed in.

MEDIA

Multimedia 1: Barnlund's Transactional Model of Communication

Watch this animated video about Barnlunds Transactional Model. How does it compare and contrast with the other models of communication?

Watch it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrFXNRzfJKU

Multimedia 2: Communication as Culture, a conversation with James Carey

Watch this conversation with renowned scholar, James Carey, as he discuss the ritual model of communciation. What are some concepts that he mentions that add to what was mentioned in this chapter?

You can view it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Mozx7z6ues

1.3: Communication Competence

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand the dimensions of competent communication and how they can vary.
- Identify your own standpoint, and how it affects your communication habits.
- Assess your communication skills to find areas where you can improve your own communication competence.

COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Communication is only meaningful if the message we are sending is received and decoded as we intend. Getting a message across is much more complicated than just saying something however we want, and having it understood. **Communication competence** is defined as the ability to craft and send a message in a manner that ensures it will be received as it was intended. According to Spitzberg and Cupach (1984; 2011), competent communication involves a number of key components.

Clarity and Intent

Achieving competent communication begins with the **intent** behind our message. Every communication has some intended response by others, even when we intend others to ignore us. Being conscious of the intent of our messages- particularly those messages we send to more than one person at a time- can go a long way to helping us craft the message in a successful way.

Crafting a message in as **clear** a manner as possible is the most common route to having it received successfully. In academic terms, clarity means adjusting our verbal or nonverbal signals to suit the channel that we choose, and with consideration to the possible noise that could confuse the recipient. In many cases, our decisions about clarity are guided by what we view to be **appropriate** ways of communicating in the context. This involves suiting our language and behavior to the expectations of others.

Adaptability

We have all experienced miscommunications when our intended meaning was misunderstood by someone else. To communicate competently means to avoid misunderstandings by purposefully suiting the message in both content and delivery. To do this requires that we constantly adapt our communication depending on who we are communicating with, what the message is that we have to convey, and what channel we are using to convey it.

The ability to adapt our communication is perhaps the most important skill for good communication. **Adaptability** is crucial to achieving communication competency because not all people interpret the same messages in the same way. Adapting our communication can mean many things- we may need to adapt our tone, the vocabulary we use, the way we behave physically, even the amount we communicate is prone to adaptation. This is because communication is always interpreted based on its context, and these contexts can change depending on a number of factors, not the least of which is culture.

Was there a time recently when you had to adapt your communication style, or approach in order to get your message across? What kind of adaptations did you make? Did you change your tone, choose new words, or even a different channel? Once you begin to think about specific exchanges and how you manage them it may be easier to realize that we are constantly adapting our communication in big and small ways in order to be understood.

Self-Monitoring

One way to improve our ability to adapt our communication is to begin by improving our own self-monitoring. **Self-monitoring** is the ability to understand one's own behaviors at both the macro and micro levels, and to understand how they may be interpreted by others. The key to strong self-monitoring is to be **empathetic** to others on a continual basis. This means being attentive to other's feelings, and trying to see things from their point of view. If you can develop your empathy for others it is likely you will be better able to accurately anticipate how your own behaviors may affect them, making it easier for you to self-monitor, and to thereby adapt your communication.

Competent communicators usually monitor their behaviors in order to convey to their conversation partners the same qualities in a listener that they too are seeking when they communicate. This is called **conversational involvement**, and it requires that we maintain eye contact, use verbal and non-verbal cues that signal interest and/or understanding, and focus our attention adequately. Ask yourself- do you practice conversational involvement when you're listening to people speak? If so, what types of things do you do to illustrate that you're involved?

In order to behave appropriately, a competent communicator will also use **conversational management** as a way of regulating the conversation. Regulating conversations is almost intuitive to most of us, but competent communicators make it a point to do things like take turns without interrupting, respond when responses are expected, and to include everyone present. This can be complicated because in most circumstances no one person is assigned the manager of a conversation, but we all play our part in the management of conversations if we want to be seen as polite. Perhaps you have had an experience with someone who did not manage conversations very well. Can you recall a time when you were confused or annoyed by someone who interrupted you consistently, or didn't reply when a response was indicated? How did you handle it?

Cognitive Complexity

People who are skilled in competent communication demonstrate what is known as cognitive complexity. **Cognitive complexity** is a measure of one's ability to see things from multiple viewpoints. A person with well-developed cognitive complexity is likely to consider a range of factors when analyzing an interaction between two people, and to make a point of contextualizing each message sent with regard to the viewpoint of the person of the sender, and then to contextualize its reception from the viewpoint of the receiver. Because communication takes place across cultural, subcultural, and even co-cultural lines it is helpful to consider that each individual person sees the world from their own particular standpoint (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984; 2011).

Standpoint Theory

Standpoint Theory argues that each of us occupies a specific social location (or standpoint) in the societies where we live, and it is from this standpoint that we experience the world, and thereby understand it. Different standpoints can occasionally be shared by people, but more often than not we are communicating with people who see the world from a different standpoint than our own (Wood, 2005). Recognizing the variety of different standpoints that people occupy is easier to understand when we first acknowledge that each of us sees the world through the framework of our own intersectional identity. The concept of **intersectionality** states that no one identity factor- age, race, gender, religion- accounts entirely for our identity. Therefore, when we aim to adopt the viewpoints of other people we must do so by recognizing that they too enjoy an intersectional identity (hooks, 2014).

Using standpoint theory as a way of framing our communication with others shows that we are seeking to communicate in an ethical manner that provides respect for others. **Ethics** in communication include concerns over the ability of people to exploit, harass, or harm others by abusing their power over them. An old maxim claims that the measure of a person is how they treat those least among them, meaning that the only ethical way to conduct one's self is to treat everyone with equal respect. This can be harder than sounds because we may not always recognize the **power dynamics** that exist in a situation, or else we may take it for granted that our perception of equality in a situation is valid.

Consider for a moment your interaction with your teachers. You may consider them to have more power than you do because of their position, but if their goal is for you to learn the material, your teacher may feel that you ultimately have the most power in the equation. After all, teachers can't read the textbooks for you (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2011).

Conclusion

As the three modules above show us, even the most basic communicative acts are far more nuanced and complex than we might realize when we perform them. Communication is not only contextual, but it demands that processes of encoding and decoding that can be complicated by the way that messages are relayed, and/or received. In order to enhance our communication, we must become more thoughtful about other people, more attentive to our own communication behaviors, and how they need to be adapted to the unique circumstances of our varied interactions with other people.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Giving Directions

Pair up the students together and instruct them to provide one another with clear accurate driving directions from the classroom to their own home (or any location they know well). They must do this without using any digital devices or visual aids, and they cannot get help with street names, landmarks, etc. except from their partner. Once the directions have been provided, the pairs of students must be merged so that there are two pairs in a group. Then each person must go around in turn and provide the directions they just learned to the others.

Through this exercise the students will have a chance to see how other people perceive the environment around them, and to try and find a shared vocabulary in how to describe streets, landmarks, turning directions, and distances without the aid of the now

ubiquitous Siri.

Activity 2: Reflection

Allow the students a few moments to reflect in writing on a miscommunication they have had recently, and to rethink how the miscommunication occurred. In what respect was the interaction lacking one of the conditions for competent communication? Once the students have identified how the miscommunication may have occurred, give them another few minutes to reflect in writing on how they could have approached the same scenario differently in order to have achieved competent communication.

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GLOSSARY

- **Adaptability:** The willingness to change your approach according to the situation.
- **Appropriateness:** Choosing the best possible channel and encoding for a specific situation.
- **Clarity:** Encoding a message in a form that will make it easy to decode accurately.
- **Cognitive Complexity:** A worldview that includes multiple perspectives and cultural understandings that may influence how a message is decoded.
- **Communication Competence:** An individual's aptitude for relaying messages to others and having them received as intended.
- **Conversational Involvement:** Illustrating your interest in a conversation through verbal and non-verbal cues.
- **Conversational Management:** Consciously working to make a conversation equitable and enjoyable for both people involved.
- **Empathy:** The ability to consider someone else's perspective or feelings.
- **Ethics:** Any issue that needs to be considered as a violation of ethics or what is seen as morally correct.
- **Intent:** The purpose a person has in sending a specific message.
- **Power Dynamics:** The structural or personal dynamics that afford power to one party or another in a given interaction.
- **Self Monitoring:** The ability is to understand one's own behaviors at both the macro and micro levels, and to understand how they may be interpreted by others.

MEDIA

Multimedia 1: Communication Competence

This video provides an audio-visual recapitulation of the content that we discuss in this module by discussing the numerous aspects of communication competence. What areas can you improve?

Link to the video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIdb7GPvSl4

Multimedia 2: "No Soup For You!"

This video illustrates an unusual communication climate that requires prompt adaptation in order to succeed. Take a look and describe all the ways you see our competence concepts playing out in the scene.

Link to the video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xqkpP59UgM

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Language

Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate the ability to assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of interpersonal strategies used in various interpersonal situations, including mediated and face to face interactions.
- Demonstrate skill in selecting and using a variety of communication strategies and responses based on situational contexts, goals, and human needs.
- Differentiate between theories that explain interpersonal interaction.
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze and critique verbal and nonverbal messages in interpersonal interactions.
- Distinguish between different aspects of meaning in language use.
- Compare and contrast connotative and denotative meanings.
- Identify rules of language via grammar.
- Recognize how verbal communication affects cognition.
- Argue how language can construct one's reality.

2.1: Nature of language

Learning Objectives

- Distinguish between different aspects of meaning in language use.
- Compare and contrast connotative and denotative meanings.
- Identify rules of language via grammar.

Nature of Language

In my junior year of college, I took a course in semantics, which focused on verbal language and solidified my interest in language. I love learning about the history of words, learning new words, and seeing how language changes over time and from one context to the next. Judging from the recent explosion of interest in word game apps like Words with Friends and Scramble with Friends, I am not alone in my love of language. In this chapter, we will learn about the relationship between language and meaning, how we come to know the content and rules of verbal communication, and the functions of language.

Language and meaning

The relationship between language and meaning is not a straightforward one. One reason for this complicated relationship is the limitlessness of modern language systems like English (Crystal, 2005). Language is productive in the sense that there are an infinite number of utterances we can make by connecting existing words in new ways. In addition, there is no limit to a language's vocabulary, as new words are coined daily.

Of course, words aren't the only things we need to communicate, and although verbal and nonverbal communication are closely related in terms of how we make meaning, nonverbal communication is not productive and limitless. Although we can only make a few hundred physical signs, we have about a million words in the English language. So with all this possibility, how does communication generate meaning?

We arrive at meaning through the interaction between our nervous and sensory systems and some stimulus outside of them. It is here, between what the communication models we discussed earlier labeled as encoding and decoding, that meaning is generated as sensory information is interpreted. The indirect and sometimes complicated relationship between language and meaning can lead to confusion, frustration, or even humor. We may even experience a little of all three, when we stop to think about how there are some twenty-five definitions available to tell us the meaning of word meaning (Crystal, 2005, p. 187). Since language and symbols are the primary vehicle for our communication, it is important that we not take the components of our verbal communication for granted.

Language is symbolic

Our language system is primarily made up of symbols. A **symbol** is something that stands in for or represents something else. Symbols can be communicated verbally (speaking the word hello), in writing (putting the letters H-E-L-L-O together), or nonverbally (waving your hand back and forth). In any case, the symbols we use stand in for something else, like a physical object or an idea; they do not actually correspond to the thing being referenced in any direct way. Unlike hieroglyphics in ancient Egypt, which often did have a literal relationship between the written symbol and the object being referenced, the symbols used in modern languages look nothing like the object or idea to which they refer.

The symbols we use combine to form language systems or codes. **Codes** are culturally agreed on and ever-changing systems of symbols that help us organize, understand, and generate meaning (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993). There are about 6,000 language codes used in the world, and around 40 percent of those (2,400) are only spoken and do not have a written version (Crystal, 2005). Remember that for most of human history the spoken word and nonverbal communication were the primary means of communication. Even languages with a written component didn't see widespread literacy, or the ability to read and write, until a little over one hundred years ago.

The symbolic nature of our communication is a quality unique to humans. Since the words we use do not have to correspond directly to a "thing" in our "reality," we can communicate in abstractions. This property of language is called **displacement** and specifically refers to our ability to talk about events that are removed in space or time from a speaker and situation (Crystal, 2005). Animals do communicate, but in a much simpler way that is only a reaction to stimulus. Further, animal communication is very limited and lacks the productive quality of language that we discussed earlier.

The earliest human verbal communication was not very symbolic or abstract, as it likely mimicked sounds of animals and nature. Such a simple form of communication persisted for thousands of years, but as later humans turned to settled agriculture and populations grew, things needed to be more distinguishable. More terms (symbols) were needed to accommodate the increasing number of things like tools and ideas like crop rotation that emerged as a result of new knowledge about and experience with farming and animal domestication.

There were not written symbols during this time, but objects were often used to represent other objects; for example, a farmer might have kept a pebble in a box to represent each chicken he owned. As further advancements made keeping track of objects-representing-objects more difficult, more abstract symbols and later written words were able to stand in for an idea or object. Despite the fact that these transitions occurred many thousands of years ago, we can trace some words that we still use today back to their much more direct and much less abstract origins.

For example, the word calculate comes from the Latin word calculus, which means “pebble.” But what does a pebble have to do with calculations? Pebbles were used, very long ago, to calculate things before we developed verbal or written numbering systems (Hayakawa & Hayakawa, 1990). As I noted earlier, a farmer may have kept, in a box, one pebble for each of their chickens. Each pebble represented one chicken, meaning that each symbol (the pebble) had a direct correlation to another thing out in the world (its chicken). This system allowed farmers to keep track of their livestock. They could periodically verify that each pebble had a corresponding chicken. If there was a discrepancy, they would know that a chicken was lost, stolen, or killed.

Later, symbols were developed that made accounting a little easier. Instead of keeping track of boxes of pebbles, farmers could record a symbol like the word five or the numeral 15 that could stand in for five or fifteen pebbles. This demonstrates how our symbols have evolved and how some still carry that ancient history with them, even though we are unaware of it. While this evolution made communication easier in some ways, it also opened up room for misunderstanding, since the relationship between symbols and the objects or ideas they represented became less straightforward. Although the root of calculate means “pebble,” the word calculate today has at least six common definitions.

Triangle of meaning

The **triangle of meaning** is a model of communication that indicates the relationship among a thought, symbol, and referent and highlights the indirect relationship between the symbol and referent (Richards & Ogden, 1923). As you can see in Figure 1, the thought is the concept or idea a person references. The symbol is the word that represents the thought, and the referent is the object or idea to which the symbol refers. This model is useful for us as communicators because when we are aware of the indirect relationship between symbols and referents, we are aware of how common misunderstandings occur.

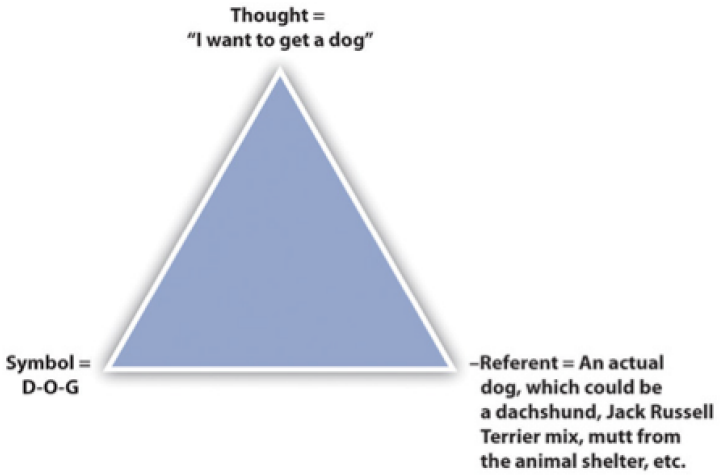

Figure 1: Triangle of Meaning

Source. Adapted from Ivor A. Richards and Charles K. Ogden, The Meaning of Meaning (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Tubner, 1923).

For example, suppose Jasper and Abby have been thinking about getting a new dog, so each of them is having a similar thought. They are each using the same symbol, the word dog, to communicate about their thought. Their referents, however, are different.

Jasper is thinking about a small dog like a dachshund, and Abby is thinking about an Australian shepherd. Since the word dog does not refer to one specific object in our reality, it is possible for them to have the same thought, and use the same symbol, but end up in an awkward moment when they get to the shelter and fall in love with their respective referents only to find out the other person didn't have the same thing in mind.

Being aware of this indirect relationship between symbol and referent, we can try to compensate for it by getting clarification. Abby might ask Jasper, "What kind of dog do you have in mind?" This question would allow Jasper to describe his referent, which would allow for more shared understanding. If Jasper responds, "Well, I like short-haired dogs. And we need a dog that will work well in an apartment," then there's still quite a range of referents. Abby could ask questions for clarification, like "Sounds like you're saying that a smaller dog might be better. Is that right?" Getting to a place of shared understanding can be difficult, even when we define our symbols and describe our referents.

Role of definitions

Definitions help us narrow the meaning of particular symbols, which also narrows a symbol's possible referents. They also provide more words (symbols) for which we must determine a referent. If a concept is abstract and the words used to define it are also abstract, then a definition may be useless. Have you ever been caught in a verbal maze as you look up an unfamiliar word, only to find that the definition contains more unfamiliar words? Although this can be frustrating, definitions do serve a purpose.

Words have denotative and connotative meanings. **Denotation** refers to definitions that are accepted by the language group as a whole, or the dictionary definition of a word. For example, the denotation of the word cowboy is a man who takes care of cattle. Another denotation is a reckless and/or independent person. A more abstract word, like change, would be more difficult to understand due to the multiple denotations. Since both cowboy and change have multiple meanings, they are considered **polysemic** words. **Monosemic** words have only one use in a language, which makes their denotation more straightforward. Specialized academic or scientific words, like monosemic, are often monosemic, but there are fewer commonly used monosemic words, for example, handkerchief. As you might guess based on our discussion of the complexity of language so far, monosemic words are far outnumbered by polysemic words.

Connotation refers to definitions that are based on emotion- or experience-based associations people have with a word. To go back to our previous words, change can have positive or negative connotations depending on a person's experiences. A person who just ended a long-term relationship may think of change as good or bad depending on what he or she thought about his or her former partner. Even monosemic words like handkerchief that only have one denotation can have multiple connotations. A handkerchief can conjure up thoughts of dainty Southern belles or disgusting snot-rags. A polysemic word like cowboy has many connotations, and philosophers of language have explored how connotations extend beyond one or two experiential or emotional meanings of a word to constitute cultural myths (Barthes, 1972).

Cowboy, for example, connects to the frontier and the western history of the United States, which has mythologies associated with it that help shape the narrative of the nation. The Marlboro Man is an enduring advertising icon that draws on connotations of the cowboy to attract customers. While people who grew up with cattle or have family that ranch may have a very specific connotation of the word cowboy based on personal experience, other people's connotations may be more influenced by popular cultural symbolism like that seen in westerns.

Language is learned

As we just learned, the relationship between the symbols that make up our language and their referents is arbitrary, which means they have no meaning until we assign it to them. In order to effectively use a language system, we have to learn, over time, which symbols go with which referents, since we can't just tell by looking at the symbol. Like me, you probably learned what the word apple meant by looking at the letters A-P-P-L-E and a picture of an apple and having a teacher or caregiver help you sound out the letters until you said the whole word.

Over time, we associated that combination of letters with the picture of the red delicious apple and no longer had to sound each letter out. This is a deliberate process that may seem slow in the moment, but as we will see next, our ability to acquire language is actually quite astounding. We didn't just learn individual words and their meanings, though; we also learned rules of grammar that help us put those words into meaningful sentences.

The rules of language

Any language system has to have rules to make it learnable and usable. **Grammar** refers to the rules that govern how words are used to make phrases and sentences. Someone would likely know what you mean by the question "Where's the remote control?"

But “The control remote where’s?” is likely to be unintelligible or at least confusing (Crystal, 2005, p. 180). Knowing the rules of grammar is important in order to be able to write and speak to be understood, but knowing these rules isn’t enough to make you an effective communicator.

As we will learn later, creativity and play also have a role in effective verbal communication. Even though teachers have long enforced the idea that there are right and wrong ways to write and say words, there really isn’t anything inherently right or wrong about the individual choices we make in our language use. Rather, it is our collective agreement that gives power to the rules that govern language.

Some linguists have viewed the rules of language as fairly rigid and limiting in terms of the possible meanings that we can derive from words and sentences created from within that system (de Saussure, 1974). Others have viewed these rules as more open and flexible, allowing a person to make choices to determine meaning (Eco, 1976). Still others have claimed that there is no real meaning and that possibilities for meaning are limitless (Derrida, 1978). For our purposes in this chapter, we will take the middle perspective, which allows for the possibility of individual choice but still acknowledges that there is a system of rules and logic that guides our decision making.

Looking back to our discussion of connotation, we can see how individuals play a role in how meaning and language are related, since we each bring our own emotional and experiential associations with a word that are often more meaningful than a dictionary definition. In addition, we have quite a bit of room for creativity, play, and resistance with the symbols we use. Have you ever had a secret code with a friend that only you knew? This can allow you to use a code word in a public place to get meaning across to the other person who is “in the know” without anyone else understanding the message. The fact that you can take a word, give it another meaning, have someone else agree on that meaning, and then use the word in your own fashion clearly shows that meaning is in people rather than words. Many slang words are developed because people wanted a covert way to talk about certain topics like drugs or sex without outsiders catching on.

Language acquisition

Language acquisition refers to the process by which we learn to understand, produce, and use words to communicate within a given language group. The way we acquire language is affected by many factors. We know that learning a language is not just about learning words. We have to learn how to correctly connect the words to what they mean in a given context and be able to order the words in such a way, within the rules of grammar for the language code we are using, that other people will be able to understand us (Hayakawa & Hayakawa, 1990).

As if that did not seem like enough to learn, we also have to learn various conversational patterns that we regularly but often unconsciously follow to make our interactions smooth and successful. A brief overview of language acquisition from birth to adulthood offers us a look at the amazing and still somewhat mysterious relationships between our brain, eyes, ears, voice, and other physiological elements (Crystal, 2005). In terms of language acquisition, there is actually a great deal of variation between individuals due to physical and contextual differences, but this overview presumes “typical development.”

Much is being taken in during the first year of life as brain development accelerates and senses are focused and tuned. Primary caregivers are driven, almost instinctively, to begin instilling conversational abilities in babies from birth. As just about anyone who has spent time around a baby during this phase of rapid development can attest, there is a compulsion to interact with the child, which is usually entertaining for adult and baby. This compulsion isn’t random or accidental, and we would be wrong to assume that our communication is useless or just for fun.

We would also be wrong to assume that language acquisition doesn’t begin until a baby says his or her first words. By the time this happens, babies have learned much, through observation and practice, about our verbal communication and interaction patterns. These key developments include the following:

- **2–4 months.** Babies can respond to different tones of voice (angry, soothing, or playful).
- **6 months.** Babies can associate some words, like bye-bye, with a corresponding behavior, and they begin “babbling,” which is actually practice for more intelligible speech to come.
- **8–10 months.** Babies learn that pointing can attract or direct attention, and they begin to follow adult conversations, shifting eye contact from one speaker to the next.
- **1 year.** Babies recognize some individual words (people’s names, no) and basic rituals of verbal interaction such as question-pause-answer and various greetings. Shortly before or after this time, babies begin to use “melodic utterances” echoing the variety in pitch and tone in various verbal interactions such as questioning, greeting, or wanting.

Language acquisition after the age of two seems sluggish compared to the pace of development during the first year or so. By the end of the first year, babies have learned most of the basic phonetic components necessary for speech. The second year represents a time of intense practice—of verbal trial and error. From three to five we continue to develop our pronunciation ability, which develops enough by our teens to allow us to engage in everyday communication. Of course, our expressive repertoire, including ways of speaking and the vocabulary we use, continues to develop.

A person's life and career choices determine to a large degree how much further development occurs. But the language abilities we have acquired can decrease or disappear as a result of disease or trauma. Additionally, if such things occur early in life, or before birth, the process of language acquisition can be quite different. Barriers to speech and language acquisition are common and are the domain of a related but distinct field of study often housed in departments of communication sciences and disorders.

Conclusion

Overall, language is a symbolic, rule-governed system of meaning that we learn through practice and exposure to our environment. Misunderstandings in everyday talk may start with the language we use, as demonstrated by the Triangle of Meaning. It is always important to ensure connotation does not take the place of denotation.

Learning Activities

Activity #1: Dollar Bill Exercise

Have your students draw a dollar bill from memory, do not allow them to pull out a dollar bill to "cheat." Notice how each drawing from memory differs. How does this come into play with language and the Triangle of Meaning?

Activity #2: Telephone

Play a game of telephone to see how quickly and easily verbal messages fall apart. In a large group setting have one person begin a verbal message with 3-4 lines then have them pass the message along. Have the last person to receive the message state out loud what the message is. Then have the first-person state what the message is. How did the verbal meanings and messages change?

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Glossary

Codes: Culturally agreed on and ever-changing systems of symbols that help us organize, understand, and generate meaning.

Connotation: Definitions that are based on emotion or experience-based associations people have with a word.

Denotation: Definitions that are accepted by the language group as a whole, or the dictionary definition of a word.

Displacement: Our ability to talk about events that are removed in space or time from a speaker and situation.

Grammar: Rules that govern how words are used to make phrases and sentences.

Language acquisition: The process by which we learn to understand, produce, and use words to communicate within a given language group.

Monosemic: Having a single agreed-upon use or meaning.

Polysemic: Having multiple meanings.

Symbol: Something that stands in for or represents something else

Triangle of Meaning: A model of communication that indicates the relationship among a thought, symbol, and referent and highlights the indirect relationship between the symbol and referent.

Media

Media 1: Verbal Aggression Scale

Take this self-test to learn how verbally aggressive they might be in their personal relationships. Are you surprised by the results?

Link: https://project-oracle.com/uploads/files/BussPerry_agression_questionnaire_scoring.pdf

Media 2: How language reveals how we think.

How does grammar influence our thoughts? Watch this TED talk video from Stephen Pinker, a linguist at Harvard University: https://www.ted.com/talks/steven_pinker_what_our_language_habits_reveal?language=kn

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2.2: Functions of verbal communication

Learning Objectives

- Recognize how verbal communication affects cognition.
- Argue how language can construct one's reality.

Functions of Verbal Communication

Now that you have learned about the nature of language, there are many functions that you can explore with this greater understanding. Language is ubiquitous in our verbal, written, and mediated communications. In this section, we will explore **verbal communication**, which is communication via language. You will learn to recognize and appreciate the common thread that can tie us together or breaks us apart.

Reality construction

Verbal communication helps us define reality. We use verbal communication to define everything from ideas, emotions, experiences, thoughts, objects, and people (Blumer, 1969). Think about how you define yourself. You may define yourself as a student, employee, son/daughter, parent, advocate, etc. You might also define yourself as moral, ethical, a night-owl, or a procrastinator. Verbal communication is how we label and define what we experience in our lives.

These definitions are not only descriptive, but evaluative. Imagine you are at the beach with a few of your friends. The day starts out sunny and beautiful, but the tides quickly turn when rain clouds appeared overhead. Because of the unexpected rain, you define the day as disappointing and ugly. Suddenly, your friend comments, "What are you talking about, man? Today is beautiful!" Instead of focusing on the weather, he might be referring to the fact that he was having a good day by spending quality time with his buddies on the beach, rain or shine.

This statement reflects that we have choices for how we use verbal communication to define our realities. We make choices about what to focus on and how to define what we experience and its impact on how we understand and live in our world.

Categorization

Verbal communication helps us organize complex ideas and experiences into meaningful categories, known as **categorization**. Consider the number of things you experience with your five primary senses every day. It is impossible to comprehend everything we encounter. We use verbal communication to organize seemingly random events into understandable categories to make sense of our experiences.

For example, we all organize the people in our lives into categories. We label these people with terms like, friends, acquaintances, romantic partners, family, peers, colleagues, and strangers. We highlight certain qualities, traits, or scripts to organize outwardly haphazard events into meaningful categories to establish meaning for our world.

Cognition

Verbal communication helps us think. Without verbal communication, we would not function as thinking beings. The ability most often used to distinguish humans from other animals is our ability to reason and communicate. With language, we are able to reflect on the past, consider the present, and ponder the future. We develop our memories using language. Try recalling your first conscious memories. Chances are, your first conscious memories formed around the time you started using verbal communication. What would your world be like without language?

Boroditsky (2011, p. 62) claims that people "rely on language even when doing simple things like distinguishing patches of color, counting dots on a screen or orienting in a small room: my colleagues and I have found that limiting people's ability to access their language faculties fluently--by giving them a competing demanding verbal task such as repeating a news report, for instance--impairs their ability to perform these tasks." This may be why it is difficult for some people to multitask - especially when one task involves speaking and the other involves thinking.

Verbal communication helps us shape our attitudes about our world. The way you use language shapes your attitude about the world around you. Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf developed the **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis** to explain that language determines thought. People who speak different languages, or use language differently, think differently (Hussein, 2012; Lucy, 2010; Maxwell, 2004; Perlovsky, 2009; Sapir, 1958; Whorf, 1956).

The argument suggests that if a native English speaker had the exact same experiences in their life, but grew up speaking Chinese instead of English, their worldview would be different because of the different symbols used to make sense of the world.

When you label, describe, or evaluate events in your life, you use the symbols of the language you speak. Your use of these symbols to represent your reality influences your perspective and attitude about the world. So, it makes sense then that the more sophisticated your repertoire of symbols is, the more sophisticated your world view can be for you.

While the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is highly respected, there have been many scholarly and philosophical challenges to the viewpoint that language is what shapes our worldview. For example, Vicente and Martinez-Manrique (2008) did a study regarding the argument of explicitness, which has two premises. The first premise is that "the instrument of thought must be explicit" in order for thought and language to be connected; the second is that natural languages - languages that humans can learn cognitively as they develop - are not explicit (Vicente & Martinez-Manrique, 2008, p. 384).

The authors conclude that thoughts "demand a kind of completeness and stability of meaning that natural language sentences, being remarkably underdetermined, cannot provide" (Vicente & Martinez-Manrique, 2008, p. 397). It makes sense that something as arbitrary and complicated as the connection between thought and language is still being debated today.

Additionally, Boroditsky (2011) argues that if someone wants to learn another language and become fluent in that language, he or she might have to change the way he or she behaves, especially in how he or she sort things into categories and he or she notices in his or her focus.

Conclusion

While we have overly-simplified the complexities of verbal communication for you in this Module, when it comes to its actual use —accounting for the infinite possibilities of symbols, rules, contexts, and meanings—studying how humans use verbal communication is daunting. When you consider the complexities of verbal communication, it is a wonder we can communicate effectively at all. However, verbal communication is not the only channel humans use to communicate. In Unit 7, we will examine the other most common channel of communication we use: nonverbal communication.

Learning Activities

Activity 1: Words From Other Cultures

Words and their meanings are represent what is important to the people in culture. For instance, the Swedes have invented a brand new word, "flygskam,"which translates as "flight shame" in response to climate change and encourage their citizens to consider taking the train instead. Danes have a word, "higgle," that translates as "the feeling of coziness, warmth, and well being." The Japanese have a literary word, "tsundoku," that translate as "an affliction of buying books that you don't read." Research meaningful words in other languages that do not exist in the English language. Discuss.

Activity 2: Categorization exercise

Create a common grocery list of about 15-20 items. Then have the students categorize the list of items in small groups. Compare each other's group categorizations. How might this exercise relate to language categorization of other more complex ideas? Does this show how language can construct our realities?

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Glossary

Categorization: The process of organizing complex ideas and experiences into meaningful categories.

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: The hypothesis that suggests that language determines how people think.

Verbal Communication: The use of a language to communicate.

Media

1. Arrival – Sapir Whorf Hypothesis

Watch this clip from the movie *Arrival*. How the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis apply to the scenes displayed? Between Dr. Banks and the entity?

The link is here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JX8qOoyxt8s

2. TedEd: How languages evolved

Watch this clip about how languages evolved. How did we end up with some many languages? How is the English language evolving?

The link is here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWDKsHm6gTA

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Identity

Learning Objectives

- Describe the terms self-concept, self-image, self-esteem and ideal self.
- Discuss theories and ideas related to self-concept (Johari window, reflected appraisal, social comparison and self-fulfilling prophecy).
- Demonstrate the ability to use the Johari window to categorize aspects of your self-concept.
- Discuss how reflected appraisal and social comparison have influenced your self-concept.
- Describe self-image and explain how we perform different roles in different contexts.
- Relate Carl Jung's concepts of persona and shadow to self-image.
- Describe cognitive dissonance and the three ways to resolve it.
- Discuss perception and identity the five stages of perception.
- Describe image management and face needs.
- Define the terms culture, race and ethnicity.
- Describe the four components of culture.
- Recognize cultural influences on communication (i.e., individualism and collectivism, low- and high-context cultures and low- and high-power distance cultures).
- Describe the process of identity formation and different types of identities (i.e., personal, social and cultural).
- Discuss identity management and the relational stages.

3.1: Self-Concept

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Describe the terms self-concept, self-image, self-esteem and ideal self.
- Discuss theories and ideas related to self-concept (Johari window, reflected appraisal, social comparison and self-fulfilling prophecy).
- Demonstrate the ability to use the Johari window to categorize aspects of your self-concept.
- Discuss how reflected appraisal and social comparison have influenced your self-concept.

SELF-CONCEPT

Interpersonal communication is the study of how two people communicate in personal relationships (NCA, n.d.). Interpersonal communication starts with each of us. The development of our self-concept helps us to not only understand our ideas about self but also how we relate to the world around us. This module focuses on self-concept as well as theories and ideas related to our development of self-concept.

Defining self-concept

The term **self-concept** (sometimes called identity) refers to your own ideas about who you are. Your self-concept develops and expands over time as you learn more about yourself and your motivations. While your self-concept is cultivated from early childhood, it continues to grow throughout your lifetime. At the same time, there are many dimensions to our self-concept.

If you were meeting someone for the first time, how would you introduce yourself? Maybe you would use one or more of the following phrases:

“My name is …(your name).” “I’m a …(your occupation).” “I’m from…(location).”

There are many ways you might describe yourself. Maybe you would focus on your background or experience. In another situation, you may focus on your hobbies and interests. Or maybe you would talk about something else entirely. It can be difficult to pin down who we are to a single answer. Is one answer more correct than another? Not necessarily, there are many aspects to each of us and all of these ideas may be true at the same time.

A term sometimes used to describe the various ideas we hold about ourselves is self-schema. A **schema** is a cognitive framework (idea or concept) that helps us to organize and interpret information about ourselves and the world around us. Our self-concept is made up of numerous self-schemas.

Let’s think about how this term works through social roles: You can be a son/daughter, a brother/sister, a father/mother, etc. all at the same time (each of these roles could be one aspect of your self-schema). All of these ideas can be true. Taken together, your self-schemas make up your self-concept.

Three components of self-concept

Another way to think about self-concept is through related terms. A humanistic psychologist, Carl Rogers (1959) defined self-concept using three distinct but related components: self-image, self-esteem and ideal self (Figure 1).

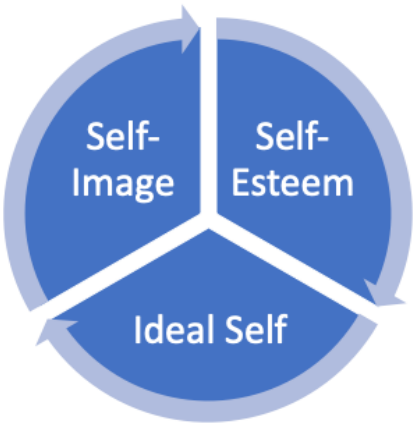

Figure 3.1.1: Rogers' Three Components of Self-Concept

Note. Observe how the three components of self mutually constitute each other.

Self-image is the way we see ourselves. This may include our physical attributes, social roles and personality traits. Unfortunately, our self-image can be inaccurate. When you were a child, did you ever think you were really good at something only to find out later that it wasn't true? This type of situation (which can happen at any time in life) is an example of how our self-image may not match reality.

Self-esteem is the way we evaluate ourselves and the importance we place on that evaluation. When we compare ourselves to others, is the result more positive or negative? For some people, the answer may be as simple as: a positive comparison equals improved self-esteem and a negative comparison equals decreased self-esteem. But for others, the answer may be more complicated. For example, a negative comparison may lead a person to work harder to improve and could actually improve self-esteem.

If you had no limitations (money, time, resources, etc.), who would you be and what would you do?

Your answer is your ideal self (at least at this moment). Our **ideal self** is who we want to be. We typically describe our ideal self in terms of our goals and ambitions in life. However, this concept is not static, meaning it can change over time as we change and grow.

If you had no limitations (money, time, resources, etc.), who would you be and what would you do? Your answer is your ideal self (at least at this moment). Our **ideal self** is who we want to be. We typically describe our ideal self in terms of our goals and ambitions in life. However, this concept is not static, meaning it can change over time as we change and grow.

The ideas we have about who we are (our self-concept) is a mixture of many things. The way we see ourselves (self-image), the way we evaluate ourselves in terms of others (self-esteem), and who we want to be (ideal self), all contribute to our understanding of self.

Self-concept theories

A variety of scholars in psychology, sociology, and communication have researched self-concept. Their task is a difficult one because our self-concept is personal, dynamic and changes as we learn more about ourselves and the world around us. In this section, we will look at a few prominent theories and ideas from this area of research.

Johari window

What do we know about ourselves? What aspects of ourselves do we share with others? What aspects of ourselves are yet to be determined? In 1955 psychologists, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham created a model known as the Johari window to visually represent the aspects of self that are known to us versus those that are unknown to us. Their model has four quadrants (Figure 2).

In the first quadrant (upper, left-hand corner) are those ideas that are known to self and others. This quadrant is considered the *open area* and likely includes ideas like your name, hobbies and other topics about yourself that you freely share with others. If you have

a social media account, the messages you post publicly would fall into this quadrant.

In the second quadrant (upper, right-hand corner) are those ideas that are unknown to self but known to others. This quadrant is considered the *blind area*. This area might be easier to think about in terms of others. Do you have a friend, co-worker or sibling who comes off abrasive but doesn't know it? Or maybe you know someone who's a pushover but doesn't see it. Do you think that their lack of recognition affects their understanding of self? Now, let's think about it in terms of ourselves. What are our blind spots? These aspects of our personality (that others readily known) but escape our notice fall into this area of the Johari window.

In the third quadrant (lower, left-hand corner) are those ideas that are known to self but unknown to others. This quadrant is considered the (it is titled 'facade' in Figure 2) *hidden area* and includes things you known about yourself that you do not share with others (i.e., traumas you've experience, emotional insecurities, embarrassing situations, etc.).

In the fourth quadrant (lower, right-hand corner) are those ideas that are unknown to self and others. This quadrant is considered the *unknown area*. This area includes things you and others don't know (yet). How will you cope with the loss of a parent (if both your parents are living)? What type of parent will you be (if you don't have children)? How successful will your career be (if you're in school and having started your career yet)? Because these things haven't happened yet, the outcome is unknown.

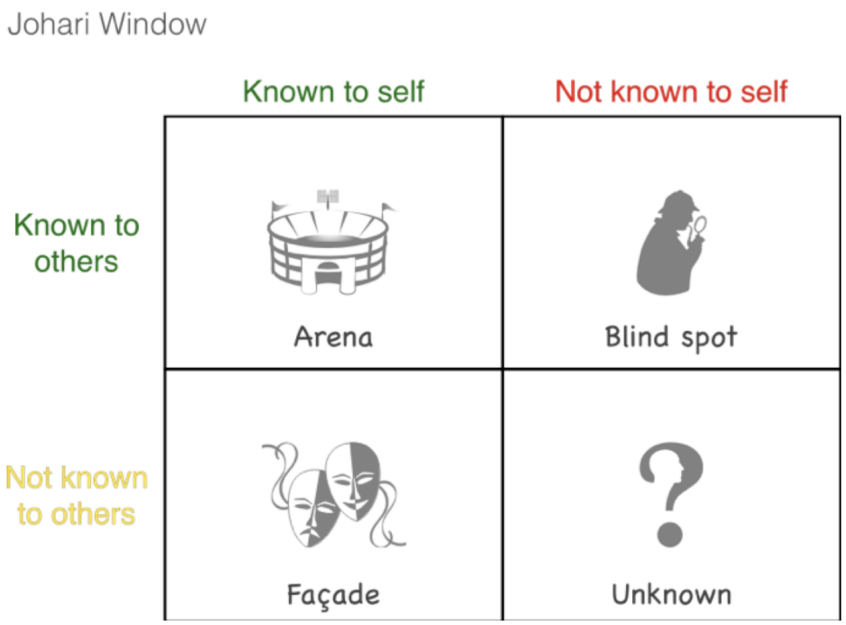

Figure 3.1.2: Johari Window

From "Johari Window," by Spaynton, 2019, *WikiMedia Commons* (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:JohariWindow.png). Licensed under CC-BY-SA 4.0

Reflected Appraisal

How do others view you? What influence do those ideas have on your self-concept? **Reflected appraisal** is a term used to describe the process by which our self-concept is affected by what other people think of us.

In 1902, sociologist Charles H. Cooley described how reflected appraisal works in a concept he called the "looking glass self." Cooley suggested that our understanding of how others perceive us influences the development of our self-concept (Cooley, 1902). As such, social interactions (especially with those who are most important to us) play an integral role in the cultivation of our sense of self. Let's look at an example to see how this might work.

When you were a child, how did your parents or guardians describe you? If words like "smart," "athletic" or "kind" were used. You may have believed those words and worked harder to exemplify them by studying more frequently, practicing your sports more often or trying to be nice to everyone. If someone asked you to describe yourself, you may have even used those words (because they were now part of your own self-concept).

On the other hand, if your parents or guardians described you as "lazy" or "noncommunicative," you may have believed those words, too. Those words would affect your self-concept in a negative way.

Social comparison theory

When you think about your friends, how do you measure up? In your opinion, are you better (or worse) looking? Are you more (or less) successful? In what ways do you think you are better than your friends? In what ways are you worse off than your friends? In 1954, psychologist Leon Festinger suggested that we evaluate ourselves in comparison to others, and those judgments influence our self-concept. This concept is known as **social comparison theory**.

As with reflected appraisal, some people (those closest to us) influence our self-concept more than others. *Upward social comparison* occurs when we compare ourselves with those we see as better than us. These comparisons tend to focus on the desire to improve ourselves. *Downward social comparison* occurs when we compare ourselves with those we see as worse off than us. These comparisons often focus on making us feel better about ourselves and our abilities.

Self-fulfilling prophecy

A **self-fulfilling prophecy** occurs when your expectation *causes* something to happen. Suppose your friends stop by your apartment to tell you that a new person moved into the apartment down the hallway. When you ask them, what they thought of your new neighbor, they describe the person as aloof and rude.

Later in the day, you run into your new neighbor by the mailboxes. Based on the description you heard from your friends, you say "excuse me" in an aggressive manner and push your way into the space. In turn, your new neighbor gives you a harsh look and leaves quickly. The next time you see your friends, you tell them that you met your new neighbor and definitely agree with their assessment.

Was your new neighbor actually aloof and rude? Or did you treat your new neighbor in a way that your preconceived notion would be fulfilled? If so, it is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Sometimes our expectations (or the expectations of others) can influence our communication behaviors. In the example above, the information you received from your friends influenced how you interacted with your new neighbor. How might things have been different if you didn't know anything about your new neighbor before you met at the mailboxes? Would you have communicated in a friendlier manner? If you had, would your new neighbor have reacted differently? It's difficult to say what would have happened. But it's important to remember that the feedback we receive about others may not be accurate. If we communicate with others based on inaccurate information, we may create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Conclusion

Trying to pinpoint who we are can be difficult. There are many aspects to our self-concept. In some cases, the aspects of self we present will depend on a variety of factors. In this module, we learned about different ways to think about self-concept and various people and situations that may influence the development of our ideas about self. We also learned about several theories and ideas related to our development of self-concept.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Johari Window

Ask the students to take out a sheet of paper, draw a square with four quadrants and label each quadrant (as described in the text). (Alternatively, the instructor could create a worksheet). Ask the students to spend a few minutes jotting down ideas about themselves that would fit into each category. (While they are discussing, draw a Johari window on the board large enough for students to enter information) After 10-15 minutes, have the students wrap up their thoughts, and then ask students to share and compare with classmates seated near to them. After, share and compare, then:

- Ask a member of each small group to enter in the Johari window drawn on the board common elements their group what they wrote down for a particular quadrant (or all four quadrants)
- Ask each group to report to the class how they made decisions about what should go where

Finish the activity by asking students what are their key takeaways about the Johari window and how it be used to better understand self-concept.

2. Reflected Appraisal

Ask students to brainstorm/write on the follow topic:

- Who has influenced your self-concept?
- In what ways?

Students can take this activity in a variety of directions. They could look at early influencers (such as parents or siblings) or later points in their life. While students are brainstorming, create two columns on the board: Column 1 Element of self-concept. Column 2 Who influenced it?

After 10-15 minutes, have students share and compare with small group of classmates seated near them. Ask a member of each group to write common elements from their group in each column. Finish the activity by asking students what are their key takeaways about reflected appraisal and how it be used to better understand self-concept.

3. Social Comparison

Ask students to discuss with small group seated near them, who do they (or others they know) use as social comparisons and what is compared. While students are discussing, make two columns on the board: Column 1 Who? Column 2 What? Ask a member of each group to write common elements from their group discussion under each column. Ask the class what are their key takeaways about social comparison and how it can be used to better understand self-concept.

Ask students to find a social setting where they can observe others (preferable in their peer group). Examples: at a coffee shop, bar, restaurant, etc. Ask them to observe the setting, people, etc. and jot down notes about what they are seeing. This observation should last for 30 minutes.

During the next class meeting, ask students to share what they observed. The instructor should write some of these ideas on the whiteboard. Once everyone is done offering their observations, ask them to think about how this information could be used as a social comparison.

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GLOSSARY

Ideal self: Your conception of who you would like to be.

Johari Window: A framework for making sense of identity based on what one knows and how one believes that they are perceived.

Reflected appraisal: Describes the process by which our self-concept is affected by what other people think of us.

Schema: A cognitive framework (idea or concept) that helps us to organize and interpret information about ourselves and the world around us.

Self-concept: Ideas you have about who you are.

Self-esteem: How we evaluate ourselves and the value we place on that evaluation.

Self-fulfilling prophecy: When your expectation causes something to happen.

Self-image: The way we see ourselves.

Social comparison: The ways we evaluate ourselves in comparison to others and how those judgments influence our self-concept.

MEDIA ATTRIBUTIONS

Johari window:

3.2: Self-Image

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Describe self-image and explain how we perform different roles in different contexts.
- Discuss the persona and shadow and explain how it relates to self-image
- Describe cognitive dissonance and the three ways to resolve it.
- Discuss perception and identity the five stages of perception.
- Describe image management and face needs.

SELF-IMAGE

Our sense of self is greatly influenced by the ideas we have about who we are. But we are also concerned with how others view us. When we interact with another person (especially in an interpersonal context), we negotiate what aspects of ourselves we share based on how we want to be perceived. This module explores the concept of self-image and the ways we attempt to manage our image to others.

Self-Image

If you asked your friends to describe you, what would they say? What about your family or co-workers? In what ways would the words others use to describe you be similar or different in different contexts? **Self-image** is the way we want others to see us. Our self-image (similar to our self-concept) is complicated. It can even change depending on the person(s) we are communicating with or the situation.

Self-image as performance

In 1959, sociologist Erving Goffman suggested that we perform different roles in different contexts. The image we present is selective. We don't share all aspects of ourselves with everyone. Our image is often based on our expectations, the expectations of others and our relationship to them. Let's look an example:

An actor is someone who portrays a character in a specific context (e.g., a television show, film, theatrical production, etc.). Throughout their career, an actor may portray several distinctly different characters. Each time reading the script, developing their ideas about the character and context and crafting these elements into their performance. The image an actor presents in a performance depends on the role they are playing and the context.

At the same time, an actor is also a real person. Their personality, interests and communication style may be very different from the characters they have portrayed. This can sometimes create confusion for fans who see their favorite actors in public places.

While we may not be playing different characters on a stage, we are actors, too. The image we present to others depends on a variety of factors. In one situation, we may want to appear intelligent, reliable and focused (e.g., during a job interview or when delivering a presentation). In another situation, we may want to appear funny, carefree and outgoing (e.g., when we spend time with our friends or in a social situation).

"Dow Centennial Centre Shell Theatre Stage," by JoshGennings, 2015, WikiMedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/F...atre_Stage.jpg). Licensed under CC-BY-SA 4.0

We cultivate our self-image based on the information available (what we know about ourselves as well as others and the context). This dynamic process continues to develop throughout our lives.

Carl Jung's persona and shadow

Many psychologists have contributed to our understanding of self and the image we present to others. Carl Jung's work on the persona and shadow are useful for this discussion.

Jung believed the psyche is made up of three interacting systems: the ego, personal unconscious and collective unconscious (Jung, 1966). His work describes how thoughts, feelings and memories are imprinted upon us (either consciously or unconsciously) and the ways these imprints influence our self-concept and self-image. Jung's work is extensive and detailed, but purposes of this discussion, we're going to focus on two concepts: the persona and shadow.

What does your social profile look like? What topics, stories, pictures, etc. do you share with others? Does your profile accurately represent you and your life? Maybe it does. But chances are you've made choices about how you want to appear to others. Your profile may even look different depending upon the platform or website. For example, your profile on a dating website might look very different from your profile on a professional networking site.

The **persona** is a mask, or public face we present to the world. Much like being an actor, we perform roles in different context (Jung, 2006). We use different masks to perform those roles. For example, we may use one persona as a parent, another persona as a professional, and yet another persona as a friend. Each persona is cultivated based on the context (i.e., situation, people, roles, etc.). It represents the choices we make about who we are and how we wish others to see us.

The **shadow** represents the hidden aspects of self. We sometimes choose to repress certain feelings, thoughts and memories (because they are painful or traumatic). These repressions are buried our unconscious mind. Jung argued that we should examine our shadow (even if it's difficult) because it has the ability to negatively influence our self-concept and the ways we interact with others.

The concepts of the persona and shadow help us to better understand ourselves and the ways to conscious or unconsciously attempt to manage our public image. We now turn to a discussion on cognitive dissonance to explain how we reconcile inconsistencies in our self-image.

Cognitive dissonance

In 1957, Leon Festinger used the term **cognitive dissonance** to describe the uncomfortable feeling we experience when our beliefs and behaviors are not aligned. When this occurs, we are motivated to get rid of the inconsistency. This process usually involves one of three approaches: change the behavior, change the belief, or rationalize the behavior (Festinger, 1957).

For example, we may know smoking is bad for our health. We may say we value our health and well-being. At the same time, we smoke with our friends when socializing. Our partner may notice that what we say and what we do are two different things and ask us about it. This situation would create cognitive dissonance (Figure 1).

To reduce the stress associated with cognitive dissonance, we could: (1) stop smoking (because it isn't healthy), (2) say we don't value our health (and continue the smoking behavior), or (3) rationalize that we don't smoke that often so our health isn't compromised.

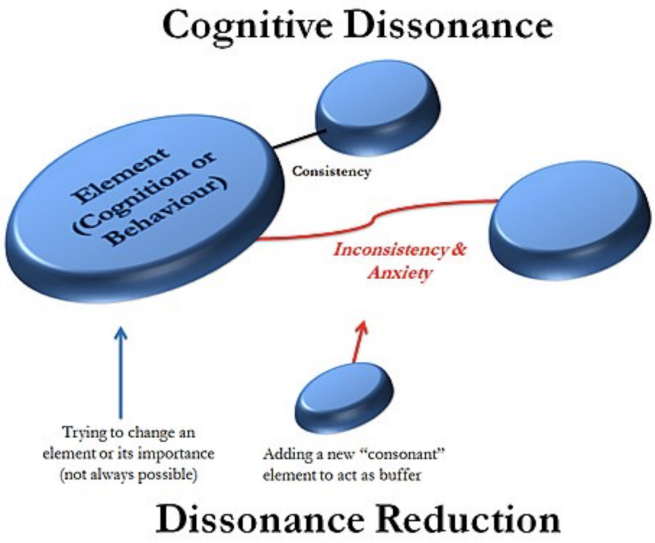

Figure 3.2.1: Cognitive Dissonance

"Cognitive Dissonance: Dissonance Reduction," by Tesseract2, 2010, WikiMedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/F...nceDiagram.jpg). Licensed under CC-BY-SA 4.0

We manage our self-image by reconciling what we know about ourselves with what we want others to know about us. When we are exposed to an idea or situation that challenges our perspective, we may need to renegotiate or rationalize our behavior. How we accomplish this task may be influence by our perception of things. The next section is going to examine how perception relations to self-image.

We manage our self-image by reconciling what we know about ourselves with what we want others to know about us. When we are exposed to an idea or situation that challenges our perspective, we may need to renegotiate or rationalize our behavior. How we accomplish this task may be influence by our perception of things. The next section is going to examine how perception relations to self-image.

Perception

As we move through time and space, we are constantly bombarded with sensory information. The process by which we select, organize and interpret this information is called **perception**. Perception allows us to experience the world around us through our senses: sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. While it is largely a cognitive and psychological activity, perception influences how we perceive other people (and how they perceive us).

Perception also affects our interpersonal communication. We react differently to stimuli we view as favorable as opposed to stimuli we see as unfavorable.

The five stages of perception

Perception is a process, a sequence of steps that begins with the environment. Joseph Devito (2016) breaks perception into five stages that occur when we encounter another person interpersonally. These stages help to explain the process of interaction (Figure 2).

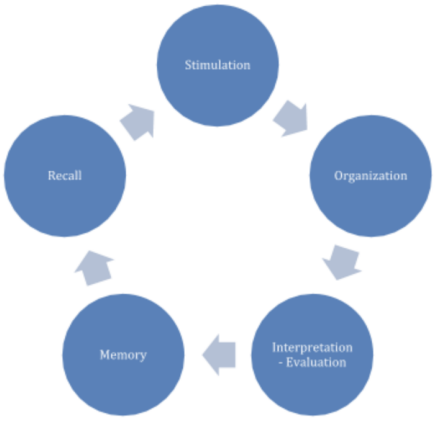

Figure 3.2.2: Five Stages of Perception

Stimulation

Stimulation is the first step. It involves coming into contact with a particular stimulus in a specific environment. We gather sensory data about the stimulus through our senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch). Then we select certain stimuli to focus on because we can't pay attention to everything at once.

For example, say you were walking in the park with a friend and having a conversation. Then your cell phone started to ring. Would ignore it and continue talking with your friend? Or would you look at your phone to see who's calling and answer it?

In this example, the ringing of the phone is perceived through sensory data (sound and touch). Once your attention is drawn, you have a choice to make (selection) about which stimuli you will pay attention to.

Organization

The next step is to organize the stimuli. This step is important because we cannot effectively use our senses if we can't identify and recognize the stimulus. Many people organize stimuli by topics or categories. Sometimes it may make more sense to organize things by rules or patterns.

For example, you are walking on campus and recognize someone you've seen in class. You might smile when you walk by that person and without thinking say, "hi, how are you?" Your classmate may respond, "Good, how are you?" as you pass each other. How did you both know how to handle this communication situation?

You know how because you've probably been in this situation many times. What you think you should do has already been processed and organized in your mind. This organization has been reinforced through many communication occurrences. As a result, you don't think much about what to do.

Interpretation-evaluation

How do we making meaning from the stimuli we've selected from the environment and organized in our minds? The third step explains how we process this information by interpreting and evaluating it. To do this, we may draw on previous experiences and knowledge or we may evaluate the information in terms of our beliefs, values, needs, expectations, etc.

For example, when you go to your doctor's office for a check-up, do you question your doctor's intelligence (at least as it relates to medicine)? Do you ask your doctor which medical school he or she attended? Or do you ask your doctor what his or her grades were in school?

Most of us, assume doctors are knowledgeable and successful. When the doctor walks into the exam room, wearing a stethoscope, we make assumptions based on previous interpretations of doctors (in general) and our doctor specifically.

Memory

After stimuli has been organized and interpreted, it gets stored in our memory. The brain records everything and what we choose to actively remember is dictated by how we organized the information as well as the level of *salience* we have with the stimuli.

Think of your memory as a filing cabinet. Within the filing cabinet, there are many files. If we put files into the cabinet at random, it may be difficult to find a specific file later. If, on the other hand, we organize each drawer of the cabinet based on a topic and

then add dividers to organize it further. How much easier might it be to find a specific file? Memory, like a filing cabinet, is about *both* storage and organization.

Recall

The last step is recall. Once stimuli are organized and stored in our memory, we may need to remember that information. We need to access the memory file and reconstruct the information in a meaningful way. Again, relevance or salience matters. What we can recall is influenced by our unique set of values regarding what is important.

Does/Did your grandmother wear a specific perfume? If some walked by you right now wearing that perfume, would you immediately think of your grandmother? What images or ideas would pop into your head?

The sensory data (smell of a specific perfume) is connected to your grandmother. This idea has been reinforced many times through your experiences with her. So, when you smell that perfume, the idea of your grandmother comes to your mind immediately. This is one example of how recall works.

Perception formation, self-presentation, and management

Perception is created by our orientation to society and our unique self-concept. What we perceive and how we interpret that information is influenced and managed by our upbringing and personal preferences. Our values dictate how we form our self-image and the ways we interact with others. We manage our expectations and the expectations of others through image management. This is manifested through our interpersonal relationships and interactions with others.

Image management and face needs

We develop our public image based on our self-concept and the feedback we receive from others through interpersonal interactions. The way we behave in a particular context is our desired public image. Goffman used the term **face** to describe this concept.

We have three face needs: fellowship, autonomy and competence. **Fellowship face** is the relational aspect of our public image. We need others to like and accept us. **Autonomy face** is the independent aspect of our public image. We want to remain independent of others so they cannot intrude upon us. **Competence face** is the aptitude aspect of our public image. We need others to acknowledge and respect our intelligence and abilities.

Threats to face

Our face needs depend on the desired public image we want to project. Because we each have a different public image, our face needs are also different. One person may have a high level in one area and not care about the other two. Another person may have a moderate level in more than one area. Our needs really depend on our desired public image.

We may not even be aware of our face needs. We generally become aware of our face needs when we feel threatened. Face threats often lead us to behave in ways that restore our desired public image.

For example, if we value our competence face and found ourselves in a situation where our competence was threated (i.e., we applied to Ivy League Schools and got rejected), we might have trouble figuring out how to reconcile our desire to seem smart with the rejection letters. In this situation, we may try to save face by tell our family and friends that Ivy League Schools are for wealthy kids, not intelligent ones.

Conclusion

Skilled communicators manage their public image by recognizing and adapting to varied situations and context. If we want to be skilled communicators, it is important to have a strong sense of self and think in careful ways about *what* and *how* we communicate who we are to others.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Analysis of Online Self-Image

This activity focuses on the ways we cultivate self-image in online forums. Ask the students to select a social media platform they use regularly and review their profile, messages, images, etc., they have posted in the past six months. As they examine their online self-image, ask the students to write down in their notes what they see.

After 15-20 minutes, ask the students to analyze their notes (categories of posts, types of images, elements of self that they shared on profile, feedback they received from others, etc.). Then ask them to think about the concept of self-image and compare the self-image they see to the self-image they would like to present. Are they the same? Are they different? If so, in what ways?

After the students have finished their comparisons, ask them to discuss as a class:

- What is self-image? How does it relate to our presence on social media platforms?
- Did you notice any inconsistencies between what you want your self-image to be and what it actually is?
- If you are more intentional in developing your self-image, what would happen?
- If someone (like a future employer, partner, friend, etc.) saw your self-image, would they view it positively or negatively?
- Do you think you need to change/develop your self-image? If so, what changes would you make?

Then ask groups to report to the class their answers to the questions.

Five Stages of Perception

Ask the students to work in small groups (3-5 students). They should begin by reviewing the five stages of perception. After a few minutes, ask the students to work in their groups to analyze how the perception process relates to learning (in general terms). Then have them develop a new learning method (something they could use for studying and preparing for exams) that focuses on the five stages of perception.

After 15-20 minutes, ask each group to share their learning method with the class. After each group is done presenting their ideas, discuss with the students the relationship between perception and learning.

Face Needs

Ask students to form groups (3-5 students) and discuss the three face needs: fellowship, autonomy and competence. After a few minutes, ask them to think about and discuss in their groups:

- Which face(s) is most important to them? Why?
- Does context and audience influence your face needs? (Think about different examples such as at home, socially, at work, etc.).
- Based on the face(s) that are most important to you, what are the potential face threats you may experience?
- What ways might you reduce the discomfort of those face threats?

When groups are done discussing, ask for volunteers to share what they talked about with the class. Use the examples offered to reinforce their learning about face needs and threats.

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GLOSSARY

Autonomy face: The independent aspect of our public image.

Cognitive dissonance: The uncomfortable feeling we experience when our beliefs and behaviors are not aligned.

Competence face: The aptitude aspect of our public image.

Face: A person's desired public image.

Fellowship face: The relational aspect of our public image.

Perception: The process by which we select, organize and interpret information.

Persona: A mask, or public face we present to the world.

Self-image: The way we want others to see us.

Shadow: Represents the hidden aspects of the self.

MEDIA ATTRIBUTIONS

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3.3: Culture and Identity

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Define the terms culture, race and ethnicity.
- Describe the four components of culture.
- Discuss cultural influences on communication (i.e., individualism and collectivism, low- and high-context cultures and low- and high-power distance cultures).
- Describe the process of identity formation and different types of identities (i.e., personal, social and cultural).
- Discuss identity management and the relational stages.

CULTURE AND IDENTITY

We live in a diverse, global world. New technologies have increased our ability to communicate with others in both near and far away places. These technologies have increased our exposure to a variety of cultures and practices as well as our ability to share our own experience. This module will examine the concept of culture, cultural influences on interpersonal communication and the negotiation of culture and identity.

Defining culture

The term culture can mean many things to different people. This term plays an important role in our social lives. It helps us to shape our interpersonal relationships, determine the ways we make sense of the world and our place in it and influences our actions and experiences in society.

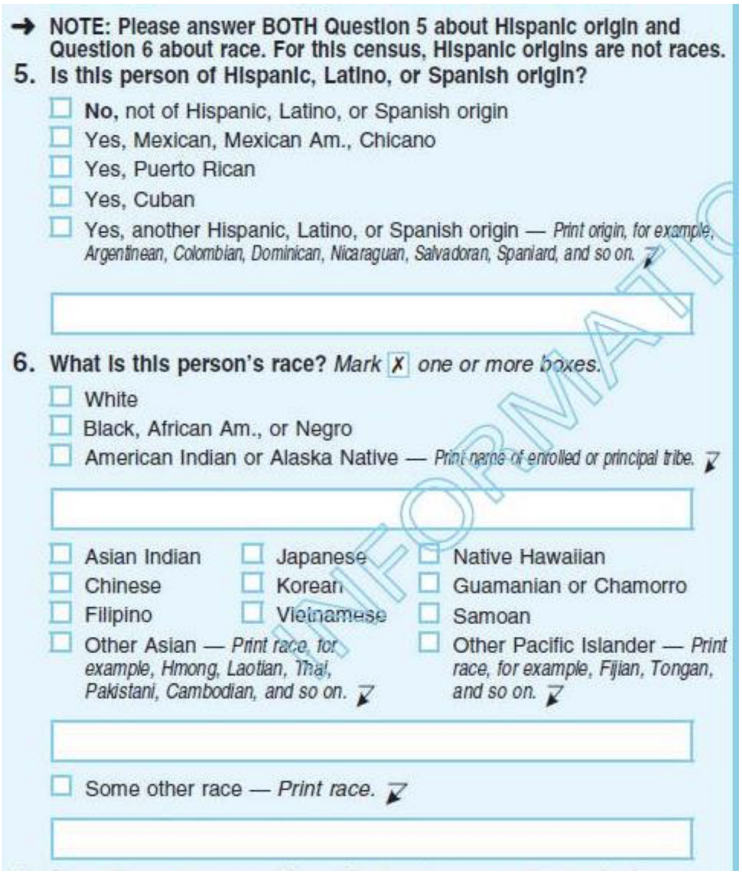
For our purposes, we will define **culture** as a system of learned and shared symbols, language, values and norms. Culture is not defined by location, ethnicity or economic status. It belongs to people and describes the way a group lives based on unique factors and historical context.

Race and ethnicity

Culture is learned not inherited. It is determined by our upbringing (who and where we were raised) as well as the symbols, language, values and norms we were exposed to. This means that culture is not necessarily tied to our race and ethnicity. To better understand this distinction, we will examine the ideas of race and ethnicity in this section.

Race

Race is the way we categorize people based on physical features (such as skin color) that is shared (to some degree) by a specific group of people. In the United States, common racial categories are Black, White, Asian, Latino and Native American. What do these categories mean? How are they used?



"US Census 2010 Form Extract of Race Section" by US Census Bureau, *WikiMedia Commons* (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:US_Census_2010_form_race.jpg). Public Domain CC0.

The subject of race is controversial. A quick review of history shows that race has traditionally been used to oppress and enslave people. While these explicit forms of oppression are not as prevalent today, there are still may ways racial categories are used against groups of people. These forms of oppression are more *implied* and are deeply embedded in our social, political and economic systems.

Racial identification is flawed. Think about the common racial categories used in the United States, what do these terms *actually* mean? Can a person be a color? Are "white" people actually white? Are "black" people actually black? What about a child born to parents who are categorized as different races, what race is the child?

Many theorists have studied the relationship between race, discourse and identity. In 2006, cultural theorist Stuart Hall described race as a "floating signifier." Hall argued that race is discursive construct that operates in society as a form of representation. In 2015, sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant described race as a socially constructed identity used to justify ethnocentrism.

Ethnocentrism is a term used to describe a systematic preference for the characteristics of our own culture. It may also lead us to be less trusting of others who do not share our ethnic, national and/or cultural background.

For theorists like Hall, Omi and Winant, our ideas of race are socially constructed and cannot be extracted from a context based on power. Although racial categories may appear natural, they are actually due to our socialization through the creation of symbols

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is defined by the unique characteristics of a social group, usually bound by shared identity-based ancestry, language, religion or culture. Sometimes people think that ethnic groups exist only through common national or cultural origins, but this is not accurate. In reality, an ethnic group forms because of their shared historical and social experiences. Over time, these shared experiences help to develop the group's ethnic identity.

The concept of race and ethnicity can be confusing. We sometimes look for simple explanations to describe complex phenomena. When this occurs, we may misinterpret others and even offend them. Let's look at an example to better understand how this can

happen.

Maya and Carlos are siblings from the Dominican Republic who now live in a midsized town in Texas. They are good students who enjoy the outdoors and interacting with their peers. Maya and Carlos are bilingual and speak both Spanish and English. Despite being well mannered and friendly with most of their classmates, they experience many misunderstandings.

While sharing the same parents and cultural background, Maya and Carlos have different skin tones. Maya's skin is a darker shade of brown, while Carlos' skin is lighter. Maya has experienced frequent arguments with her African American friends about her supposed blackness. She knows her friends mean well but is tired of explaining to them that she identifies as Dominican and not black. Maya's friends think she is in denial of her heritage, while Maya tries with little success to explain the nuances of race and ethnicity to them.

Meanwhile, Carlos is experiencing a different type of misunderstanding. The kids in his grade and on his baseball team, keep referring to him as Mexican. Carlos has gotten into a few skirmishes over this misunderstanding, because he has already told them where he is from. The kids who keep calling Carlos Mexican seem not to care. Sometimes when his team plays at rival schools, he even hears racial slurs aimed at him by people who assume he is Mexican, or who don't care enough to know he's Dominican. This enrages Carlos even more as he asks himself why these people are so stupid and insensitive.

Components of Culture

Cultures vary greatly. Even within the same country, people from different regions may differ in their values and customs. Regardless of these geographical differences, there are several shared elements within a culture including, symbols, language, values and norms.

A **symbol** is something that represents something else. For example, a U.S. flag represents many ideas, but at a basic level, it represents the United States. **Language** is a system of spoken or written symbols that creates shared meaning. In the context of culture, language helps us to express our identity and pass ideas from one generation to the next. **Values** are the beliefs or ideals shared by members of a culture. For example, U.S. culture values democracy. **Norms** are rules or expectations that guide people's behavior within a culture. For example, it may be appropriate (and expected) that you shake hands when you meet someone. In another culture, this action may be viewed as disrespectful.

Co-Cultures

Within a culture, there may be several co-cultures. **Co-cultures** are groups who share values, customs and norms related to common interests or characteristics. It is a subset (a small group) within a culture. We may identify with several co-cultures based on our age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or other interests (such as athletic, musical, etc.).

"Skateboarders skate at Tompkins Square Park during Save Tompkins Day" by Wil540 art, 2019, *WikiMedia Commons* (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Skateboarders_skate_at_Tompkins_Square_Park.jpg). Licensed under CC-BY-SA 4.0

Cultural Influences on Communication

We are affected by our culture, and in turn, our cultural beliefs and traditions can influence our communication behavior. Many scholars in psychology, sociology, anthropology and communication have studied cultures and cultural differences. Their work has

identified several cultural differences that influence how people interact with each other. For the purposes of our discussion, we are going to focus on individualism and collectivism, low- and high-culture contexts and low- and high-power distance.

Individualism and Collectivism

There are many ways cultures can differ. Some cultures emphasize individualism, while others focus more on collectivism. In an **individualistic culture**, people value the individual over the group. They believe in personal rights, self-expression, innovation, autonomy and privacy. A primary motivator, in this type of culture, is competitiveness. The old U.S. Army slogan: "Be all you can be," aptly describes the spirit of individualism.

In a **collective culture**, people value the interests of the group (i.e., family and community) over personal achievement. This is especially true when personal achievements conflict with the goals or values of the group. They believe in collaboration, cooperation and tradition.

Whether you are a member of an individualistic or collective culture, the ways that you are socialized will directly influence your self-concept and self-esteem. If your culture is individualistic, you may be more likely to strive toward goals that benefit your own self-interest. Conversely, if you are a member of a collective culture, you may form your self-concept around the interest and contexts of your group.

Low- and High-Context Cultures

Some cultures emphasize low-context, while other cultures prefer a high-context. **Low-context cultures** tend to be more pluralistic with less emphasis on shared values and norms. Communication in low-context cultures is often more explicit and direct because there are multiple individual cultures that exist within this context.

The United States is a perfect example. In the U.S., inhabitants differ in many ways including, ethnicity, religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds. As a result, communication is often candid, and traditions can vary greatly. Low-context cultures may also function with one or more native languages or be infused with languages from immigrant groups.

Listed below are some of the attributes of a low-context culture:

- Individualism and personal achievement are valued.
- Social structures are decentralized.
- Communication is a means to convey information. Interactions are less personal.
- Verbal messages are direct. Nonverbal elements are less important.
- Relationships are viewed as temporary. Individuals are transient.
- There will be a greater number of interactions with others (over lifespan).
- Interactions with people from differing cultural backgrounds is encouraged.
- Privacy and personal space are valued. Everyone is not family.
- Focus is placed on results (i.e., getting things done).
- Time is viewed in a linear fashion.
- Punctuality and speed are valued (i.e., time is money).

By comparison, **high-context cultures** tend to rely on history and shared experience that are reinforced through cultural values and norms. Communication in high-context cultures is implicit because meaning is created through norms and practices that have been passed from one generation to the next.

Several factors contribute to the development of a high-context culture. Traditions or a deeply rooted sense of history contribute to the development of a high-context culture. Norms and practices are embedded within family histories. Deference is shown to elders. High-context cultures are usually ethnically similar (i.e., homogeneous) and share one common language.

Listed below are some of the attributes of a high-context culture:

- Group identity is valued more than individuality.
- Social structures are highly important. They maintain cultural identity and traditions.
- Interpersonal relationships are established over time.
- Trust is developed through shared experiences. The family structure is emphasized.
- Authority figures are valued and respected.
- Social cues are subtle.
- Communication is viewed as an art based on established symbol systems.

- Verbal communication is indirect. Nonverbal communication is important.
- Gestures, tone and facial expressions are used to understanding verbal meaning.
- Space is shared. People are comfortable being near each other.
- Time is viewed in a less linear.
- Process is valued over speed.

Low- and High-Power Distance Cultures

Power is the ability for a person to influence another in a social relationship. The extent to which power is distributed among many people or is concentrated in a few, determines whether a culture is considered to have a low- or high-power distance. In 1978, philosopher Michel Foucault said, "where there is power, there is resistance." Depending upon how power is distributed within a culture and our ability to influence others may be based on the type of power-distance culture we were brought up in.

In **low-power distance cultures**, power is distributed more evenly among people. People in low-power distance cultures value equality and justice. This doesn't necessarily mean that people are treated equally. They just value the idea that people should be. Low-power distance cultures are also more democratic, and power is decentralized. Individuality is emphasized over collective identity. The U.S. is an example of a low-power distance culture.

In **high-power distance cultures**, power is concentrated in a few people (i.e., royalty or a ruling political party). People in high-power distance cultures are taught that certain people or groups deserve more power than everyone else. They also believe that respecting power (and those that possess it) is more important than equality. High-power distance cultures are also more autocratic.

Cultural Context and Power Distance Influence Interpersonal Communication

Our cultural context and power distance play a direct role in our socialization and the ways we communication with others. Let's look at an example to see how culture context and power distance can influence interpersonal communication.

Nelson recently immigrated from Kenya to Florida. Nelson's parents are professors teaching at a local university. Kenyan cultural background is high-context and relies on a long tradition of deference to elders. At his high school, Nelson notices his peers are less deferential to authority figures. Many of them engage in verbal confrontations with their teachers. These confrontations confuse Nelson.

Nelson speaks great English but sticks out because he doesn't have a traditional southern American accent and knows no American teenage slang. He is trying his best to fit into an environment that is alien to him and wants to find a way to connect with his peers.

Being around 6 feet 5 inches tall, Nelson is encouraged to play basketball. In fact, many of the kids assume Nelson already plays basketball because he is tall and his skin is dark. He has little knowledge of the history of African Americans in the Deep South or in America in general. Sure, Nelson has read a few history books, but he is ill prepared for the racial subtleties that characterize his new context. He doesn't understand how he's been stereotyped.

For one, many of the students assume he's African American until he speaks with his accent. Nelson decides to play basketball to gain friends and status. His teammates keep telling him he is black despite the fact he identities as Kenyan. Nelson assumes he is encouraged to play basketball because he is tall, but he does not realize he is encouraged to play because he's tall *and* black.

Due to Nelson's upbringing he is not as aggressive as some of the other players. His coaches are also encouraging him to assert himself more on the court. To fit in, Nelson starts to listen to hip-hip music despite the fact he loves classical music. None of Nelson's classmates know he can play the violin, a fact he has hidden to avoid teasing.

As time passes, Nelson gains more acceptance from his peers due to his quick study of basketball and his willingness to go with the flow. As Nelson becomes more assertive, he begins to argue with his parents from time to time. Nelson's parents have become concerned with his change in dress and his sudden interest in hip-hop. They wonder if they made the right decision for their son as his goals and attitudes are continuing to shift away from his cultural upbringing.

In this example, Nelson quickly grew sick of kids asking stupid questions about hunting lions in Africa. As a result, he did his best to assimilate into his new culture by doing things other expected of him. While this helped Nelson to fit in with his new peers, his change in behavior strained his relationship with his parents.

Nelson also experienced a culture shock in terms of power distribution. To make extra money, he gets a job at the local gym in the summer. The work isn't too demanding, and Nelson really enjoys it because he can work out when he wants and socialize with the patrons.

Nelson is surprised at first when his supervisor Bobby asks him to call him by his first name. Nelson calls him sir, and Bobby replies, “Man, don’t call me sir, it makes me feel old, call me by name.” In staff meetings, Bobby asks for input from his subordinates. This is weird to Nelson because he is used to being told what to do by his superiors without any of his input.

Nelson’s identity has changed drastically from when he first arrived in the United States (to the chagrin of his parents). His newly adapted American self, conflicts with his Kenyan roots and traditions. Nelson’s parents are upset when he decides to put down the violin and focus on basketball. They are also not happy with his verbal sparring, which they feel is disrespectful.

This story illustrates the possible challenges we could face when our cultural context changes significantly. We are born into a world where certain behaviors are expected (based on assumed societal norms). Our lives are shaped by these norms and our identities are formed. Whether we choose to accept or reject cultural expectations depends on the level of comfort we experience in our environment. Often, it is difficult to go against the grain.

Identity Formation

Identity formation begins *before* we enter the world. Our cultural context dictates a range of possibilities available to us as we shape our identity. Based upon genetics and our orientation to society, we develop our identity. Experiences during our upbringing, the moral systems instilled in us by our parents or guardians and adaptations we make based on cues and interpretations from popular culture all continue to the formation of our identity. In this section, we will explore a variety of factors that influence our identity.

Personal, Social and Cultural Identities

Our self-concept is developed by our ideas about who we are and how we want others to view us. Many people help to shape our sense of self including, parents, siblings, friends, teachers as well as various forms of media we are exposed to in our formative years. As we mature, our cognitive abilities and social awareness increase and we begin to reflect on our self-concept in different ways. In this section, we will look at how our personal, social and cultural identities contribute to our self-concept.

Personal identities are aspects of self that are primarily intrapersonal and directly connect to our experiences in life. Our **social identities** are aspects of self that result from our involvement in social groups that we are interpersonally bound. **Cultural identities** are communally constructed categories that influence our social behavior.

Some people choose to follow traditional paths created by their family structures. Others may choose to reject these notions altogether. In most cases, identities are morphed combinations of moral systems passed down and individual choices based on our own experience. Every generation is a little different in regard to the influences that define them.

Political, Religious and Cultural Expectations

The cultural context also influences how we form our identities. In a low-context culture, the opportunities for individuality or deviation from our cultural expectations is greater than in a high-context culture where tradition is valued. Let’s look at an example to see how personal, social and cultural identities are negotiated.

Priya comes from a traditional Indian family. Her parents are members of a tight knit Indian ethnic community in New York City. Most of the members Priya’s ethnic community are Hindu and her family follows the values and traditions of Hinduism.

Expectations for Priya have always been high. She is supposed to follow the family tradition of studying medicine, as both her parents are physicians. In addition, Priya is also expected to marry a young man in her community who is also Hindu and studying medicine.

All goes according to the family plan when Priya goes to college. She begins her study of medicine and is enjoying the process. Things begin to change as Priya is away from home and gets to experience other cultures directly. An avid reader, Priya has always been curious about other cultures. Her peer group is both ethnically and religiously diverse. She even goes to a Christian church with her dorm mate Sarah every other week without her parents’ knowledge.

Despite her upbringing, Priya is a bit apprehensive about her parents' plan for marriage. Priya’s apprehension is exacerbated when she meets George, a philosophy student from Philadelphia. George and Priya bond over their love of philosophy and music, and soon develop a romantic relationship that Priya’s parents are unaware of.

The problem with George is he is neither Indian or Hindu nor studying medicine. George’s mother’s ethnic background is Polish, and his father is Venezuelan, he comes from a politically liberal family with less rigid moral codes than Priya’s. Adding to the dilemma, George self identifies as an atheist. Priya is in love with George but deep down is not sure if she can be with him long term.

She loves her family and respects their tradition and has no interest in alienating herself from them. At the same time, she is torn by her desire to break tradition and choose a mate on her own.

Priya's story illustrates the difficulties of cultural expectations based on religion and politics. How we shape our identity is based on our orientation to the world, our experience and the environments that cultivate our existence. Some people will choose to follow family tradition and others may go in a different direction. Ultimately, interpersonal relationships are formed and negotiated based on our expectations and values that shape our unique sense of identity.

Traditional and Non-Traditional Roles

Gender roles can also influence the formation of identities. Within a culture, masculinity and femininity more be more or less well defined. Over time, environmental circumstances, attitudes and values may shift. While many applaud these changes and the destruction of social barriers, other lament them and desire a return to tradition. Let's look at an example of how identity and gender roles are negotiated:

Janice is a budding basketball star who recently accepted a full scholarship to a major college. In addition to becoming a world-class athlete she also has done quite well in the classroom, maintaining a 4.0 GPA. Janice's father and brothers are proud of her and encourage her sporting success. Despite Janice's successes, her mother is worried about her.

Throughout her life, Matilda, Janice's mother has tried to get her to do "girls' activities" like learn how to cook and sew. Matilda would give her dresses to wear, which Janice hated as she is more comfortable in basketball shorts or sweats. This ongoing conflict has made Janice feel closer to her father Tom than Matilda.

Along with the conflicts with her mother, Janice also experiences difficulties in dealing with some people her age who feel threatened by her assertiveness. These conflicts began in childhood as some of the boys and girls in her class took issue with her dominance in the classroom and on the court. Janice has always been outspoken which alienated her from many of the girls at her school.

Now that Janice is receiving national fame for her basketball skills, she has a following on social media. Much of the feedback she gets is positive, but there are also a fair number of naysayers. Every time she posts, there are a few people who make rude comments about how she presents herself.

Janice has received comments like, "She thinks she's a dude," "get in the kitchen and make me a sandwich" and other lewd and inappropriate comments about her appearance. Janice likes interacting with her fans but often feels compelled to close her social media accounts because of the negative feedback.

In this example, Janice is struggling with some of the same issues many of us face. How willing are we to ascribe to a preconceived idea about our identity? This is a question we each have to answer for ourselves. We should be aware that assumptions about how we *should* act or communicate are often biases embedded within our cultural context. If our goal is to communicate more effectively, then respecting others (even if they're different) has to be our first goal. We also should remember that when we communicate in more authentic ways with an openness to learning from others, we benefit, too.

We are constantly negotiating aspects of our identity when we communicate with others interpersonally. When our relationship also has an intercultural component, there are many additional considerations. In the next section, we will look at identity management theory and the relational phases an intercultural relationship moves through.

Identity Management

Building on the work of Erving Goffman, William R. Cupach and Tadasu Todd Imahori developed identity management theory (IMT) in 1993. IMT explains the complex management of identity in intercultural interactions. This theory views cultural identity as central to interpersonal communication. As such, IMT also examines the ways partners attempt to successfully negotiate accepted identities during intercultural interactions. In the next section, we will explore the relational phases of intercultural communication.

"Nordic walking by group of people from all ethnics, gender and age from different parts of the world," by Vijay.Shivu, 2011, *WikiMedia Commons*, (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nordic_walking_by_group_of_people_from_all_ethnics,_gender_and_age_from_different_parts_of_the_world.jpg). Licensed under CC-BY-SA

Relational phases of identity management

Imahori and Cupach (2005) suggested intercultural relationships move through three interdependent identity management phases: trial, enmeshment and renegotiation.

The **trial phase** occurs early in an intercultural relationship when partners attempt to negotiate their cultural identity within the framework of the relationship. During this phase, cultural differences can be a significant barrier to relationship development (i.e., differences in language communication style and norms).

Each partner's knowledge of the other partner's culture may be very limited and based on stereotypical information or images. It is important for partners to avoid identity freezing and nonsupport based of this type of information. During this phase, partners may also be more willing to risk face threats to establish an agreeable balance within the relationship.

This phase is called "trial" because there is a lot of trial-and-error experimentation. This used to identify commonalities between partners as well as boundaries for the relationship in terms of face support and face threats.

When intercultural partners find enough commonality between them, they move to the **enmeshment phase**. During this phase, symbols, rules and expectations converge. Partners become more involved in developing their relational identity and more willing to share their expectations in terms obligated, prohibited and preferred behaviors within their shared relationship.

As a result, partners also negotiate their own understanding of competent communication and shared relational identity. However, relational identity is not fully developed yet, and partners tend to ignore or de-emphasize cultural differences as they become more comfortable with their collective identity and relationship.

The **renegotiation phase** occurs when partners develop a stronger sense of their shared relational identity. During this phase, partners are able to their relationship, each other and the outside world in similar ways.

This shared perspective allows partners to view their distinct cultural identities as an asset to the relationship. Partners are also able to address cultural differences more directly because they view these differences as an important and positive aspect to their relationship.

It is important to note that while the three phases of identity management are presented as a sequence, partners in an intercultural relationship may move through these phases at different rates. They may also go back to an earlier phase if they discover new cultural differences that need to be managed.

Conclusion

Our identities begin to form before we enter the world. Our cultural context and upbringing will shape aspects of our identity in significant ways. As we mature, we have more opportunity to make choices about who we are and how we want to live. We may choose to follow the traditional path laid out for us by our parents or we may choose to blaze our own trail. Regardless of which choice (or combination of the two) we make, the more we understand about ourselves and the varied ways we negotiate our identities within the context we live, the better we will be.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Symbols

Prior to class, the instructor should collect various symbols. Some of these symbols should be controversial (i.e., the Confederate flag, professional sports team mascots, etc.). Show each symbol one at a time and ask the students what the symbol represents/means to them. Ask the students to think about different perspectives (if they are hesitant to discuss the symbol). Then ask the students if they think the symbol represents our culture. If so, why? If not, why not? Repeat the process for all the symbols. At the end of the discussion, ask the students to think about how language, values and norms influence our ideas about symbols and what they represent.

Activity 2: Identity Formation

Have students create a time capsule of their current identity.

Part 1- Away from class, choose five objects that reflect your identity. Items should be chosen based on their importance and relevance.

Part 2- Briefly present your objects in class. Explain why and how these objects represent your identity.

Activity 3: Identity Management

Ask the students to form small groups (3-5 students) and assign each group a different country. If possible, select countries that have different cultural and communication practices.

Part 1- Ask each group to research their assigned country in terms of cultural characteristics and communication practices:

- What are the shared symbols, language, values and norms?
- How do they approach interpersonal communication (accepted behavior/practices)?
- What are appropriate communication patterns within this culture?
- What are inappropriate communication patterns within this culture?

Part 2- After the groups have spent some time researching, ask the students what they would do if they were going to live in that country for six months (i.e., study abroad, an internship, a job opportunity). How would they approach fitting into the culture? What communication strategies would they employ? Finally, ask the groups to discuss how the relational stages of identity management may help them in this process.

Part 3- Ask each group to share their findings with the class. The instructor should facilitate this discussion and draw connections between culture and interpersonal communication more broadly.

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GLOSSARY

Co-cultures: Groups who share values, customs and norms related to common interests or characteristics.

Collective cultures: People who value the interests of the group (i.e., family and community) over personal achievement.

Cultural identities: Communally constructed categories that influence our social behavior.

Culture: A system of learned and shared symbols, language, values and norms.

Enmeshment phase (identity management): When intercultural partners find enough commonality between them.

Ethnicity: The unique characteristics of a social group, usually bound by shared identity-based ancestry, language, religion or culture.

Ethnocentrism: A systematic preference for the characteristics of our own culture.

High-context cultures: Cultures that rely on history and shared experience that are reinforced through their values and norms.

High-power distance cultures: Concentrate power in a few people (i.e., royalty or a ruling political party).

Individualistic cultures: Cultures that value the individual over the group.

Language: A system of spoken or written symbols that creates shared meaning.

Low-context cultures: Cultures that are more pluralistic and emphasize on shared values and norms to develop meaning.

Low-power distance cultures: Distribute power more evenly among people.

Norms: Rules or expectations that guide people's behavior within a culture.

Personal identities: Aspects of self that are primarily intrapersonal and directly connect to our experiences in life.

Power: The ability for a person to influence another person in a social relationship.

Race: The way we categorize people based on physical features (such as skin color) that is shared (to some degree) by a specific group of people.

Renegotiation phase (identity management): When partners develop a stronger sense of their shared relational identity.

Social identities: Aspects of self that result from our involvement in social groups that we are interpersonally bound.

Symbol: Something that represents something else.

Trial phase (identity management): Occurs early in an intercultural relationship when partners attempt to negotiate their cultural identity within the framework of the relationship.

Values: The beliefs or ideals shared by members of a culture.

MEDIA ATTRIBUTIONS

Skateboarders skate at Tompkins Square Park during Save Tompkins Day by Wil540 art is licensed under CC-BY-SA 4.0

US Census 2010 form extract of race section by United States Census Bureau is in the Public Domain CC0

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Culture

4.1: Culture and Communication

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Define intercultural communication, including beliefs, values, and norms.
- Discuss co-cultures and how they play a part in intercultural communication.
- Consider 1st order and 2nd order realities and their effect on perception.
- Define cultural practices in different cultures, including context, time, talk, silence, nonverbal communication, and the dimensions of culture.
- Understand how organizational and occupational culture interplay with culture in general.

CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

When you think of intercultural communication, perhaps you don't think about the next door neighbor who just moved in from another state, or the person who works as a firefighter when you work in retail. But, these are just a few of the people that you communicate with interculturally. Interpersonal communication, which happens between two people, often has intercultural aspects to it, and there's more to it than just talking with someone while traveling to another country.

First, the big view of culture and communication deals with beliefs, attitudes, values, and norms. Many definitions of culture call for it being a shared belief system, attitudes, values and norms. However, sometimes within a culture, those beliefs, attitudes, values, and norms may be different, and it's still the same culture. Intercultural communication is defined as a symbolic exchange process where people from different cultural communities negotiate shared meaning (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012).

Part of culture includes beliefs, values, attitudes, and norms, and these are often shared within cultures. **Beliefs** are big. They encompass people's world view, which is the overall way someone views their place in their city, neighborhood, school, friend group, etc. It may include religion, and often does, as religion tends to be a lens through which humans view their world.

Alternatively, the lack of religion could also frame someone's worldview. Two people who are communicating from different world views may have more trouble understanding each other. For instance, one friend who is Hindu and the other friend is an atheist may question how the other gets along in the world, if there is no higher power in the atheist's life, and vice versa, the atheist may be confused by how the Hindu can have many gods.

Values are the learned organization of making choices and resolving conflict, according to Novinger (2001). They are effectively what someone views as morally right or wrong. Most people would agree that murder is wrong, but what people view as murder may not always be the same. For instance, one culture may be against the death penalty, while the next thinks it's fine.

Attitudes include a cognitive layer and an affective layer, with the cognitive layer allowing a person to suspend judgment and be open-minded, and the affective layer allowing the purposeful commitment to perspective-taking and empathy (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012). Attitudes can also be simply feeling positive or negative about something.

These can be changed more easily than something like beliefs or values. For example, if someone doesn't like pizza as a child, but then tries it again with prompting of friends as a teen, and then they do like pizza, the person's attitude about it changed. However, it tends to be more difficult to change something like religious beliefs. If someone grows up being Christian or Hindu, those belief systems and values that come with them tend to stay with a person, and are more ingrained than attitudes.

Then **norms** are what people within a culture have come to understand as the way things are done. For instance, if a family has dinner together, there may be certain things that happen in that process. Perhaps two family members cook together, one person sets the table, everyone talks happily during the meal, and another person cleans up after the family is done. In another family, it may be completely different, with the adults talking while the children look at their phones. The norms in one family are not better or worse; they are different.

Co-cultures are cultures within a larger culture that are differentiated from each other. A group of children in theatre class in middle school comprise a different co-culture than a group of football players. The IT people in a state agency have a different co-culture than the people who work with Medicaid applicants in the same state agency. The people within a generation comprise a co-culture, as do people from a particular ethnicity or race. People who enjoy riding motorcycles are a co-culture. Basically, we are all part of many co-cultures, and part of a larger culture.

Within our own worlds, we observe others. **First-order reality** is what is physically observable, whereas **second-order reality** is attaching meaning to first-order reality. Different people may have different second-order reality. For instance, if a person someone

just met shakes their hand, that's a first-order reality. A second-order reality is that the person has a super-firm handshake that is almost painful and you feel like they want to overpower you. That person's second-order reality is that they admire the person and want to impress them with a firm handshake, and they have been told they have a weak handshake earlier in the day. Two completely different meanings are present, and neither person knows the other person's second-order reality.

Social practices

Geert Hofstede, a noted culture researcher, used the metaphor that your own culture is like the air you breathe, whereas another culture is like water, and you can survive in both, but you must learn to survive in the second one by using tools (2010).

There are several dimensions of culture we use, including **high context** and **low context**. Hall (1976) coined these terms, in which high context means the information conveyed is mostly within the person, whereas in low context, the information conveyed is in explicit code. This means a home loan, with all its many pages of documents to sign, is low-context, coded in language specific to the process, whereas your best friend's stricken expression as she's lost her 15-year-old pet is high context communication. You can do both, but each is necessary in different situations.

Time is valued and perceived differently in different cultures. In Germany, for instance, trains run like clockwork, and in the United States, school schedules are by the minute. At one Texas middle school, school begins at 8:45 a.m., students have precisely seven minutes between classes, and school releases at 4:05 p.m. In Mexico, when someone says to meet at 8 p.m. to go to dinner, it could be 9 or 9:30 by the time people actually arrive. None of these situations are seen as good or bad within their own cultures, but they could promote miscommunication within people from different cultures.

Within cultures, there are different values placed on talk and silence. In the United States, there is a tendency to think talk is highly valued, and that silence means there is something wrong. For instance, there is the dreaded "silent treatment" in interpersonal relationships, where someone isn't talking to the other person in order to punish that person. However, contradictorily, there is also what's labeled a comfortable silence, in which two people can simply be together without talking and there is no issue.

Talk seems to be valued more in the United States than in some other places. For instance, Zimmermann and Morgan indicate there is a lot of pressure to express yourself in Western culture, but perhaps we should " think about silence, solitude, and contemplation and the role they might play in restoring personal understanding of the *Self* and of authentic experience of the *Other* through reflective learning" (2016, p. 400). Some Native American people like the Apaches, value silence, as do the French (with people they don't know), and because people from the United States who are not Native Americans value talk, miscommunication may happen frequently (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012).

Nonverbal communication permeates all of communication, and is truly inescapable, even sometimes with someone's absence. In nonverbal communication, there are factors of facial expression, touch, artifacts, use of time, gestures, tone, volume, choice of clothing, hairstyle, or makeup. All of these determine impressions, and may be misinterpreted.

Even the six universal facial expressions, surprise, disgust, fear, anger, happiness, and sadness, are not always supported interculturally (Jack, Garrod, Yu, Caldara, & Schyns, 2012). Just the clothing you're wearing may tell someone about your personality and culture. While it may be tempting to draw conclusions about someone from their nonverbal communication, ethical communicators work hard to avoid assumptions.

Knowing Hofstede's Dimensions will help in adapting to your audience in interpersonal communication when you are communicating with someone of a different culture, co-culture, or international culture. **Individualism** and **collectivism** are two dimensions that indicate whether someone is more concerned about themselves and their immediate family as opposed to the group. Culturally, people from the United States, Germany, Ireland, South Africa, and Australia are high on the individualism spectrum, while people from countries such as Japan, China, Korea, Venezuela, Guatemala, Indonesia, Argentina, Brazil, Nigeria, and India are seen as collectivist.

Uncertainty avoidance is the degree to which people do not like uncertainty. In some cultures, people are fine with vague details, while high uncertainty avoidance cultures include people who want to know what's going to happen, with whom, when, and how.

Power distance relates to how people view people who are more powerful than they are. For instance, think about being on a first-name basis with your boss or parents? This may mean you are a low-power distance person, whereas if you call your boss Ms. Ramirez, you may have a higher power distance.

Masculinity and **femininity** are also cultural dimensions, in which masculine cultures have different expectations for men and women, and feminine cultures have more fluid gender roles. This can vary within households as well. The concepts of masculinity

and femininity are socially constructed concepts, which means there are in-betweens, and these binary stereotypes exist as part of a continuum, which is discussed more in an upcoming unit on gender.

Long-term and **short-term orientation** is another dimension, where long-term means people are interested in what will happen over a longer period of time, and preparations are made for careers, education, and family life, whereas cultures with a short-term orientation tend to focus on the now, and even the past, with tradition being at the forefront.

Organizational culture

Beliefs, values, and norms within organizational culture may be a bit different than within the social culture. People in general, organize, but what we are considering organizational culture here is some type of organization where there is a purpose, and a culture emerges from it. For instance, a college has an organizational culture. A restaurant has an organizational culture. A retail store and its employees have an organizational culture.

Take a restaurant, Cheesecake Factory. It has an organizational culture, as all its employees dress the same, there is a giant, multi-multi-page menu, and birthdays are celebrated. The decor is expansive, with tall ceilings, and columns with woodwork.

All of these things tell us something about the organizational culture. What people may take away from these artifacts would be that the restaurant wants to convey opulence and fine dining, as opposed to many of the casual restaurants that exist. They take the service and the quality of the food very seriously, and it shows in the décor.

There are also rites and rituals that happen, both between employees, and with guests. One ritual might be a particular way orders are taken, or in a retail store, when new employees are told they must act out "I'm a Little Teapot" prior to their first shift. Stories are told between employees, and there may be myths and legends about that long-term food server who stayed for years, and the manager who saved the day when the electricity went out. All of these contribute to the communication climate of the organization. If you walk into an organization and everyone has a disgusted look on their faces, it may appear to have a negative communication climate, which could affect whether you want to work there at all.

Artifacts in an organizational culture might be the art that is on the wall, or the types of plates that are used for guests. It may also be, in an educational institution, what types of tables and chairs the students sit in, as opposed to the instructors.

Occupational culture comprises people who are working in the same field, and may be part of a separate organization, or they may be working in the same organization (Trice & Beyer, 1993). Like other subcultures, they may have frequent social interaction, shared experiences, and similar personal characteristics, all of which lend themselves toward cohesion (Trice & Beyer, 1993). An occupation can span multiple organizations, and there is often a culture permeating a particular occupation.

For instance, people working in the restaurant industry will have shared experience of terms they use, like "two-top" meaning a table for two, and "86" meaning leave out, and will be able to share discussions about customers, managers, and more. Another example is of firefighters, who share a culture as well, and others may feel left out because they do not have that knowledge and experience.

People in the military immediately have a shared connection in which they discuss where they've been, what branch, and what their jobs were. In the information technology field, there is a shared experience, and many people in the field have a savior mentality, in which they are seen as the people who can fix everything when something goes wrong. It's also a culture in which there is a high male population.

It's important to think about occupational culture when communicating interpersonally, as occupations can shape our experiences sometimes even more than workplaces themselves. The saying "life's work" comes from the choice of an occupation, after all, and serves to help people form an identity.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Your Co-Cultures

Talk to a friend about co-cultures. What co-cultures do you share, and what co-cultures are each of you in that the other didn't know about? How might you get to know more about your friend? How did you get drawn together? How do you keep the relationship going?

Activity 2: Occupational Culture Analysis

Ask a parent or older adult about their occupation. What are some of the characteristics the person feels are shared within the occupation? Ask about beliefs, values, and attitudes within the occupational culture. What about the occupation you hope to have?

Analyze what that culture might be like, and how it might change in the future due to technology in a blog post.

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GLOSSARY

Attitudes: Somewhat settled way of viewing a concept or thing, can be changed with persuasion

Beliefs: Worldviews of people within a culture, often relating to religion

Co-cultures: Cultures within a larger culture that are differentiated from each other

Dimensions of culture: Dichotomous ideas put forth by Hofstede to describe and put cultures along a continuum to describe them, i.e. individualism/collectivism, long-term/short-term orientation

First-order reality: What is physically observable

Norms: The way things are done within a culture

Occupational culture: Shared beliefs, values and attitudes within a work field, like firefighting, or academia

Organizational culture: Shared beliefs, values and attitudes within a group, like a business, nonprofit, children's team

Second-order reality: Attaching meaning to first-order reality

Values: Learned organization of making choices and resolving conflict

MEDIA

Multimedia 1: When watching the following video, notice all of the stereotypes people who are native to Alaska face, and think about how you'd approach a conversation with someone from the area. Try to consider the situation from another perspective.

What People Get Wrong About Alaska Natives: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lDU4PkSqWsQ

Multimedia 2: In this segment, a social ethicist discusses going to an African American community support group for people with diabetes. She talks about a more collectivist view of health in this community.

African American health, faith beliefs: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnfkiMv0At0

Multimedia 3: Miles Best talks to an author about Black culture, and how it is American culture. Language is discussed, as well as other parts of Black culture.

Black culture in the United States: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmdE_FlSfig

4.2: Cross-Cultural Communication

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Practice cross-cultural communication through communication competence.
- Understand how to learn about cultures.
- Discuss international cultures co-existing within communities.
- Analyze problems within cross-cultural communication.
- Understand cultural issues and perception within multiple types of relationships.
- Understand the effect of age, generation, race, gender, and disability in cultural communication.

CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Communicating across cultures

When people from different cultures communicate, this is cross-cultural communication. This can be people from different families, different occupations, different races, ages, and genders. It can also be cross-cultural communication when two people are from different countries.

What is needed in cross-cultural communication is competence, and this comes partially from having an open mind. Critical thinking is necessary to ascertain what these differences are, and how to get the point across in a different way, or at least be able to explain the why. Chung notes the rapidly changing demographics in the United States, saying, “what was once a homogeneous community, we may now find more diversity and cultural values in flux” and that we learn more from people who are different than people who are similar (2019, p. 376). There’s value in diversity.

An example of cross-cultural communication is when a couple comes together and they are from different cultures, i.e. a person from Houston, Texas, gets together with another person from near Houston, Texas, but who is originally from Lima, Peru, by way of Brazil. There may be a nuanced language barrier, or a difference in food expectations, and a difference in expected dinner times. These partners may have the same religion, and so there is that in common.

But, families communicate differently, so they must negotiate their norms nonverbally and verbally. For instance, the Peruvian hugs and has more communication through touch. There may be differences in expectations for how to raise children, household chores, and who works and who doesn’t. There may also be questions if there is a lack of competence of one or both of the people involved. The initial attraction may be physical, but there would be a lot of interpretation going on in actions.

Competence and cultural learning

How we learn about other cultures may improve our competence level. Many people will simply begin to ask questions, or may do research on the particular culture of the person. Knowing that the research is about a group of people should be telling, as all people from within a culture will not be the same. However, reaching out shows outreach.

Food is a great way to find out about a culture, and the treatment of food. Many families in the United States rarely have dinner together, and instead fend for themselves, while other families insist upon a family dinner at one table with no electronics every night. Some people will want everyone to eat all the food, where some people will want some food to be left on the plate. This is something that must be learned.

Within communities, there may be many people from different countries, and there is a need to learn the norms. Consider a real estate agent who is a white woman from Texas and who is invited to a client’s baby shower. The client is from Nigeria, and the real estate agent budgeted only 45 minutes of time for the shower. The real estate agent showed up at the designated time, was there for almost two hours. The client showed up right as she was leaving. The real estate agent was confused, but hadn’t researched the culture. Time is viewed differently within the Nigerian culture, but the agent didn’t realize that would apply in the United States. However, with many Nigerian people at the party, the time standard was not typical U.S. time orientation.

Knowing our audience is important, so we become more competent. The best intercultural communicators are people who are genuinely interested in other cultures.

Problems in cross-cultural communication

Biases

Problems in cross-cultural communication can be stereotyping, ethnocentrism, prejudice, discrimination, and racism. **Stereotyping**, according to Hall, is "attributions that cover up individual differences and ascribe certain characteristics to an entire group of people" (2005, p. 192). An example might be that Asians are good at math. While this may be a positive stereotype, it's still not correct to use, whether it's positive or negative.

Ethnocentrism is "assuming that one's group is the center of the world" and feelings of superiority (Hall, 2005, p. 198). Though ethnocentrism may not be meant to be negative, it shows a lack of critical thinking, and thinking outside the culture. The real estate agent from our earlier example who attended her Nigerian friend's baby shower could have made the mistake of telling her friend that it's better to have an exact start time for an event, but instead, the agent went along with the uncertainty even if it made the agent feel a bit out of her comfort zone.

Prejudice is "a rigid attitude that's (1) based on group membership and (2) predisposes an individual to feel, think, or act in a negative way toward another person or group of persons." (Hall, 2005, p. 202). Prejudice is always negative. **Discrimination** is acting negatively based on prejudice, while **racism** is discrimination or prejudice directed at someone of a different race because of the notion that one's own race is superior. These get progressively more negative and harmful.

Rockson (2019) writes a primer on how to connect with others through cross-cultural communication, and suggests that people need to be aware of their own values and biases, as that helps prevent missteps and bad relationships. Rockson's (2019) book suggests the solution is to educate, don't perpetuate, and instead, communicate.

Relationships

On the positive side, cross-cultural relationships often develop. Relationships have many variations: strangers, acquaintances, friends, romantic partners, and family. The way all these relationships are valued varies between cultures. For instance, the elderly population of some cultures is treated differently than in other cultures, like Japan versus the United States. In Japan, 58% of elderly people are likely to live with one of their children, while in the United States, 15% of elderly people live with someone else, and Japanese elders are seen to have more wisdom and are listened to with reverence and seen as relevant (Karasawa, 2011).

Family relationships tend to be nuclear in the United States, though the saying "blood is thicker than water" has been heard in the country. This saying means that family relationships are more valued than other relationships. Within families, relationships within collectivist countries like Japan tend toward family members sticking with extended family members, even to the point of living in the same households.

When people immigrate to the United States, the tradition of extended family living together often carries over. For instance, Indian families often have multiple generations living together, as do Hispanic families from collectivist cultures. As economies change, these things may tend to change as well.

Within the United States, the culture of friendliness with strangers varies. In Southern states, there tends to be an air of friendliness, and strangers will help each other out, and go out of their way to do nice things, whereas in northern states, or larger cities, like New York City, people are not as conversational, and may not consider others as much. Neither is good or bad, they just are.

Acquaintances within cross-cultural relationships often co-exist, like one street in Houston, where there was a large Catholic family with five children, next door to a lesbian couple with two children, a black family with children, a couple with no children, an Indian family, and an Asian family. This particular community touted itself as the most international community in the world, and everyone coexisted, but no one seemed to truly involve themselves in each other's lives.

With cross-cultural friends, more of an effort is made to reach out and maintain. With cross-cultural relationships, there may be a more difficult time understanding each other's world views, but the variations in ethnicities, race, religion, and more can make things more interesting. An example would be a friendship in which one friend is an atheist, whereas the other is an evangelical Christian, or a friendship where one person is Catholic and the other person is Hindu. Even with that religious difference, it can be a learning opportunity.

Romantic partners may have the hardest time of all of these within cross-cultural relationships. Romantic partners of different backgrounds may need the goodwill or acceptance of their extended families, and sometimes may not receive it. For instance, an Indian-American Hindu woman marrying a Bangladeshi-born American Muslim man might encounter resistance from their families, but might persist. Or, the families could intervene and question them.

The video Working with Cross-Cultural Couples (2018) includes an example of an African American woman who married a West African Muslim man, and found that she had more in common with a white man from Colorado than she did with her own

husband, though she and her husband both had similar skin tone. She experienced being called a “black white wife” by her husband’s family, as she is American. The video noted that the couple stayed married despite these issues.

The earlier Peruvian-American who married the several-generation Texan didn’t encounter reservations from family, but both encountered some need to be mindful about their respective families and expectations. For instance, the Peruvian mother-in-law moved to the house on the next street over, but maintained some distance instead of moving right into the couple’s house. The white Texan man learned to be more physically affectionate with the Peruvian in-laws, as is the norm.

Affection may be experienced differently within cross-cultural couples, and decisions need to be made about language and children, religion, and naming, and all of these things that may be negotiated along the way.

Improving cross-cultural relationships

When it comes to improving cross-cultural relationships, think about differences and similarities, and how those may cause both people within a relationship to react. Age and generational differences show up in family relationships, as an example, teenage children and their parents or grandparents may have differences of opinion.

They may place importance on different notions as well. Note, the “OK, Boomer” phenomenon from 2019. This phrase is used whenever younger people want to ignore or dismiss something a person of an older generation says. In current U.S. culture, there are several generations, starting with Generation Z, people who are currently very young up to about age 19 or so. These are people who have grown up with technology, unless their parents forbade it. Millennials, or Generation Y, are currently the young adults, on up to the late 30s. While they didn’t start out with technology, they’ve used it most of their lives, and it’s permeated their view of the world.

Generation X, or what was known as they were coming of age as the ‘Slacker Generation,’ is the generation in their 40s to early 50s currently. They are at the peak of their careers, and have learned to integrate technology into their lives. The Boomer generation is currently in their later 50s to early 70s, and they are retiring or continuing to work. The generation known as the Greatest Generation is aging, and definitely did not grow up with technology, but they are living longer than the generations before them. Age can be a factor in relating to people interpersonally, so think about topics of conversation and examples that are used, as those will vary greatly between generations.

People who are older will have different wording for dating, such as calling someone a beau or boyfriend, or will say, “are you going with someone?” or they may use the word “courting.” Teens will say, “I’m dating someone” or if it’s not “official” then “talking to someone.”

Racial differences also play a part of communication. What is important to think about with race relations is that race is still a big factor in many people’s minds, and it’s been in the news a lot lately. Sometimes people don’t communicate with people of different races because they haven’t experienced such friendships before, and so there is uncertainty.

Talk with people from different backgrounds, and ask about experiences. With people who are of different backgrounds, listen and then believe their experience, and understand privilege. Even things as simple as the emoji for a thumbs up tends to be first in a white skin tone, but brown skin tone emojis exist as well.

When you are within a culture, sometimes you may not notice these things, but take a look around. Seek out experience, and learn. Know that bias can creep into conversations, but understand that, apologize for it, and make a commitment to change behaviors.

Gender roles in different cultures may be unknown, and may be more pronounced, as discussed earlier in the masculine and feminine culture section. Think critically about the gender roles, and what you may see in others. Just because a woman takes on more traditionally feminine roles in a relationship doesn’t mean it’s bad, unless she doesn’t want to do those roles. An example is a new heterosexual couple watching a romantic movie for the first time together, and the male cries and the female doesn’t. Is this outside of what is seen as the norm? Perhaps, but is it wrong? Nope. Self-expression can come in different modes for people.

Disability as a factor in relationships can affect interpersonal communication. People with disabilities should be addressed as you would address anyone else. If someone has cerebral palsy, and uses a wheelchair and has an attendant with them to help facilitate communication, when you converse with the person, make eye contact with the person with the disability, not the attendant.

When someone with Down syndrome is ordering food at a restaurant, ask them what they want, not the other people they are with. Expect people with a disability to be able to function independently, until they ask for help. One time, a 10-year-old boy with Down syndrome surprised his parents by climbing out a window to go sit on the roof. They realized what he’d done, and knew to mitigate for that in the future, but learned that he could figure out how to do things they never imagined.

When someone who is blind is walking down the hall, don't grab their arm to guide them. Rather, if it appears they could need help, ask if they need help. With a deaf person, make lots of eye contact, and feel free to write something down on paper if other ways of communicating aren't working. Sign language interpreters often help in larger-group situations. If you know the person, try to learn American Sign Language (if that is what the person uses).

There are many different types of disabilities, including physical, developmental, intellectual, and learning disabilities. Sometimes people have a combination of these disabilities. People appreciate effort to communicate with them, and relationships with people with disabilities can be extremely rewarding for all involved. Chances are, all people have encountered someone with a disability in their educational journey.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Ethnocentrism and Mobility

Read the article "The Inevitability of Ethnocentrism Revisited: Ethnocentrism Diminishes As Mobility Increases," located at https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4672305/. What does the article say about in-group and out-groups? How does mobility reduce out-group hostility? Does traveling help reduce ethnocentrism?

Activity 2: American Dream Quiz

A recent quiz was created about privilege to determine how many roadblocks people have encountered on their search for the American Dream. Do the quiz, located at https://movingupusa.com/calc/. What was your score, and were you surprised? How many of the things that you consider roadblocks have been within your control?

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GLOSSARY

Discrimination: Treating someone differently because of characteristics such as race, age, or sex

Ethnocentrism: Thinking one's own way of thinking or being is superior, without considering that it is negative, because of the difficulty of getting out of one's own culture

Prejudice: Being negatively biased against someone because of characteristics such as race, age, or sex

Racism: Prejudice based on the belief that a person's own race is superior

Stereotyping: Attributing generalized characteristics to an entire group of people

MEDIA

Multimedia 1: An intercultural couple discusses how they negotiate cultural differences. Particularly, a Japanese man and a white U.S. American woman discuss their differences.

What we argue about | Japanese/American marriage https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0reQCDL968

Multimedia 2: Comedian and news anchor Trevor Noah discusses trying a taco for the first time. More importantly, look at the misunderstanding that happens in the use of language in the clip. Think about whether you may have had misunderstandings like these with friends from other cultures.

Trevor Noah: That's Racist - Tacos: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDk5ajNDgZc&list=TLPQMTEwMTIwMjBTkibtm_xuXQ&index=2

Multimedia 3: Biracial actresses from Sister, Sister discuss their marriages. One of the twins is married to an African American man, and the other is married to a white man. Think about your own experience with interracial couples, or even your own experience being part of an interracial couple. How do you react when you hear such things? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngwvHYqYGS0

Multimedia 4: Observe the following clip to see how different cultures view cultural appropriation. How will you react differently, if at all, to costumes in the future?

My Culture is NOT a Costume: Cultural Appropriation https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6Y5cARFJw8

4.3: Communication Accommodation Theory

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Define Communication Accommodation Theory.
- Discuss how CAT has been used in research between cultures, ages, and gender.

COMMUNICATION ACCOMODATION THEORY

Principles

First conceived by communication professor Howard Giles in 1971, Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) was mainly about speech, but then adapted to involve verbal and nonverbal communication (Hordila-Vatamanescu, 2010). Giles described developing the theoretical perspective in his graduate school days in the United Kingdom, and muses that he still is constantly noticing new ways people accommodate others, such as when his wife lost her voice for a few days, and others would whisper to her, thinking she was whispering for another reason (Gallois et al., 2016).

The theory is about convergence and divergence in accommodation, and says that communicators are likely to accommodate the person they are speaking with by adopting their mode of communication. Soliz, Thorson, and Rittenour say accommodation is performed for seeking approval, inclusion, affiliation, or interpersonal goals," while nonaccommodation serves to highlight differences between people (2009, p. 821).

Divergent communicators maintain their own way of communicating, and then the communication differs from the other communicator. There is also the concept of over accommodating, as Hordila-Vatamanescu (2010) says, and this means they exaggerate the accommodation. There are three types of over accommodation:

"The first is sensory where people tend to over adapt to others who are perceived as limited in their abilities. The second is dependency, where the person who is talking, speaks to others as if they're in a lower status than them. Lastly, intergroup occurs when the speakers place listeners in cultural groups without acknowledging individual uniqueness" (Hordila-Vatamanescu, 2010, p. 281).

Within CAT, however it occurs, it's important to note that communication happens within a context, as always, and that there is always negotiation of relationships within a conversation, including power within a relationship, when communicating. Based on these stereotypes of outgroup members, expectations may arise about people from the culture. Norms of accommodation may appear. When over accommodating happens, it may make the communicator seem condescending, which hopefully, the person does not desire. However, when done well, "communication accommodation becomes a mutual feeling of identification between the source and the receiver" (Hordila-Vatamanescu, 2010, p. 283). Communicators begin to feel more similarity and commonality, which begets affection, or likeability. When people from different cultures accommodate by moving to Texas and trying to act friendlier to others, people will feel more commonality, even if the person from another state wasn't used to acting friendly to acquaintances.

Applications

CAT can be used in many contexts, as in between cultures, ages, genders, and virtual communities. Between cultures, people may become more comfortable with someone from a different culture if they mirror nonverbally, and topics of conversation that would interest the other.

For instance, communication accommodation was seen when a Muslim family in a suburb in Texas invited their white neighbors to attend the home petting zoo birthday party of their three-year-old child. At the party, the food was halal, as is customary to the culture of the Muslim family, and most of the party-goers were family members. The white family had older children and instructed their daughter to dress a bit more conservatively than her normal short-shorts as an accommodating nonverbal gesture. Both parties had accommodating behaviors and communication.

Many times, accommodating behaviors occur between people of different ages. If there is a big age difference, for instance, professors need to ensure they are giving examples that are relevant to their students. For instance, using an example of nonverbal communication accommodation between cultures could come from the movie *European Vacation*, which was created in the 1980s, but a more recent example would be something like the television show *Blackish*.

Over accommodation is often seen in communication between different age groups, as in communication between parents and children, neither of whom may realize they are maturing as fast as they are. One study discussed CAT and estrangement of adult

children, and Rittenour et al (2018) found that there were about an equal number of instances of parents using accommodation (65) and over accommodation (61), which is seen as negative, and fewer cases of under accommodation (30), which is also seen as negative.

Cross-gender communication may be another instance where CAT is employed, and stereotypes are often used in this type of conversation. What's most important in cross-gender communication is not to make assumptions, and let the person communicate for themselves. Respond to how they respond. Mansplaining is a popular term in which a male explains a topic to a female on which the female is more of an expert the male, yet the male talks about it incessantly anyway. CAT can also be seen in environments of virtual communities, as "it may account for discovering how people perceive, assume and express their identity in a boundless community" (Hordila-Vatamanescu, 2010, p. 287).

Another example of using CAT to study mediated communication is CAT through textisms, which are when people use emojis, shorten words, or use incorrect capitalization in a text. For instance, "R u going 2 the store? :-)" instead of "Are you going to the store?" A study looking at gender and whether people like each other and whether power affects the way people use textisms found that there is a relationship in the use of textisms and whether people like each other and whether they have unequal power balance in a relationship (Adams, Miles, Dunbar, & Giles, 2018). There was a significant correlation between liking and people using more textisms (Adams et al., 2018). Giles (2016) has taken a look at CAT over the years, and showed how it's truly become multi-disciplinary, it's studied in many languages, and it's still relevant today. All of this is amusingly appropriate for a chapter on culture and interpersonal communication.

Summary

Culture infiltrates interpersonal communication, including co-cultures within communities and nations, as well as organizational culture, and occupational culture. Beliefs, values, and norms are pervasive in our social practices, including world view, language, and the dimensions of culture.

Cross-cultural communication involves communication across contexts, while thinking critically and communicating competently. An open mind is ultimately important, while avoiding ethnocentrism, and stereotyping, and attempting to eliminate prejudice, discrimination and racism. We should, however, be aware of our own bias that creeps into conversations, acknowledge it, and fix it.

Communication Accommodation Theory is one way to explain how people of different cultures are constantly adapting their communication styles either in converging, diverging, or over accommodating styles to people in multiple contexts.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: CAT in Action

Consider a friend or acquaintance that you have who is from a different culture. Think about a time you have enacted CAT within a conversation interculturally. How did it affect the conversation? Talk with that person now about what they thought was happening in the conversation, and whether they noticed the accommodation was happening. Discuss your observations in a discussion.

Activity 2: First Time for Everything

When was the first time you participated in an activity? For instance, salsa dancing or going bowling. How did you communicate with the people around you who had done it before? Did you feel they were over accommodating in order to make you feel more comfortable? Write a journal entry about this experience.

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GLOSSARY

Communication Accommodation Theory: Theory adapted by Giles that says people adapt to others in order who are different than them, and the accommodation can converge, diverge, or be over accommodating

Convergence: Communicating in similar ways interpersonally as someone else to accommodate the interaction, such as adopting a similar tone, accent, or pitch in one's voice

Divergence: Communicating in different ways than another person in order to maintain differentiation from the person culturally, such as exaggerating a different accent, or speaking much louder than the other person

MEDIA

Multimedia 1: The following clip is an example of convergence. How have you adapted your own behaviors in the past to 'fit in' with others?

Mean Girls: Convergence https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pchVTkNjzUA

Multimedia 2: This clip illustrates a relative traveling to Malaysia to visit a friend, and the Communication Accommodation Theory is seen in action. What elements of communication accommodation do you see in this clip?

Examples in CAT in Malaysia: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rv4u45HBr3c

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Gender and Sexuality

5.1: Two Separate Concepts

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Define the terms male, female and intersex.
- Discuss different conceptualization of sex from binary to five-sexes.
- Explain the concept of gender as a performative act.
- Understand the differences between gender roles as they have been traditionally assigned, and how they have evolved over time.

SEX & GENDER: TWO SEPARATE CONCEPTS

In an essay about science fiction's relevance to gender and sexuality, Pluretti, Lingel, & Sinnreich (2015) talk about a fictional world where gender is not lived by, or even talked about much at all. However, we do not have to look to science fiction to see that our definitions of gender and sexuality are currently expanding, just like space. When we think about gender roles and interpersonal communication, it's important to have those definitions in order to be 'in the know' about what others are experiencing. To truly have empathy for another and listen, we need to be able to understand the terms.

Though Pluretti et al., said "gender and sexuality provide a set of acceptable attributes and behaviors, masculine and feminine, heterosexual and homosexual, for men and women," they go on to describe how culturally, there is more of a hierarchy, that favors **masculinity** and heterosexuality over the "other." (2015, p. 392-393). In this Module, we will discuss key terms in discussions of gender and sexuality.

Sex

Sex from a biological perspective is defined as a classification of human beings based on their reproductive organs and functions. In this section we will briefly discuss these classifications as a starting point for the exposition on gender, which is differentiated from sex by the aspect of performance.

Female

Both **males** and **females** have 46 chromosomes. The last pair of chromosomes determines whether we are 'female' or 'male.' For a female, the last chromosome pair is two X's. For a male, the last chromosome pair includes an X and a Y. This chromosomal difference results in the development of different sex parts, due to the differences in hormone production.

While both women and men have levels of testosterone, estrogen, and progesterone present in the body, in females, levels of estrogen and progesterone are higher than in men, resulting in the development of ovaries, a uterus and a vagina. The aforementioned sexual organs allow the opportunity for females to carry and bear children when they reach the stage of puberty.

Male

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, males also carry 46 chromosomes with the difference of the Y chromosome while females have two X chromosomes. The XY combination creates higher production of testosterone in men which results in the development of testes and a penis. Again, both males and females carry levels of testosterone, estrogen and progesterone from conception and these levels fluctuate over the life span of the individual. The secondary effects of testosterone dominance are increased levels of physical strength and aggression.

Intersex

Anne Fausto-Sterling discusses in detail the phenomenon of **intersex** in the groundbreaking essays, *The Five Sexes* (1993) and *The Five Sexes, Revisited* (2000). In *The Five Sexes*, Fausto-Sterling argued that the female/male categories of sex were limiting in describing the scope of biological sexual reality as intersex is not accounted for in the binary defining of sex.

Fausto-Sterling suggested "a five-sex system" that "in addition to males and females…included 'herms' (named after true hermaphrodites, people born with both a testis and an ovary); 'merms' (male pseudohermaphrodites, who are born with testes and some aspect of female genitalia); and 'ferms' (female pseudohermaphrodites, who have ovaries combined with some aspect of male genitalia)" (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p. 19). Today, these terms are no longer used, nor do most intersex people use the term hermaphrodite. Instead, intersex is used as a blanket term that many intersex people modify in different ways to identify themselves. For example, some may say they are intersex, whereas others may identify as having an intersex condition (Dreger & Herndon, 2009).

Estimates of intersexuality vary among different studies with factors like environment having an influence on the levels of variable hormonal differences in different parts of the world. Most children who are born with intersexual characteristics are operated on at infancy to normalize their sex. This decision is usually made by the parents. The biological ambiguity of intersexuality results in difficulties in acceptance in a world where most people fit into the male/female binary. Estimates of babies born with intersex characteristics vary from 1 in 1,500 to 2,000 births to estimates as high as 4% (Intersex Human Rights Australia, 2019). While the estimates vary greatly depending on which study is referenced, many theorists and human rights advocates agree that biological sex should be thought of as more of a continuum than a binary distinction.

Gender as Performativity

As opposed to sex, which is assigned to us at birth based on a variety of biological indicators, gender is a performative act—meaning that it is not tied directly to our sex, but is rather expressed by us through our behavior. This is why we consider gender to be performative, meaning that is performed through our interpersonal communication, including how we dress, talk, walk, and even in how we may think (Butler, 1991).

With this analysis it is important to recognize that gender is performative and just because a person is male or female does not mean they will express themselves in a masculine or feminine manner. Gender performance is more of a continuum than a distinct binary and many will reject the notion that men communicate in a certain way or women communicate in a certain way. However, these social constructs influence the communication cultures of each gender. As we continue to shift and redefine the rules and norms of gender performance, the definitions and practices will also continue to shift.

By recognizing and understanding these distinctions we can better understand how to communicate regardless of how one performs or identifies. To distinguish between genders in modern society people have often framed the concept through a binary of a man and a woman, but just as intersex is a third category in the biological assignment of sex, there are many people today whose gender is performed in non-normative ways that are often understood as transgender. Transgender refers to anyone who bridges, or collapses the performances of man or woman into an alternative gender performance that does not adhere to the gender binary.

While most people today still identify as **cisgender**, meaning that their gender identity matches the traditional sex assignment (i.e. man/male, woman/female), the growing recognition of transgendered people is now commonplace (Chodorov, 2014). Still, the term “transgender” can be confusing because it is used to describe a range of gender performativities. For example, some transgender people identify with a traditional gender identity, even though it is not the one traditionally assigned to their sex, whereas other people identifying as transgender reject traditional gender identities entirely (Stryker, 1994).

Masculine Performativity

When we talk about what it means to ‘act like a man’ we are describing what is known as masculine performativity. Masculinity is the performance of being a man. This performativity is culturally specific, and can vary depending on cultures, sub-cultures, or co-cultures (Buchbinder, 1994). Three prominent masculinity studies scholars, Kimmel, Hearn, and Connell (2004), approach the performance of masculinity in their work by recognizing that there are multiple masculinities, just as with feminine performativity where there are multiple femininities.

It is important to note that since masculinity is constructed in a social context through performed interpersonal exchanges, that it can be performed even by people of the female sex. Halberstam (1998) notes that female masculinity is a common form of masculinity in contemporary society, especially in social contexts where women are taking on social or workplace roles that had traditionally been exclusive to men. The same can be true of men who engage in social roles that have previously been identified as the domain of women. ‘Stay at home dads’, for example, are noted for failing to enact traditional masculinity by playing a caretaking role for their children (Godfrey, 2017).

At the interpersonal level, masculine performativity informs many of the social expectations we have when dealing with other people. Despite impressive gains in workplace and social equality, women still face outdated expectations to ‘man up’ their gender performativity in order to assume some workplace roles. Men too, suffer from expectations about their performativity that may discourage them from expressing their full identity as fathers, lovers, brothers, sons, and co-workers. Men today are still discouraged from public displays of affection toward others, including their children, and they still feel chastened when they relax their bravado in the company of other men (Buchbinder, 1994, Kimmel, et al., 2004, Kimmel, 2013).

Feminine Performativity

Just as men must perform their gender in order to be understood as masculine, women too have to perform their **femininity**. Femininity has evolved in many ways over time in response to the women’s movement, and the progressing acceptance of women

as social, cultural, and economic leaders. Simone De Beauvoir (1949) first explained the construct of femininity by noting the fact that masculinity could only be understood by contrast to femininity, and vice versa. To some extent this is still true today, but being feminine is not simply about not being masculine.

To be feminine in today's society embraces a range of characteristics (Gill & Scharff, 2013). Women today face paradoxical expectations to be both caring and self-reliant, to focus more on relationships than their male counterparts, while also performing enough detachment to maintain their reputation for virtue and professionalism. Certain feminine traits exist as an extension of presumed social roles—primarily motherhood. Because females give birth, many of our social constructions regarding parenting are aligned with the performance of motherhood, which is a gendered role ascribed to women. For many people, part of being a good woman, is to also be a good or 'natural' mother, so that caretaking remains a primary focus when conditioning girls about womanhood (Gimenez, 2018).

In many ways, femininity is complicated by the concurrent shifts in masculinity that are meant to make space for women in male dominated social, without fully transforming society (Chodorow, 2014). In other words, women have been welcomed into leadership roles, but often with the assumption they will modulate their gender performativity to be both feminine enough, and masculine enough at the same time (Greenwood, 2017). There are few, if any places in society today for women, where a single performance of femininity can go uncontested or un-criticized.

Gender Roles

Another way of thinking of performativity is by considering what theorists call gender roles. West and Zimmerman (1987) famously theorized the notion of a performed gender by explaining that the model for gender performances are the traditional gender roles that are assigned to different sexes during their life, and expected of them in order for a person to achieve what is known as gender role competency. Gender role competency means the ability of an individual to satisfactorily behave in accordance with the society's expectations of a cisgender man or woman.

However, West and Zimmerman expanded previous discussions of a performed gender to include the concept of a **sex category—** the labeling of someone's sex by those who cannot know for certain what that person's actual sex may be. In other words, most of the time we don't really know someone else's sex, but we assume we know based on certain presentational aspects of their body, and we use those aspects to assign a sex category to people. For interpersonal communication, the notion of a sex category is important to understand because it underlies the fact that most of what we assume about others is only that. Even when you have met someone you assume to be cisgender, you can't know that for sure without somehow confirming their biological sex.

Social construction of these gender roles has changed over time. For instance, women's rights were sparse until the right to vote was enacted, but even now, women are marginalized in many areas of life. During World War II, as an example, women were called to work in the factories on previous jobs males held, and "women were still expected to be feminine but not too sultry. They were also expected to do a 'man's job' but not to become masculine while performing it with the expectations of 'do as a man, appear as a woman'" (Tobin, 2017, p. 321). Women were to remain taking care of the children and home while doing these other jobs, but also stay 'ladylike.' As more women went into the workforce later, it has become the norm to have a two-earner household, or for women to work. According to a Forbes article, 49% of employed women in the United States self-disclose that they are the family's main income generator. Moreover, women have outpaced men in college attendance and degrees, the wage gap has fallen, but is still not equal (Germano, 2019).

In addition, though women are more educated and employed, they still are more likely to care for elderly family members, do the household chores, and care for children (Germano, 2019). On the other hand, men have been the ones in the past to go to work and to war, and that's changed, so women now join the military more often, and both men and women participate in the workforce. One article indicates there are approximately 7 million stay-at-home dads, and said, "Dads are feeling more comfortable with the caregiving role, and economics have forced couples to make 'non-traditional' decisions" (Godfrey, 2017, para. 2). Godfrey said this may be from economic factors like who in a household was able to get or keep a job after the recession, and child care costs. Even with this number increasing, Godfrey said, "While about half of Americans (surveyed by Pew) (51%) think that a child is better off with a mother at home, as opposed to in the workforce, just 8% say a child is better off with a stay-at-home father" (2017, para. 8). Looking at the gender roles as more than just the binary and along a continuum will become more and more prevalent, with norms in roles and relationships getting blurred.

Generational change may end up creating less defined gender roles. For instance, the Boomer generation, those born between 1946 and 1964, may have more traditional thoughts about roles, though they change as well. Generation X, those born between 1965-1980, grew up knowing about changing roles, with many coming from divorced parents, where single parent households were more

common and different gender roles were enacted. Millennials, Americans born between 1981 and 1996, experienced some of the same role differences. The recent “OK, Boomer” phenomenon, in which young adults dismiss an older person’s views shows the change in generational thinking as well. Most post-Millennials, born from 1997 to now, have always used technology, and see the world through that lens, with the changing gender roles shown in the media.

Conclusion

Understanding gender roles and how they affect communication begins first with the discussion of biological sex. As we discussed, sex is not just limited to the female/male binary but must account for intersexuality. We also have to distinguish clearly between the constructs of sex and those of gender, noting that gender is a performative act that is always occurring. We never stop performing our genders, and it is because of this that many people are able to perform transgender, gender fluid, or non-binary gender identities.

Appendix: Gender Terms

Definitions within gender

Within gender, there are many terms floating around that need definitions in order to use them properly. Gender identity has to do with how a person feels and presents themselves to the outside world.

Transgender is a term meaning that a person presents and feels the opposite of the biological sex with which they were born. For instance, a transgender woman is someone who is biologically born as a male, but presents and feels female. Someone who is transgender may or may not have had sexual reassignment surgery, meaning surgery to change genitalia and breasts.

Transsexual is a term used for someone who has had partial or full reassignment surgery. Someone who is non-binary, also genderqueer, is someone who does not prefer to identify with either male or female genders.

Androgyny is a term you may hear that refers to someone not appearing as either gender. On the other hand, someone who is bigender, or **gender fluid**, may identify as either gender, depending on their feelings on a particular day. Someone who is cisgender identifies as the biological sex they were born with. So a man identifying as a man who was born as a male identifies as cisgender.

Someone who cross-dresses wears clothing designed for the opposite sex, but does not necessarily identify as transgender. **Drag queens** or **drag kings** are performance artists who dress and perform as the opposite sex, but this type of performance is not necessarily related to being transgender, and is also not related to sexuality. Not all drag queens identify as homosexual, nor do all drag kings. Gender identity, again, is notably differentiated from sexual orientation. These two should not be confounded, as they do not always relate to each other.

Pronouns

Currently used examples are ze/zir/they/their/he/she/his/her/hers. A cisgender female often goes by the pronouns she/her/hers, while a transgender female may also use she/her/hers. Someone may use the pronoun they/their/theirs, though. A major dictionary, Merriam-Webster, added they/their/theirs as a non-binary singular person’s pronoun in 2019 (Wheeler, 2019). It’s respectful to call the person whichever pronouns they use. Another pronoun for a non-binary person may be ze or zir.

Usage

When communicating with a transgender person, use their name until they give you their pronouns, and if you are in private, judge whether to ask about their pronouns. Something to avoid is unwanted outing of a transgender person without their consent. As transgender people are unfortunately often victims of violence, leave it to that person to determine whether to disclose their gender identity. Conversations about this topic should be held in private to respect the rights to privacy of people who are transgender.

An **ally** is a person who supports people in the LGBTQ+ community from the perspective of the heteronormative culture. There’s even training to become an Ally. Again, gender identity and sexual orientation should not be confounded (they do not necessitate each other).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: ‘Riddle Me This, Cisman’

Ask your students to take out a piece of paper, on which they’ll write the answer to a riddle you are about to ask. They are not to answer aloud. They will have two minutes to consider an answer. Then ask them the following- being careful to use the phrasing provided:

‘A father and son are driving together when they have an accident. The father dies instantly, but his son is taken by ambulance to the hospital. At the hospital, the nurses wheel the boy into the emergency operating room, and begin preparing for surgery. The surgeon enters the room, looks down at the boy and says ‘I cannot operate on this boy. He is my son. ...How is this possible?”

Give them two minutes to write down their answers, and then allow them to discuss their solutions as a group. The Answer: the surgeon is the boy’s mother.

Activity 2: ‘Act Like a Lady!’

Invite a group of students to the front of the room to improvise a scene. Whisper in each student’s ear a character trope from popular movies, for example- a gangster, a villain, a superhero, a spy. Let them play out the scene as they wish for a few moments.

Give each of the characters a specific gender identity and let them return to improvising the scene. If a student has already adopted a gender performance in the first scene then change their gender in this one. If they had no gender performed then give them one to add to their character. Let the scene play out for a moment.

Once the scene is over, let the student performers discuss how they chose to integrate gender into their performance. Then allow the class to discuss whether the gender performances changed their understanding of the characters.

Activity 3: Distinction Memories

Organize students into small groups of four or five, and then ask them to discuss their earliest memories of knowing the distinction between the sexes. After they have all shared with their group (5-7 minutes), ask them to recall memories of puberty and how they viewed different sexes at that time. Let this discussion go on for another 5-7 minutes, before asking each group to then summarize some of their conversation to share with the entire class.

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GLOSSARY

Ally: Allies are people who support the queer community, even though they come from outside that community.

Androgyny: Relating to someone who does not perform any gender identity

Cisgender: Relating to someone who performs their gender identity in a fashion where their gender identity matches their birth sex according to the normative gender binary

Drag King/Queen: Someone who dresses as their opposite gender, but does not identify as transgender

Female: a person with two X chromosomes and reproductive organs typically associated with childbearing (vagina, uterus, ovaries and breasts).

Femininity: The performance of socially constructed traits and behaviors that indicate the gender of woman

Gender Fluidity: Relating to those who perform any or all gender identities at different times

Gender Pronouns: Pronouns that refer back to a binary gender of man or woman

Intersex: used to describe a person who has a combination of male and female reproductive organs (such as a penis and ovaries)

Male: a person with an X and Y chromosome pair and reproductive organs typically associated with fertilizing female eggs (penis, scrotum and testicles)

Masculinity: The performance of socially constructed traits and behaviors that indicate the gender of a man

Sex: a biological classification of human beings based on their reproductive organs and functions

Sex Category: The sex assignment that we assign to other people we meet in casual interactions, without knowing their actual sex

Transgender: Relating to someone whose performance of socially constructed traits indicates a non-normative gender identity, where their gender does not match their birth sex according to the normative gender binary

Transsexual: Relating to people undertaking a sexual re-assignment surgery, whether they are pre-op (preparing to), partial (in process of surgeries), or post-op (having completed all surgeries)

MEDIA

Multimedia 1: Watch the following clip for a new perspective on how we view biological sex. How have you been taught since childhood about it? Think about how this clip challenges your ideas.

The way we think about biological sex is wrong | Emily Quinn https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=stUl_OapUso

Multimedia 2: A recent news video discusses a difficult decision parents have to make occasionally. These types of decisions are often made in private, and without input of the person actually having the surgery due to age. What ethical implications may happen in these situations?

CNN Article/Video: She's 7 and was born intersex. Why her parents elected to let her grow up without surgical intervention https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/10/us/intersex-surgeries-gothere/index.html

Multimedia 3: Check out the following infographic for information on how illness can affect people of different sexes.

Infographic on Sex and Gender and how they Affect Health https://orwh.od.nih.gov/sites/orwh/files/docs/SexGenderInfographic11x17_508_Final_2.pdf

Multimedia 4: A TedX talk about gender identity in society indicates how different societies view gender differently. The speaker discusses how social traits and gender identity come to rule people's lives in many cases.

Beyond Sex: A talk about gender identity in society https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTUdI9up9pc

Multimedia 5: Butler discusses gender as being performative, meaning behaviors produce a series of effects. The speaker discusses gender as being developed over time, and within a person, produced and reproduced over time.

Judith Butler: Your Behavior Creates Your Gender https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo7o2LYATDc

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5.2: Sexuality and Interpersonal Communication

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand the broad range of sexualities that exist.
- Identify differences in various terms related to sexuality.

SEXUALITY AND INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Sexuality

Sexuality is something that everyone has, and how people define it for themselves may differ. Here's some of the language being used. **Sexual orientation**, first, is the "preferred term used when referring to an individual's physical and/or emotional attraction to the same and/or opposite gender" (Tobin, 2017, p. 316). Tobin (2017) acknowledges people do not feel the same way about sex, and that people are often on a spectrum regarding sexuality. Duality is not a necessity, as there are varying degrees of thinking about the definitions.

Heterosexual, or straight people, have a sexual orientation toward the opposite sex, i.e. women feel romantically attracted to men, and vice versa. **Homosexual**, or gay or lesbian people, means people of the same sex are attracted to each other. Women are attracted to women, and men are attracted to men. There are not just these two delineations, though, and so it's essential to define additional notions of sexuality.

When someone is **bisexual**, this means a person of one biological sex is attracted to people of either sex, i.e. a woman who is attracted to both women and men. **Pansexual** is different from bisexual, as it is a bit more inclusive, meaning someone is attracted to people of both sexes, including transgender people.

Someone who is **polyamorous** may be involved or interested in relationships or encounters with multiple people, all at the same time and with knowledge of everyone. Someone who is asexual is not interested in anyone romantically, and does not engage in sexual relationships.

A **demisexual** person wants to get to know the person prior to having the capability of developing romantic feelings for someone. Romantic attraction will be discussed in a future unit, but sexuality often is discussed along with the topic of developing attraction to someone.

Along with sexuality, there are stigmas attached to the language and interpretations. For instance, many people have heard the term "homophobia," which is a fear of gay or lesbian people or the idea of these types of relationships. There is also biphobia, which is the "stigma and discrimination self-identified bisexual individuals face" (Bowling, Dodge, & Bartelt, 2017, p. 87). While there are communication strategies to cope with these phobias, people need to decide whether they will communicate their sexual identity with others. Parents need to decide how to communicate with others and their children, and disclosure may be "an opportunity for parents to pass on values, attitudes, beliefs, expectations and knowledge to their children" (Bowling et al, 2017, p. 87). The suggestion in Bowling et al (2017) is that open-mindedness and discussions in schools about sexuality above and beyond diseases and pregnancy would increase understanding and decrease phobias.

Recent History of Sexuality

In the United States, sexuality, until the last 50 or 60 years, has not been a topic of conversation, and people were closeted in most aspects of sexuality, whether gay or straight (Tobin, 2017). Even now, sexuality largely remains a topic expressed interpersonally, between the people involved in the relationship (Tobin, 2017). Freud's late 1800s and early 1900s studies discussed sexuality as happening in stages, ending in adulthood, where the focus was taken from the self to an interest in the opposite sex (Tobin, 2017).

Another researcher Ellis, focused on studying both men, women, and same-sex relationships, when it was very controversial, from 1897 to 1928 (Tobin, 2017). Birth control was prohibited in the United States from 1873 through 1918. After that, birth control became more available through the work of Margaret Sanger, and the first oral birth control was approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration in 1960 (Tobin, 2017). In the 1960s and 1970s, "sexual behaviors were becoming less about procreation and more about sexual pleasure and satisfaction. Society had changed its once very conservative attitudes toward sex and sexuality to more liberal views," (Tobin, 2017, p. 323).

In the 1980s, the AIDS crisis brought sexually transmitted diseases into the limelight, with the focus first on the gay community and then later, it brought about a wider discussion, though with negative connotations, on sex (Tobin, 2017). Tobin (2017) also indicated the Janus Report in 1994 showed more education equals improved and diverse sex lives.

Sexual dysfunction became a topic of conversation as well, with the introduction of drugs and psychotherapy to treat various disorders (Tobin, 2017). There is more of a hook-up culture now, where adolescents and young adults will engage in sex without the expectation of a relationship, and "young people tend to share information about their sexuality often through social media networking," (Tobin, 2017, p. 327).

Hook-up culture was studied at colleges, and the results indicated that hook-ups can vary between cultures, between Greek life involvement, and can also depend heavily on friend groups and their experiences (Berntson, Hoffman, & Luff, 2014). Berntson et al (2014) also found that hook-ups may not be as prevalent as college students think, though they are discussed between friends as if they are the norm.

People communicate and often sexuality is communicated as part of their identity. Depending upon the situation, the communication may include more disclosure of sexuality, or less. For instance, people may decide to keep their sexuality to themselves if they want to maintain a sense of privacy, or if they sensed danger in telling people. Others will self-disclose with close friends and family only, or even just friends and not family.

With sexuality being discussed so often in the media now, more people are feeling more comfortable about opening up. Kirkman, Rosenthal, and Felman (2005) wrote about how openness within families is paramount to teens being safer with sex than families that were not open. Gender may be a factor as well, as the authors found mothers tended to be more open than fathers, but they also indicated that sexuality is a topic that many still feel uncomfortable broaching (Kirkman et al., 2005).

Another study that looked at Puerto Rican men said that heterosexual men do talk about sex, but with other men, and in a joking and derogatory manner, often encouraging machismo, which is male-dominant sexual behavior (Noland, 2008). How might this be different from how other American men, or women, for that matter, discuss sex? Perhaps not differently, depending on the person.

The study also found men believe women communicate better with other women, and women are often taught to let the men have control sexually, and that the only time men keep sexual relationships private is when they are in a serious relationship (Noland, 2008). However, casual sex is expected and considered natural in the Puerto Rican culture (Noland, 2008).

Couples sometimes communicate immediately after sex, and this communication can be an "especially important time for couples to reinforce their commitment and fondness for their partners in an aim to maintain their relationships," (Denes, Dhillon, & Speer, 2017, p. 308). The media often portrays this time in movies.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Group Discussion: Dating Today. How has dating changed from 20 years ago? What about 40 years ago? Find some examples in pop culture that depict how dating has changed. Also, think about your grandparents' relationship and dating, and perhaps your parents' story. How might those differ from your own?

Activity 2: Sexuality and Coming Out. The ability of people to self-disclose their sexuality has become much more prevalent today. How is sexuality portrayed in pop culture today versus the past, and what roles have celebrities played in the more common occurrence of being out and proud? Brainstorm a list of shows that portray nonheteronormative partnerships, and discuss how the relationships are portrayed in the media. What impact might that have on the way the public views these relationships?

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GLOSSARY

Bisexual: A person of one biological sex is attracted to people of either sex

Demisexual: A person wants to get to know the person prior to having the capability of developing romantic feelings for someone

Heterosexual: A person of one biological sex is attracted to people of the opposite sex

Homosexual: A person of one biological sex is attracted to people of the same sex

Pansexual: A person is attracted to people of both sexes, including transgender people

Polyamorous: A person involved or interested in relationships or encounters with multiple people, all at the same time and with knowledge of everyone

Sexuality: A person's physical and/or emotional capacity for attraction to others

Sexual orientation: A person's physical and/or emotional attraction to the same and/or opposite gender

MEDIA

Multimedia 1: There are several different ideas of sexuality, which are discussed in the following clip. More sexualities and ways to describe them are coming to light as people talk more.

10 Sexualities To Know About https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEurlKy2bN0

Multimedia 2: Over the years, U.S. American television and movies have depicted different sexualities more and more. Have you seen the evolution within pop culture? How was it talked about in your childhood home?

Then and now: Homosexuality in American pop culture

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ocFhdR_Tw-Q

5.3: Gendered Differences in Communication

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Identify the differences between the masculine and feminine speech communities.
- Identify some overall differences as they relate to different gender performativities.
- Better understand how your own communication style may be influenced by, or reflective of, your gender identity.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN COMMUNICATION

Do women and men communicate differently? Are men from Mars and women from Venus, as John Gray once pontificated? We will explore the performative aspects of gendered communication in this section by focusing on nonverbal and verbal aspects of communication as it relates to gender.

Nonverbal Gender Communication

Overall, men and women tend to behave in relatively consistent ways. However, as a product of social conditioning, and in order to appease long-held social customs that have developed around gender binaries, there are some documented differences in the ways that most men and women interact. This is particularly true when they are interacting with other members of their own gender.

As mentioned in the upcoming Unit 6 of this book, **haptics** focuses on the role of touch in communication. **Proxemics** refers to the use of space or proximity in communication. How does this relate to gendered communication? Brenda Major (1981) concluded that differences in the use of touch among males and females is influenced by culture and attitudes toward gender performativity. Females are exposed to more touch than males from infancy due to culturally normalized expectations of independence for boys and dependence and cooperation among girls (Major, 1981). In addition, men are more likely to initiate touch with women than women are with men. Much of the difference is influenced by power relationships and stereotypes of a culture.

Due to the normalized factors of gender expectations among women and men, females are socialized to be more accommodating and emotionally intuitive regarding interpersonal skills. Also, because of societal norms and social construction, men are less likely to get physically close to other men, whereas women are more accepting of being touched by other women. Some may consider men's same-sex aversion to touch to be influenced by homophobia, but we also must consider context. While men may not touch each other or be in close proximity when communicating as much as women, it's often acceptable to chest bump a teammate or give him a slap on the buttocks in an athletic competition. The context matters. Also important are the cultural norms that vary from country to country or ethnicity to ethnicity. European cultures tend to communicate with less distance than in the United States. Proximity also varies between Northern Europe to Southern Europe or from North America to South America. The frequency of handshakes, hugs, and kisses vary from region to region, and culture to culture.

The differences between men and women sharing a household are not limited to parenting. Studies also show that the distribution of household work remains uneven between men and women, with women straddled with the majority of household chores, despite spending equal amounts of time outside the home earning income. This inequity has far-reaching consequences. Scholars have found that in households where both partners view their chores as being evenly shared, both partners are also more likely to report high satisfaction with their sex life (Gager & Yabiku, 2010).

One reason for the disparities we see in how households divide time by gender may be that different genders have been acculturated to approach their bonding activities differently (Endendijk, et al., 2017). Whereas men are taught from youth how to bond through shared structured activities like sports, or imaginary play where the roles are assigned, women are typically raised to value communication as the primary means of bonding. Consider for example, the difference between a girl being taught to play with her dolls through imaginary chat or tea times, and little boys being steered toward video games, or a shootout between designated cowboys and Indians (Wood, 2012; Kimmel, 2013).

Gendered Verbal Communication

Speech Communities

One way that theorists have approached the differences in communication between genders is through the framework of speech communities. Julia Wood (2009) discusses the differences of how men and women use language by theorizing that they adopt different speech communities. The goal is to understand the role of culture in creating a set of norms and practices that are influenced by gender performance. Drawing from Langer's postulation of "discourse communities" (Langer, 1953; Ghosh, 1979) and Labov's discussion of "speech communities" (1974), Wood formulates the idea of gendered speech communities. The basis of

any speech community is a set of shared beliefs and practices that are influenced by history and the experiences in an environment and how these factors over time develop unique characteristics of communication practices within the group. Wood explains that "socialization is a gendered process in which boys and girls are encouraged to develop masculine and feminine identities" (2009, p. 19). The goal of understanding gendered speech communities is to explore how socialization creates these specific patterns of communication among females and males.

To be a part of a gendered speech community does not imply that you identify as that gender, or that you perform that gender role on a routine basis. Instead, the notion of a gendered speech community suggests that certain broad patterns of communication and specific practices of communication can be tied to either masculine or feminine gender performances, based on long standing traditions, and drawn from the historical research on gender communication, which was most often conducted under the presumption of a naturally occurring gender binary (Wood, 2012).

Today, we view speech communities as a useful way to examine still prevalent communication practices that may be employed for different reasons, regardless of sex, or gender identity, but that still convey gendered meaning in our society, and/or accord with social expectations based on gender. In other words, these are gendered practices that may be theoretically passé, even though they remain practically consistent.

Feminine Speech Communities

People who communicate in the feminine speech community tend to value verbal communication primarily as a means of building and maintaining relationships through the sharing of personal experiences, ideas, or concerns. For this reason, the rituals of talk in the feminine speech community differ from those in the masculine speech community, and are called **relational talk**. Women have historically been identified in large part by their communication practices, beginning with the supposition that women enjoy talking more than men, and that they crave talk more than men do. Research shows that in fact men and women communicate verbally an equal amount, though they may tend to communicate in different ways overall, and for different purposes (Wood, 2012).

To begin, members of the feminine speech community view verbal communication as an opportunity to express their own identities, and to build relationships through acts of mutual disclosure that demonstrate trust. Female socialization presents different communication patterns than males beginning with childhood games. Wood (2009) explains how girls' games involve smaller groups with less rigid rules and goals. Girls' games are more fluid and made up as the game unfolds, in direct contrast to the individualistic nature of boys' games. Due to the lack of "external rules to settle disputes," girls learn to cooperate and communicate with each other in a collaborative fashion. Girls' games are more focused on process than content with sensitivity to feelings. Criticism, exclusion of others and outdoing the competition is not acceptable behavior. The focus is less on achieving a goal. The goal is communication itself as girls strive to create an inclusive environment.

In the feminine speech community, it is common to relate stories or past experiences, and to do so by providing specific details, in order to create opportunities for others to relate, or find common threads that can lead to a meaningful response. In this community, relationships tend to revolve around sharing of information, rather than sharing activities, and for this reason studies have found that people in the feminine speech community tend to maintain relationships with others, even when they are separated by vast distances geographically (Wood, 2012).

Into adulthood women use communication to "maintain relationships with others…learn themselves and share with others" (Wood, 2009, p. 21). Women communicate to maintain relationships, offer support and make connections. Where men are more focused on goals and direct competition, women are more focused on understanding emotions and being empathetic. Wood (2009) breaks feminine communication down into seven features or qualities:

- Maintaining relationships
- Equality
- Showing support
- Conversational "maintenance" work
- Responsiveness
- Personal concrete style
- Tentativeness

Because the feminine speech community values the building and maintenance of relationships through verbal communication, they are also more likely than members of the masculine speech community to use their talk as a way of offering support to others. In part, this is why members of the feminine speech community are more apt to inquire about issues relating to family, health, and well-being in their conversations, because these inquiries can help them determine if support is needed by their conversation

partner. Sometimes the feminine speech community provides support, not just by offering comforting or affirming statements, but also by listening to the other person, and allowing them a chance to process their feelings and thoughts in an environment absent of judgement or critique (Wood, 2012).

Masculine Speech Communities

As Wood (2012) theorizes it, the masculine speech community approaches verbal communication more pragmatically. Members of the masculine speech community use talk instrumentally in order to achieve goals. In this community, members share information in order to accomplish tasks- even if the task is something like, starting a relationship. For example, someone from the masculine speech community might view the conversation they make on a first date as a necessary prelude to advancing the relationship to the second date, rather than as an opportunity to share for sharing's sake. For them, the conversation is framed as a win/lose scenario and their mind is likely working hard to ensure that when they speak they say the 'right thing' in order to satisfy their date's expectations, and succeed as a dinner partner.

Gendered patterns of communication begin in childhood with the games children play. For boys, the games often involve large groups, are competitive and rely on strict guidelines and rules (Wood, 2012). Boys' games are about asserting dominance, standing out, and being better than the other players. These factors have a direct impact on communication development as boys are taught to assert themselves, compete and attract attention. Since boys are taught to be competitive and dominant, weakness and vulnerability is unacceptable. Within a team context, individuality is still important because the individual skill set is highly valued. The emphasis of being strong, competitive and invulnerable starts a pattern of communication practices that are more impersonal and focused on achieving an explicit goal.

Because the masculine speech community engages with verbal communication in a less spontaneous and more **instrumental talk** fashion, it is no surprise that its members also use verbal communication in a more competitive manner—engaging in verbal and paralanguage tactics designed to one-up their conversation partners, especially during a disagreement. Examples of such competitive tactics include interrupting, scoffing, raising their volume, and using sarcastic tones unnecessarily (Wood, 2012; Greenwood, 2017). Often, these behaviors may not be consciously motivated by competition; rather it is a product of how the community views the purpose and value of talk—as a means by which goals are achieved. In that context, these kinds of aggressive behaviors demonstrate implied values like dominance, bravery, and intellectual superiority (Wood, 2012).

Masculine speech communities emphasize goals, assertion, preserving independence and enhancing status (Wood, 2009). By respecting others' independence, males establish boundaries of respect. Masculine talk focuses on the elaboration of a skillset or displays of being able to get things done. Men are less likely to express vulnerability or disclose personal information that will make them appear weak or diminish their status. If someone expresses a concern, the masculine style is to give problem solving advice.

The following are characteristics of masculine speech communities:

- Exhibit knowledge
- Instrumentality
- Conversational dominance
- Absolute assertion
- Abstractness
- Non-responsiveness

Differences in the socialized communication practices of men and women often creates situations where someone misinterprets the other's meaning. If the codes, norms, and practices are not understood across genders, one may respond in a manner that creates a disconnect or conflict. Grasping the various ways feminine and masculine speech communities communicate is important in developing interpersonal relationships.

On the whole, the masculine speech community tends to communicate more concisely, focusing on information they view as pertinent, rather than allowing themselves to disclose information as a way of relating to others. For this reason, there is wide room for miscommunication when they interact with people from the feminine speech community (Wood, 2012). One product of the masculine speech community's view of talk as competition is mansplaining: a sexist practice in which men attempt to assert dominance by explaining things to women that the women either already know, or didn't want to know (Solnit, 2017). Not all men are prone to doing this, but men who are also members of the masculine speech community are likely to think that by relating their knowledge of something, even if no one has asked them to do so, proves their intelligence and earns them admiration.

In keeping with their instrumental view of talk, masculine speech community members may also offend people from the feminine speech community if they are seen to be ignoring cues for mutual disclosure or supportive statements. Research finds that in professional situations, people from the masculine speech community tend to misinterpret queries from their co-workers that are meant to start a conversation by assuming the co-worker needs them to solve a problem (Yoshimura & Hayden, 2007). This is one of the most common sources of conflict between the two speech communities. Where members of the feminine speech community may disclose a problem or obstacle they face in order to solicit support, members of the masculine speech community are likely to view this disclosure as an opportunity to fix the problem by providing unwanted advice (Wood, 2012).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: 'Say What?'

Invite two students of any gender identity to the front of the room to improvise a scene. Each one is tasked to use a different speech community in their improvisation. Then, let the class volunteer the setting of the scene; the type of discussion- argument, proposal, offer of help, etc.; and the relationship between the two characters.

Let the scene play out for a moment. Then, let another pair of students take over the two assigned roles and let them perform the speech communities in front of the class. After the scene discuss what specific forms of the masculine and **feminine speech communities** they saw playing out during the scene. Did it cause confusion between the two characters? Did it cause conflict?

Activity 2: Writing Reflection

Ask each student to reflect on their own speech community, bearing in mind that your gender does not have to match your speech community. Then ask them to classify the different friends and family they see regularly into different speech communities. Lastly, ask them to reflect in writing on any miscommunications they have had in the past with those friends or family that don't share their speech community.

When the students are done let them share aloud in small groups, or with the class.

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GLOSSARY

Haptics: The use of touch

Feminine Speech Communities: The grouping of people who communicate according to certain common traits that have been associated with feminine performativity

Instrumental Talk: Verbal communication aimed at achieving a task or accomplishing a goal

Masculine Speech Communities: The grouping of people who communicate according to certain common traits that have been associated with masculine performativity

Proxemics: The use of space to communicate.

Relational Talk: Verbal communication aimed at building relationships or showing support

MEDIA

Multimedia 1: One TEDx speaker discusses the issues living as both a man and as a woman. See this from the perspective of one person who has experienced gender identity from different viewpoints.

I've lived as a man & a woman -- here's what I learned | Paula Stone Williams | TEDxMileHigh https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrYx7HaUlMY

Multimedia 2: A communication researcher, Audrey Nelson, Ph.D., discusses the seven most asked questions about gender in communication. Have you had these same questions? How do they differ from your experience?

The Most Asked Questions About Gender Communication - Audrey Nelson PhD

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2I6Lu2aCC6Q

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Nonverbal Communication

6.1: Introduction to Nonverbal Communication

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Define nonverbal communication and explain its metacommunicative nature.
- Describe the process of nonverbal communication.
- Assess the impact of nonverbal communication in interpersonal relationships.

INTRO TO NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Defining nonverbal communication

Your partner flashes a big smile when you surprise them for their birthday even though they secretly are embarrassed. You send an emoji "face with tears of joy" (😂) to your BFF after getting a perfect score on a rhetorical criticism paper. You kiss someone on a first date. What do these scenarios have in common? Nonverbal communication of course -- an essential but frequently misunderstood dimension of interpersonal relations (Gifford, 2011). **Nonverbal communication** is often simply defined as communication without words. Others have noted that nonverbal communication includes "all behaviors that are not words" (Guerrero & Floyd, 2006, p. 4). Regardless of the deceiving simplicity of its definition, know that nonverbal communication is very complex.

In everyday life, nonverbal communication is multimodal and multifunctional in nature serving many functions. It is closely linked to how we feel about our relationships with others and how we manage those relationships. In interpersonal interaction, nonverbal messages can be found in facial expressions, eyes, body language, touching as well as clothing, tone of voice, posture and even spatial distance. Indeed, you can say a lot without saying anything, or as psychologist and philosopher Paul Watzlawick (1978) observed in the first axiom of his interpersonal communication theory that you cannot not communicate. The inevitability of sending and receiving messages is extremely important to understand because it means that each of us is a type of "transmitter" that cannot be shut off. Nonverbal behaviors are implicated in messages of intimacy, arousal and composure, dominance, formal, and task or social orientation. Whether intentional or unintentional, deceitful or sincere, no matter what we do, we give off information about ourselves. In short, nonverbal communication is an important part of human interaction and always present in face-to-face interactions.

A related concept is what social scientists call **metacommunication** -- communicating *about* communication. In interpersonal relationships, it involves how people perceive you, not just your words. For example, if I say, "Nice to see you!" to someone and roll my eyes at the same time, they will likely doubt my sincerity.

This example illustrates one of the more interesting effects of nonverbal messages: most people tend to believe the nonverbal message over the verbal message if the two appear to be in disagreement (Knapp, 1972; Knapp, Earnest, Griffin, & McGlone, 2020; Malandro & Barker, 1983; Mehrabian, 1981). People seem to believe that actions really do speak louder than words. As a result, they place a disproportionate emphasis on the nonverbal response -- therefore it's always a good idea to make nonverbal behavior *consistent* with our verbal messages (Hackman & Johnson, 2000).

So, welcome to the world of nonverbal communication. Its types, its contexts, and its impacts -- all of these will be explored in the pages that follow.

The process of nonverbal communication

Is nonverbal communication its own type of language? Yes and no. Like language, the fundamental process of nonverbal communication consists of a message encoded in a selected medium (body language, for example) that is then decoded. When you form language and speak it, your brain encodes a thought into words and intelligible sounds. For example, if you want to tell someone to leave the room, you can simply speak the words, "Please leave the room." Nonverbally, you can also encode an extra layer of "illustration" -- for example, first pointing at the person and then at the door.

Some forms of nonverbal communication are emblematic in nature, where the performance stands for a concrete idea. **Emblems** are gestures like pointing, giving a thumbs up, or signing "OK" in specific contexts where those gestures are intelligible. Other nonverbal emblems include wearing a uniform to indicate team membership or sporting a tattoo that has a literal, unambiguous meaning. The most famous emblem of all, of course, may be the infamous "middle finger."

However, not all nonverbal communication is emblematic. If you sway in your chair during a lecture, the meaning of that behavior may not be immediately obvious. Perhaps you need to go to the bathroom. Maybe you're just restless. You could even be doing

light exercises to help stay awake. Without asking you, any interpretation would be tentative -- a guess. In fact, you might not even know the answer to what your behavior means. It turns out that some people perform nonverbal gestures without realizing them. When some people speak before an audience, for example, they might look down a lot, move their legs a lot, or put their hands behind their backs -- all without realizing it. These are “adaptive” behaviors designed to subconsciously help the speaker feel better (more comfortable) about the situation they’re in.

How aware (or not) someone is of their nonverbal behavior raises the important question of *intention*. Certainly, some aspects of nonverbal are intentionally performed. Chances are, your clothing and hairstyle at the moment you’re reading this were intentional choices, but what about your posture and the position of your hands and arms? There are aspects of nonverbal communication that we may convey without meaning to. Goffman (1952) called the intentional aspects of nonverbal performance as “cues given” and the unintentional aspects as “cues given off.” Whether intentional or not, these cues can be communicated via a variety of “media” (all of them associated with you) -- your eyes, smell, tone of voice, facial expressions, and gestures to name a few. Increasing your competence in nonverbal communication means learning to pay more attention to these unintentional aspects.

Later in this chapter, you will learn different channels of nonverbal communication. These channels are grouped into four categories: *personal characteristics* (aspects relating to a person’s physical features), *environment* (artifacts in a given location), *motion* (movement-oriented gestures), and *vocal cues* (relating to the non-linguistic aspects of talking).

The impact of nonverbal communication

You might have heard that 93% of communication is nonverbal. That figure comes from a famous study by Merhabian and Ferris (1967). Participants in their study were read aloud single words that they previously rated as either positive, neutral, or negative on-paper. When they were read aloud, they were read vocal tones that were previously rated as either neutral or positive. Then the experiment was repeated using facial cues, where the experimenter read the words while displaying certain facial cues (Mehrabian & Wiener, 1967). Mehrabian utilized the results to calculate the listener’s *perceived* attitudes, which were a combination of three cues in the following proportion: 7% verbal, 38% vocal (tone), and 55% facial expression.

Notice that these studies were focused on the utterance of single words, not complete sentences within a context. We know that our typical social interactions occur in contexts of complete thoughts and actions, not just single words. These studies, therefore, face issues with external validity (the ability to apply to actual social situations). This criticism (among others concerning sample size and possible participant biases) was expressed by Burgoon, Woodall, and Ferris (1989). Though you may hear the 93% number frequently expressed in popular culture, you now know that this is based on a very limited study.

So if it isn’t 93%, how much of communication is nonverbal? The only thing that scholars agree on is that it *matters*, and that it matters in many contexts. In the next section, we will explore 14 channels (yes, 14!) and the many ways they allow us to communicate ideas beyond the power of words. In the end, our competence in nonverbal communication can help determine how an interaction will proceed and, perhaps, whether it will take place at all.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Gestures List

Ask students: *How do we communicate without words? What are some common gestures?* Divide students into groups and give each group just two minutes to come up with as many ways of communicating without using words as they can.

Activity 2: Silent Scene

Divide students into pairs. Have each pair create a one-minute scene featuring a problem that needs to be solved. When performing the scene, neither member of the pair can talk (all communication has to be expressed nonverbally). Can the audience guess the content of the scene without any dialogue to help?

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GLOSSARY

Competence: One's ability to encode and decode nonverbal communication.

Decoding: The process of interpreting and assigning meaning to a message.

Encoding: The process of organizing a message, choosing words and sentence structure, and verbalizing the message.

Medium: The channel or system by which information is transmitted.

Metacommunication: Messages that refer to other messages, usually in the context of a relationship.

Nonverbal Communication: Communication enacted by means other than words.

Emblem: A nonverbal signal that stands for an established semantic meaning.

MEDIA

1. Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are

At the TEDGlobal 2012 conference, social psychologist Amy Cuddy gave the talk "Your body language shapes who you are," based on research in which she detailed the effects of "power posing." Do you agree or disagree with her that our body language can change other people's perceptions—and perhaps even our own body chemistry—simply by changing body positions? Are her findings consistent with definitions of nonverbal communication? https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_may_shape_who_you_are?language=en

2. The Secrets of Body Language

Full documentary; This 90-minute documenary shows us several examples of this, including the summit meetings between U.S. president Bill Clinton, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, and Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak which took place at the dawning of the new millennium, and President Richard Nixon's offerings of transparency while in the throes of the Watergate scandal more than two decades earlier. In each instance, the simplest pat on the back, crossing of arms across the chest, quiver in the voice, speed of a footstep or stance during a handshake illustrates underlying tensions and doubt. Can you identify or describe the process of creating and interpreting nonverbal cues in this documentary?

6.2: Environment and Physical Characteristics

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Identify the primary functions of nonverbal communication.
- Distinguish between four types of nonverbal communication.
- Explain how the person's environment and physical appearance impact communication message construction and reception

COMMUNICATOR ENVIRONMENT & CHARACTERISTICS

Classifications of Nonverbal Communication

Scholars have classified nonverbal communication into three principal classifications: environmental conditions where communication takes place, the physical characteristics of the communicators, and behaviors of communicators during interaction (Knapp, Hall & Morgan, 2014). Obviously, many scholars have classified the broad range of nonverbal communication, however these categories will serve as a frame for how we will explain nonverbal communication in a variety of contexts.

Classification I: Communicator Environment

The **environment** is everything around us and can be defined as any place, setting, location, surrounding in which something occurs. The physical environment plays a significant role in nonverbal communication (Patterson & Quadflieg, 2016; Patterson, 2018). Traditional dimensions include territory and how human beings utilize personal space (**proxemics**), inanimate objects even interior designs, furniture arrangement, lighting, colors, textures, and even time (**chronemics**).

Consider the following questions:

- What message might a cluttered living room send?
- Is having desks split into two groups facing each other or in a circle the most effective arrangement for class discussions?
- Do you know someone who is guilty of 'manspreading' on public transit? Manspreading (or man-sitting) is when men sit "with their legs in a wide v-shape filling two or three single seats on public transport" (Jane, 2017, p. 459). This practice is clearly a high-power nonverbal display that violates social expectations of how public spaces should be utilized.

Proxemics

Proxemics is part of the communicative environment. It is broadly defined as the study of the way people use space. Cultural anthropologist Edward T. Hall, in his now classic book *The Hidden Dimension* (1966), coined and defined proxemics as "the interrelated observations and theories of humans use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture." Personal space refers to the area an individual maintains around him or herself, while territory is a larger area an individual controls to provide *privacy* (for example, an office or a specific chair in the conference room). Invading another's territory may cause that person discomfort and a desire to defend their space (e.g., by turning away or creating a barrier).

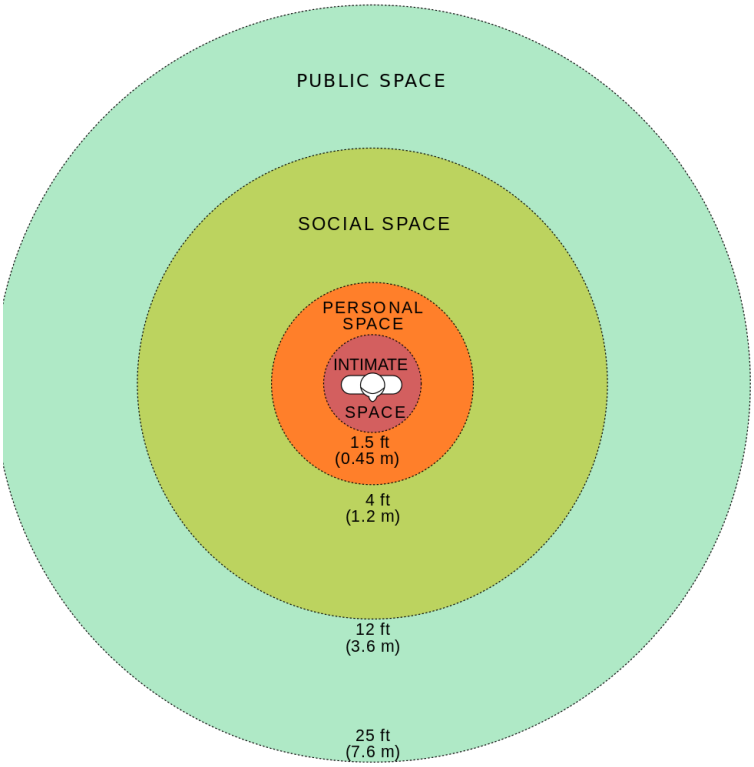

Figure 6.2.1: Hall's Dimensions of Personal Space

From "Personal Space," by WebHamster, 2009, *WikiMedia Commons* (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Personal_Space.svg). Licensed under CC-BY-SA 4.0

Although the term “personal space” was originally introduced by environmental psychologist Robert Sommer (1959) to denote the area that separates yourself from others, it was cultural anthropologist, Edward T. Hall who created specific zones of interpersonal distance and the impact proxemics has on interpersonal communication. Below are Hall’s spatial distances demonstrated in Figure 1:

- **Public**: *12 feet or more*
- **Social**: *4 to 12 feet*
- **Personal**: *18 inches to 4 feet*
- **Intimate**: *Skin contact to 18 inches*

Chronemics

Chronemics is the study of how time is perceived by individuals or by cultural groups, how it is used, and how differing perceptions and usages can affect communication. In *The Dance of Life* (1983), Hall examined how we treat time in nonverbal communication and classified time into nine categories, each with its own rules and meanings: biological time, personal time, physical time, metaphysical time, micro time, sync time, sacred time, profane time, and meta time.” In addition, informal rules about chronemics dominate our time-based behaviors, including (Burgoon, Guerrero, & Floyd, 2016):

- punctuality
- duration of events
- acceptability of multitasking
- how much advance time is given for notice of events

For example, have you ever been late to a party on purpose? The way an individual talks about or uses time nonverbally communicates much about them.

Classification II. Communicator Physical Characteristics

Physical characteristics are a significant part of nonverbal communication, and these greatly affect the nature in which people perceive others as they communicate with them. Judgments are quickly formed within seconds (Willis & Todorov, 2006). Examples of physical characteristics include physical attractiveness, hair, skin color, facial features, height, weight, body modifications and even hair. Research points out that, while some of these are easily alterable (e.g., clothing, hair color and length), others are less so (e.g., skin color) (Bonaccio, Reilly, O'Sullivan, Chiocchio, 2016, p. 7). People make initial judgments based on appearances and often play a significant role in interpersonal relationships. In this module, discover how appearance, physical attractiveness, hair, olfactics, clothing, tattoos, and even makeup can influence interpersonal communication.

Physical Attractiveness

When asked, many people will tell you that physical appearance is only one aspect of what attracts them to other people. Studies on physical attractiveness suggest that attractive people are more successful in the workplace (Elmer & Houran, 2020), earn more money (Ruffle & Shtudiner, 2015), receive more leniency in court (Wareham, Blackwell, Berry & Boots, 2019; Gunnell & Ceci, 2010) and applying for jobs (Chiang & Saw, 2018). On the other hand, there is evidence that being physically attractive might not always be beneficial (Fang, S., Zhang, C., & Li, Y., 2020). In television commercials, for example, retailers and other companies are increasingly using real people - with all their physical flaws rather than models to give their brands an "authentic" feel. When it comes to interpersonal romantic relationships however, the longer we know each other, the less important physical attractiveness becomes to beginning and maintaining a long-term relationship (Spielmann, Maxwell, MacDonald, Peragine & Impett, 2020). In other words, physical appearance is subjective, meaning that what one person considers physically attractive another person may not consider physically attractive.

Hair

Hair is communication and communicative and plays a role in nonverbal communication. Because hair is on the head it is highly noticeable and combines with other facial factors to send out powerful unspoken messages. Hair communicates power, status, influence, even cultural identity (mostly for African-American women (Varner, 2003). In other words, a person's hair is often an integral part of expressing body language. Because hair is malleable - meaning capable of being altered, shaped, cut and easily changed into a new shape, it may information about the persons' femininity/masculinity/non-gender conforming identity, sexuality, authority status, self-development or even mood.

In interpersonal relationships, hair matters. Scholars found that women judged males with heavy stubble faces as most attractive and heavy beards, light stubble and clean-shaven faces as similarly less attractive (Dixson & Brooks, 2013). On the other hand, men rated full beards and heavy stubble as most attractive and not too far behind rated clean-shaven and light stubble as least attractive. Additional research revealed that in some instances beards are associated with being more aggressive (Saxton, Mackey, McCarty, & Neave, 2016). Hair is used to convey different messages. The type of message depends mostly on the individual's personality, religion, background and cultural milieu.

Olfactics

The sense of smell can also play a role in nonverbal communication, especially when it comes to interpersonal relationships. Just as your fingers have unique prints, our bodies have distinct and unique odors. Olfactics is communication through smell. Olfactics can communicate status, ethnicity, and social class. The sense of smell in humans is more powerful than we think. One study showed that we can distinguish at least 1 trillion different odors — up from previous estimates of a mere 10,000 (Bushdid, Buller, Guerrereo, Afifi & Feldman, 2014). When it comes to smells, "sexual chemistry" is more than just a way of talking about heated attraction. People are influenced by "good smells" and "bad smells" and do not even realize it. Think of taking a deep inhale of someone you were attracted to. You may have even had a physical reaction. Think about how the scent of cologne or perfume lingered long after this person was gone. While we may personally be repelled or attracted to the scent of another person, the fact of the matter is this...inhaling body odor can offer information about a person's emotional state. Research also concludes that anxious odors can increase alertness in others (Pazzaglia, 2015). Although our noses can sometimes lead us astray, in general they send us important messages about other people. Keep smell's importance in context. Be cognizant of the importance of natural scents and manufactured scents.

Clothing

Like other aspects of human physical appearance, **clothing** has social significance, with different rules and expectations being valid depending on circumstance and occasion. Clothing conveys nonverbal clues about a speaker's personality, culture, mood,financial status, level of confidence, interests, age, authority, values, sexual identity -- even religious or political affiliations. Research has

shown that we are sensitive to clothing (Dunbar & Bernhold, 2019) and also body art/tattoos (Ozanne, Tews, & Mattila, 2019). Consider how your choice of clothing impacts an audience while giving a formal speech or presentation. If you have ever taken a presentational speaking class, the instructor probably talked about first impressions and the impact your clothing (Smith, 1976) even shoes (Gillath, Bahns, & Crandall, 2012) has on the audience. Scholars that have researched nonverbal expressions of behavior and how they contribute to personality judgments note, “In a get-to-know context, the broad smile of an interaction partner and the colorful clothing could lead to the conclusion that this person is friendly, thus resulting in a friendship or a romantic relationship” (Breil, Osterholz, Nestler & Back, 2019, p. 3). It may sound cliché, but you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

Tattoos

Tattoos are not just for bikers, rock stars or even hardened criminals anymore (DeMello, 1995). These are just outdated stereotypes that fail to take into account that tattoos have become an acceptable form of self expression. Tattoos send many nonverbal messages and have gained popularity among young Americans over the last two decades (Maloney & Koch, 2020; Shannon-Missal, L. 2016). These messages can range from signaling a sense of freedom, memorializing a family member, accentuating religious identity, or indicating whether one was a criminal, or prisoner of war. Caution should be taken when interpreting the design or assigning a “meaning” to the wearer’s tattoo(s). Regardless of the motivation, amount, type, size, style or location of a tattoo, any given tattoo is likely to speak volumes about the one who bears it.

Makeup

Americans (more women than men) spend a lot of money and time on **makeup**. As of Aug 20, 2019, 1.12 million Americans spent $500 or more on makeup products in the last 3 months in the United States. Although there has been a cultural shift in ideas about self adornment, especially makeup, cosmetics can significantly change how people see you, how intelligent other people think you are, and how warm or approachable you seem at first impression. In a study featuring photos of female models without makeup and

with natural, professional and glamorous makeup, “respondents (male and female) overwhelmingly felt that makeup produced a significant effect on judgments of attractiveness, competence, and likeability -- but not trustworthiness (Etcoff, Stock, Haley, Vickery, & House, 201, p. 5). Perceptions about makeup are not just situated within a certain age group. Even seniors continue to have judgement about what is communicated with makeup (Baek, 2019). Their findings showed that seniors had a prejudice against makeup and their generation tended to wear makeup to look younger rather than prettier.

In summary, when it comes to clothes, hairstyle, fragrance, tattoos and even make-up, be certain that whatever message you are communicating is reflected not only on the inside is also being communicated on the outside.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Distance Violations

You can test the importance of distance by *deliberately violating* the cultural rules for use of the proxemic zones outlined by cultural anthropologist Edward T. Hall:

1. Join with a partner. Choose which one of you will be the perpetrator and which will be the observer.
2. In **three** distinct situations, the perpetrator should deliberately use the "wrong" amount of space for the context. Make the violations as subtle as possible. You might, for instance, gradually move into another person's intimate zone when personal distance would be more appropriate. (Be careful not to make the violations too offensive!)
3. The observer should record the verbal and nonverbal reactions of others when the distance zones are violated. After each experiment, inform the people involved about your motives and ask whether they were consciously aware of the reason for any discomfort they experienced.

Activity 2: Micro-expressions

Test your ability to detect micro-expressions for free by using the link: http://www.microexpressionstest.com/micro-expressions-test/

How well did you interpret the micro-expressions?

Now retake the test -- this time with a partner -- to see if you can agree on what micro-expression is being displayed. Then address the following:

- Discuss why you chose the expression you did.
- Talk about how easy or difficult it is to interpret these brief nonverbal cues.

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GLOSSARY

Proxemics: The study of personal space management.

Chronemics: The study of how timing and meaning relate.

Olfactics: The study of how smell is used to communicate.

Environment: The place, setting, location, surrounding in which something occurs

MEDIA

1. *Seinfield*'s "The Close Talker"

Here is an episode from the comedy sitcom Seinfeld where someone has an issue with proxemics. Use this video to spark a discussion about personal space management: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12ngQixZ4II

2. The Halo Effect

Watch this segment from a documentary about the studies of physical attractiveness and impression format. How might this bias come into play in our daily lives? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UEho_4ejkNw

MEDIA ATTRIBUTIONS

"Photo of woman wearing sunglasses" licensed by Malcom Garrett is in the Public Domain, CC0.

6.3: Movement and Vocal Cues

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Identify different types of body movement positions and their significance in the realm of nonverbal communication.
- Distinguish between different aspects of vocalics and how they influence perception and production of talk.
- Evaluate the impact of the four aspects of nonverbal communication in everyday interactions.

MOVEMENT AND VOCAL CUES

Classification III: Movement/Position

The next category of nonverbal communication relates to body movement. There are certain aspects of your body that can be purposefully moved to communicate including your eyes, facial muscles, arms, and hands. In this Module, we will discuss each of these four aspects and how they can be used to communicate.

Oculesics

You probably have heard the saying "the eyes are the windows to the soul." Your eyes can communicate just as much as your mouth does. **Oculesics** is the study of the use of our eyes to communicate. There are many ways that we use our eyes for communicative purposes and they can be culturally driven (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013).

First, there is pupil dilation. Your pupils are the hole in your eyes that expand or contract based on the amount of lighting and what you are viewing. When your pupils dilate they are enabling you to take in more information about something, usually in states of arousal (Critchley & Nagai, 2012). Conversely, when your pupils contract, they are trying to force your sight onto a particular thing, usually in a state of fear, anxiety, or sadness. Dilated pupils also make you more physically attractive to others (Hess, 1975). You may notice that in some sensual modeling photos that the model will have dilated pupils; these are known as "bedroom eyes."

You may also notice that some professional poker players wear sunglasses despite being in a dimly lit room. The sunglasses prevent other players from noticing pupil dilation, which may indicate that the cardholder has a good hand. In fact, poker players have a term for all nonverbal communication signals that may "leak" what kind of hand a specific player has; they are called "tells" (Caro, 2003).

Pupil dilation is just one kind of "tell," glancing can also convey meaning. A glance is the direction where pupils are facing. In basketball, players will use the "no-look" pass which involves facing in one direction yet strategically using their pupils to pass the ball in a different direction. The misdirection caused by the player facing one direction but passing in a different one tricks defenders because they assume that a player will always look where they are passing. In dating, "checking out" a person involves someone's pupils focusing on different aspects of a person-of-interest's physical appearance. If you get caught "checking out" someone, it can be awkward to say the least.

Third, there is eye contact. Eye contact is the mutual exchange of glances between two people. When two people are madly in love, they will glance deeply into each others' eyes and rarely break eye contact. Because of the romantic nature of a situation, you may notice that their pupils dilate. Pupil dilation is associated with sexual attraction (Rieger & Savin-Williams, 2012). On the opposite end of the spectrum, if two people are violently angry with each other; they may also exchange focused glances with their pupils contracted.

There are some social situations where eye contact is expected to be maintained like when you are public speaking, testifying in court, or telling someone you love them. There is a cultural element to these norms. In some cultures, avoiding contact with a superior is a sign of respect. For example, in Japanese culture, students will bow their heads and face the floor while they are being scolded, as a sign of respect and deference to the scolder (Burgoon, Guerrero, & Floyd, 2010). In the US Marine Corp training, boot camp recruits are prohibited from making eye contact with their drill sergeant as they are being talked to and must face forward at all times.

In fact, Goffman (1963) identified a social norm called, **civil inattention**. One thing that parents teach toddlers is to not "stare" at others. Imagine if you walked into a Starbuck's coffee shop and all of the patrons watched you as you walk in, order your coffee, and sit down at a table. You would probably be a bit uncomfortable being stared at by everyone. The norm that we are supposed to "see" others but not "stare" at them is the idea of civil inattention.

Overall, oculesics has three features; pupil dilation, glance, and eye contact. What we look at, how we look at it, and for how long we look can each have a layer of meaning to observers. Now that you are aware of the use of the eyes, you can see how they work

in synchrony with the facial muscles for facial displays.

Facial Displays

In synchrony with our eyes, the movement of our facial muscles also express messages to others, known as **facial displays**. The study of facial displays is most commonly associated with the field of emotions research. People are most adept at reading each other's emotions through each other's facial displays (Scherer & Scherer, 2011). There are many theories of emotions that can be discussed, and we refer you to Unit 8 to learn more about them. We will focus on Paul Ekman's research on emotional displays since it directly addresses the use of facial displays.

Paul Ekman (2003) argues that there are seven basic universal emotions that have unique facial displays: fear, anger, sadness, happiness, contempt, surprise, and disgust. You can see pictures of each emotion here: https://www.paulekman.com/universal-emotions/. Ekman argues that the human brain is subconsciously wired to exhibit these displays regardless of cultural upbringing, making them "universal." Not only did Ekman study these seven emotion displays, he also discovered the use of micro-expressions.

Micro-expressions are fleeting facial displays that last for one second or less in response to a stimulus (Ekman, 2009). Suppose that you are told by your parents that they are cancelling the family vacation that you secretly dreaded going to. When the news comes, you might show a very brief flash of happiness (a micro-expression), before correcting that emotion to appear to be sad or disappointed (out of respect for your parents). Micro-expressions are usually only detectable in slow-motion replays of video recordings, though Ekman believes that the human eye can be trained to detect them in real-time a little bit more than 60% of the time (Ekman, 2009).

The way we express our emotions is also governed by cultural norms known as **display rules** (Matsumoto, 1990). There are many ways we modify our facial displays when feeling certain emotions. For example, you might de-intensify the emotion that you feel. Perhaps you receive a phone call from an employer that you interviewed with that you earned the job. When you are told, you contain your excitement and thank them for the offer. After you get off the phone, you then begin to jump up and down with glee out of extra excitement. Now suppose the employer calls and tells you that you did not get the job. You might pretend to be understanding and accepting of the decision, but in fact, you are deeply hurt by it. In that case, you would be masking the emotion.

There are also certain "looks" that we can give each other. A father might dart his eyes at his child who is misbehaving. Once the child gets the "evil stare," the child stops acting up. A student who is confused might give a "puzzled" look to a teacher who is explaining a difficult concept, prompting the teacher to respond with another example.

Some "looks" are not kinesic in nature, but are just natural structures of our faces. Some people have natural resting faces that make them appear happy or in deep thought. Other people might have "resting angry faces," where they appear to be irritable in their resting position.

In any case, face-to-face interaction naturally calls for people to look at each others' faces. It would be quite uncomfortable to have an in-person conversation with someone who just stares at your chest or arms the entire time. The moves and looks of our face structure can be used to communicate specific stares and desires, as the "windows of our souls."

Kinesics

Kinesics is the study of body movement to communicate, generally the body, head, and limbs (Harrigan, 2008). There are an estimated 700,000 different physical signs that can be produced by humans. There are 250,000 different facial expressions that can be made with the 30 or so muscles in the face (Birdwhistell, 1970). And there are 1,000 human postures possible (Burgoon, Guerrero, & Floyd, 2009). The two areas that we will focus on are the use of our arms and legs.

When you talk, you might find yourself using your hands and arms to make points. The use of your arms to communicate are generally referred to as gestures. There are two types of gestures: speech-dependent and speech independent. Speech-independent gestures that have a direct verbal translation or dictionary definition. These are also known as **emblems**. Emblems usually consist of a word or two, or phrase. There will typically be a high agreement among members of a culture about a specific emblem means.

Emblems can express greetings (waves), requests (come here), insults (middle finger), threats (pistol shot), physical states (rubbing stomach), thought processes (thinking while looking up), death (slashing throat), and emotional states (eyes wide open "beware"). Can you think of others?

Speech-dependent gestures, known as **illustrators**, require having verbal context to have a clear meaning. Raising your palms up can have many different meanings, or no meaning at all. However, you might raise your palms up while telling a story about how

you carried something heavy to your room. In this case, the palm raising is made sense by the accompanying story about lifting something. Speech-dependent gestures can accent, repeat, contradict, or complement what you are saying.

Illustrators can be referent-related where they are used to describe the subject that you are speaking about. For example, you might say, "I caught a fish that was *this big*" While saying "this big," you might create distance between your hands to show the approximate length of the fish. Illustrators can also speak to your relationship to the subject. If you are very certain about an answer to a question, you might say "yes" while moving your palms down to show the certainty, or if you are uncertain, you might put your hand to your face and look up while speaking to show that you are in deep thought.

You might also use punctuation gestures to emphasize a particular word or phrase in a speech. For example, a politician might say, "No more wars" while pounding on the lectern on each word of that phrase. Lastly, you could use interactive gestures to help regulate the turns and flow of a conversation. As you talk to someone, you might forget what something is called, so you might snap your fingers or point at them to help you finish your sentence. You could also regulate a turn by putting your hand up while talking when someone tries to interject.

In either case, both emblems and illustrators are important for daily communication. They provide shortcuts, regulation, and illustration to everyday language that is unspoken yet felt and seen.

Haptics

Haptics is the study of touch as communication. The importance of touch begins with our birth; the first senses that you developed in the womb was your sense of touch. Immediately after birth, you were probably held and caressed by your parents or parent-figures. Touch is also important for our physical well-being. Touch has been found to be associated with reducing stress levels by increasing oxytocin (Gallace & Spence, 2010; Regehr, Glancy, & Pitts, 2013). Literally, sometimes all you need is a hug when you are stressed. When you are very nervous, you might resort to using adaptors, which are self-soothing touching and movement behaviors that occur in response to high arousal or anxiety. These behaviors may include clicking your pen, shaking your legs, or rubbing your hands.

There is some difficulty in studying touch naturally. Touching norms are culturally defined, with some cultures having low usage and others having higher usage. Moreover, touch that occurs between people low touch and immediate touch cultures is done privately; consider romantic couples and social norms against "PDA" (public displays of affection). Researchers must then rely on self-reports and experiments where confederates manipulate touch levels.

We do know that there are five dimensions of touch: intensity, duration, location, frequency, and instrumentality (Burgoon, Guerroro, & Floyd, 2009). Intensity refers to how hard or soft a touch is. Compare squeezing someone as you hug them, versus lightly touching them as you embrace. Duration refers to how long the touching lasts. Compare a hug that lasts one second versus five seconds; how might the meaning of that hug change? Location is where the person is touched. When hugging, you might wrap you arms around the upper arms of the person, or you might wrap your arms around the lower waist of the person. The location of where your arms touch might vary based on the relationship you have with that person.

Frequency describes the number of touches that occur. If you pat on the person's back a few times while hugging, that might have some kind of special meaning versus just doing one pat as you embrace. Finally, instrumentality describes what one is touched with. Imagine being touched on the arm with a hand versus an elbows. Or imagine being touched on the arm with a ruler rather than a hand. The fact that you were touched with a ruler might mean something different to you.

In addition to these five dimensions, Heslin and Alper (1983) developed a taxonomy of touch that range from less personal to most personal. The five types are functional/professional, social/polite, friendship/warmth, love/intimacy, and sexual arousal.

Functional/professional touch relates to accomplishment of a specific task or service, that are usually impersonal in nature. When a baseball coach helps batters work on their swing, the coach might hold the batters' arms to instruct them on how to best execute the swing. Or a firefighter might give a child a boost to safety, touching the children's feet or waist area.

Social/polite touch is contextualized by acts of politeness and social etiquette. A very common form of this in American culture is the handshake. We generally shake hands with strangers upon meeting them with no prior relational history. A greeting hug, high-five, or pat on the back can all be examples used in politeness situations.

Friendship/warmth is characterized by one's expression for friendship and liking towards someone. Examples can be extended hugging, holding hands, arms around the waist or shoulders, or sitting closely to each other. Friendship gestures can sometimes be mistaken for romantic ones, which can create uncertainty in some types of relationships.

Love/intimacy touch expresses romantic attraction. Romantic relationships are often marked by physical touch milestones. Couples can probably recall the story of their "first kiss" or the first time they were physically intimate. The success of a date might be judged upon how much the physical intimacy "escalated," did the date end with just a kiss? A hug? Or holding hands?

Sexual arousal is the most intimate of all physical touch. Generally, what makes a touch sexual is the focus on areas of the body generally considered the most intimate and vulnerable: mouth, thighs, and genitals. Commonly ascribed sexual touching can include kissing, petting, and sexual intercourse.

A key qualifier to this taxonomy of touch is cultural norms. In some cultures, two men holding hands is a sign of friendship, and kissing on the cheek is part of a typical greeting sequence. Context is the framework for making sense of any action.

Classification IV: Vocal Cues

You might have heard the saying, "It doesn't matter what you say, but how you say it." The fourth category of nonverbal communication is related to vocal cues, also known as **vocalics** (Burgoon et al., 2011). Vocalics focuses not on the words that we choose, but the manner in which we say the words using our vocal cords. Vocalics include the study of paralanguage which is the set of physical mechanisms that we use to produce sounds orally. These mechanisms include the throat, nasal cavities, tongue, lips, mouth, and jaw. The specific aspects of vocalics that we will focus on in this Module are: pitch, pace, volume, and disfluencies.

Consider the sentence below:

He told her about Mary.

Take a moment repeating this sentence, putting emphasis one just on word each time. Try emphasizing "HE told her..." and then "He GAVE her..." and so forth. Depending on the paralanguage that you use, the meaning of this sentence can vary despite using the same words.

How harmonically high or low you say something refers to **pitch**. The rate at which your vocal folds vibrate in your throat are responsible for the pitch of your voice. Low frequency vibrations make for a lower-pitched sound, while higher frequency vibrations make for a higher-pitched sound. If you end the sentence with Herbie on a high note (known as "uptalk), you might be perceived as sounding uncertain about the claim (Linneman, 2013). If you end it on a low pitch, it might sound like you are stating a fact confidently.

Pace refers to how quickly you utter your words. According to the National Center for Voice and Speech (2019), the average rate of speech for American English speakers is about 150 words-per-minute (WPM). Some researchers believe that audience comprehension begins to decline once a speaker reaches 200 words per minute, especially for second-language hearers (Hayati, 2010). Often, beginning public speakers will talk fast out of nervousness or too much excitement. Their area of improvement then is learning to slow down to allow the audience to "digest" the words. In high-energy humorous speeches, the speaker might talk faster, whereas in more serious dramatic speeches, the speaker would slow down to build the drama.

The use of pauses is a natural aspect of pacing. There are two types of pauses: grammatical and non-grammatical. **Grammatical pauses** are used to highlight something in a sentence or to build suspense. An example would be a host saying, "And the winner is....Corey," where the ellipsis (...) is a pause to build suspense. **Non-grammatical pauses** are not planned and often occur when a speaker loses their train of thought or is self-correcting. In public speaking, speakers are trained to use pauses effectively, not to avoid them entirely.

Both grammatical and non-grammatical pauses can either be filled or unfilled. Unfilled pauses have no sounds associated with them, they are pure silence. Filled pauses have some kind of noise associated with them, typically "uhh" and "umm." The use of these non-grammatical sounds as pauses are known as disfluencies. Disfluencies can also include the repetitive use of a word during a pause, such as "like," "so," or "and." Recondition yourself to not rely on disfluencies by simply taking a pause when you need a second to think of what you are about to say next.

Volume refers to the loudness (prosody) of the language being spoken. You might have a friend who is a "loud talker," where they can be heard from far distances having conversations with someone within social distance. On the opposite end of the spectrum, you may have a friend who is a "soft talker" who may be hard to hear in loud settings. In any case, we may have expectations for volume in certain settings. At a football game, loudness is encouraged by fellow fans. In a fine dining romantic restaurant, soft-talking is expected by fellow patrons.

Impacts of Vocalics

First, you may have learned the concept of **vocal variety** in a public speaking class. This refers to the variation in the use of pitch, pace, and volume in a speech. If you have heard a monotone lecturer, there is no variety in their speech (everything they say is single-toned). With some training, that speaker can become polytoned, which will increase your engagement due to the novelty that such variety brings. "Variety is the spice of life" is a saying that holds true with vocalics.

Second, vocalics are critical for identifying a person's emotions. In fact, Juslin and Lauuka (2003) found that if you ask people from five different cultures to determine the emotion that someone is experiencing through vocalics alone, they correctly name the emotion 90% accurately. You may have had a friend who said that they were "fine" when you asked them, but the tone of their voice said otherwise.

Finally, vocalics can impact one's perceived dominance in a situation. In military basic training, the drill sergeants will constantly yell at the recruits to humble them into conforming with the military culture. If they asked the recruits softly and nicely, they may not experience the same kind of obedience. Indeed, lab experiments suggest that people who are more expressive and speak louder are perceived as more dominant (Mast & Hall, 2017). In phone skills training, you would learn to "smile" through the telephone by using a certain tone and pitch when saying "hello" (Davis, 1999). Friendliness and dominance can both be conveyed through vocalics.

Summary

Overall, the four aspects of nonverbal communication complete our understanding of social interaction. So much of social life is communicated nonverbally, whether it is a face of discomfort when someone sits too close or knowing when to end a conversation when your partner begins leaning forward in their chair as if they are getting up. We also communicate nonverbally through text message and mediated communication. To study communication is not to merely study "talking," but it is to study holistic performances using all the tools on our persons and immediate environment.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Vocalics Exercise

Have your students read the sentence aloud as a class:

Jerry told her about Mary.

Take a moment repeating this sentence, putting emphasis one just on word each time. Try emphasizing "JERRY told her..." and then "Jerry TOLD her about..." and so forth. Then ask your students how switching the emphasis of each word changes their interpretation of the meaning of the sentence.

2. Tonality Exercise

Have your students say to a partner the following phrases in three different tones; sarcastic, genuine, and scripted.

"I like going to class."

"I enjoy exercising every day."

After the students say these phrases to their partners, then have volunteers share their voices. As a discussion, ask them what aspects of vocalics make each tone distinct.

3. Accent Archive

George Mason University has collected accents from across the world and put them on a map for you to visit. Pick a region on the United Staes map, and play some of the accents to your students (without them seeing the map). Ask them where they think this person is from and why. Also ask them what their impression is of each speaker. It is at the following website**:** http://accent.gmu.edu/browse_maps/namerica.php

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GLOSSARY

Display rules: Social norms that influence how and when people express their emotions.

Emblems: Speech-independent gestures that have a direct verbal translation or dictionary definition.

Facial displays: The study of facial muscular movement to exhibit human emotions.

Grammatical pauses: Pauses used for dramatic or intentional effect.

Haptics: The study of how interpersonal touch is used to communicate.

Illustrators: Speech-dependent gestures that require having verbal context to have a clear meaning.

Kinesics: The study arm, hand, and leg movement to convey meaning.

Micro-expressions: Fleeting facial displays that last for one second or less in response to a stimulus.

Nongrammatical pauses: Pauses that are unplanned and do not serve an intended purpose for conveying meaning.

Oculesics: The study of eye movement for social function.

Pace: The rate at which words are spoken in a particular utterance.

Pitch: How harmonically high or low something is said.

Vocal variety: The use of variation of pitch, volume, and pacing for dramatic effect.

Vocalics: The study of vocal aspects of communicating outside of speech content.

Volume: The loudness at which an utterance is spoken.

MEDIA

1. Fun Tour of American Accents: To exemplify vocalics, watch this professional do American accents across the country. She explains how each is done. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NriDTxseog

2. Lie To Me: Here is the opening scene of the famous show: Lie To Me. Notice how Dr. Lightman reads nonverbal expressions. Is it accurate? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWyhsqh_e9s

3. Micro-expressions: To get a better understanding of what microexpressions look like and how to identify them watch Paul Ekman's brief tutorial. Can you tell the difference between micro-expressions and traditional macro-expressions? https://www.paulekman.com/resources/micro-expressions/

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Listening

7.1: The Fundamentals of Listening

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Define listening in their own terms.
- Identify reasons why listening is important.
- Be able to explain features in the listening process.

FUNDAMENTALS OF LISTENING

Take two or three minutes to recount your most cherished interpersonal relationships. Are any of these relationships' family members, friends, colleagues, co-workers, people you met on-line or regularly Skype with? Now think about why you value these relationships. You may quickly realize that your answer has something to do with your ability to openly communicate and how much each person actively listens in the relationship. But, are these people really listening to you or are they doing something else and you think they are good listeners because you have never defined listening? In this Module, you will learn what listening is. Second, you will learn why listening is important. Finally, you will learn about a number of different features in the listening process.

What is Listening?

If you had to come up with your own definition for listening, how would you define listening? Now, if you compared your definition with someone else would the definitions match, be completely different; or, somewhere in the middle? Chances are, you may find it easier to explain what is *not* listening than what is listening. According to Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, to **listen** is "to pay attention to sound, to hear something with thoughtful attention, to be alert to catch an expected sound" ("Listen", 2020, n.p.). While some may find this definition acceptable, others would say it not completely accurate because it fails to take into account verbal and nonverbal aspects of listening. In other words, that definition is an oversimplification of a very complex interpersonal communication skill.

If you struggled to come up with your own definition of listening, know that you are not alone. Throughout the years, researchers have generated numerous definitions of listening (Barker and Fitch-Hauser, 1986; Glenn, 1989; Wolvin & Coakley, 1996; Worthington & Bodie, 2018). Often discrepancies about definitions involved the very active and complex cognitive nature of listening. Some definitions illuminated the importance of the listener's role and conducts for the effectiveness of the interaction. Other definitions highlighted verbal and nonverbal communication.

Several large associations have also weighed in. For example, the International Listening Association (ILA) defines **listening** as "the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages" (1995). In 1998, the National Communication Association (NCA) came up with its own definition in a document summarizing two sets of competencies (speaking and listening) for college students. NCA states,

"Listening is the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and nonverbal messages. People listen in order to comprehend information, critique and evaluate a message, show empathy for the feelings expressed by others, or appreciate a performance. Effective listening includes both literal and critical comprehension of ideas and information transmitted in oral language."

As you just read, the different definitions of listening as a concept are extremely broad. However, listening, as defined by both the ILA and the NCA, is an active, conscious communication act. The definition of listening as defined by the ILA will be used for the remainder of this unit because it was developed by an international organization of members that promote the study, development, and teaching of listening.

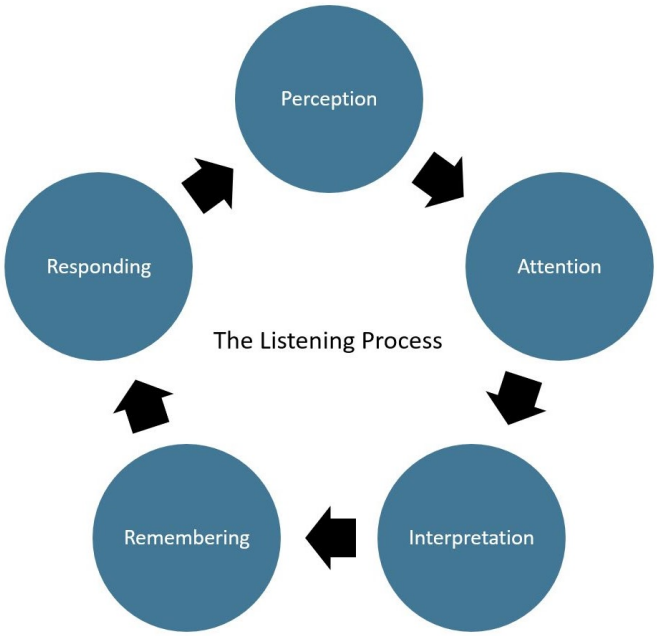
Why is listening important?

Listening is important because we spend most of our lives listening. In his groundbreaking research, Paul Rankin (1926) found that adults listen 42% and speak 32% of their daily communication time. Other listening scholars have concluded that in specific settings such as work, family/friend, on average, we spend at least 50% of our day listening to either another person or to media (Janusik & Wolvin, 2009). Collectively, these two studies indicate that you spend approximately half of your time communicating with others. However, perhaps the most obvious reason why listening is important, especially when it comes to interpersonal communication, is that you might misinterpret key information. When that happens, you will not respond *appropriately* or *effectively*.

Let's be honest, when it comes to listening, many if not all of us at some point are guilty of faking attention, fading in and out of conversations, rehearsing responses, making assumptions, and failing to retain pertinent information. Listening has always played a fundamental role in interpersonal communication. For example, scholarly articles and research studies have examined listening and its role in interpersonal relationships such as student/teacher (Cooper & Buchanan, 2010; Imhof, 2008; Valli, 1997), undergraduate peer tutors (Abbot, Graf, & Chatfield, 2018), friends (Bodie, 2012), parent/child (Ross & Glenn,1996), adolescents/parents/medical team (Starkman, Fisher, Pilek, Lopez-Henriquez, Lynch & Bilkins-Morgin, 2019), romantic partners (Hoskins, Woszidlo, & Kunkel, 2016); Kuhn, Bradbury, Nussbeck, & Bodenmann, 2018; Manusov, Stofleth, Harvey & Crowley, 2018), long-married couples (Pasupathi, Carstensen, Levenson, & Gottman, 1999), ministers, rabbis, priests/parishioners (Corley Schnapp, 2003) and employees/supervisors (Kristinsson, Jonsdottir, & Snorrason, 2019) just to provide a few examples. Although, the examples span more than 20 years this by no means is an exhaustive list. In short, listening is very important in a variety of interpersonal relationships and there is plenty of research to support this claim.

What is the Listening Process?

One of the reasons why Merriam Websters' definition of listen is an oversimplification is because too much of the answer seems to imply that listening is hearing. This simply is not the case. Can you recall a time when you responded to someone with, "Yeah, I heard you." but in reality, you were multitasking and checking your cell phone? While you can feel good knowing that you were telling the truth, because you did hear them, unfortunately you were not listening. This is a perfect example of ineffective listening and definitely demonstrates that hearing and listening are not the same. Listening is a process.



The study of listening in the field of communication is not a new focus. As early as 1948 Ralph Nichols, considered by many listening scholars to be the "father of listening" as a field of study, established dimensions of what constitutes listening behavior. These dimensions included inference making, listening for the main ideas, identifying the organizational plan, and concentration. Early listening scholars attempted to classify, categorize and explain how listening is situated from a number of different factors. "Although other scholars had studied listening, Nichols's work motivated scholars to think of listening as a separate and identifiable aspect of communication" (Worthington & Fitch-Hauser, 2012, p. 7).

As a result, scholars have described the listening process using five (Adler, Rosenfeld, Towne & Scott, 1986; Adler & Towne, 1999; Adler, Rosenfeld & Proctor, 2017; DeVito, 2000), six (Brownell, 2013) or even seven components (Worthington Fitch-Hauser, 2012). A content analysis of 50 definitions of listening found that the five most frequently used features included perception, attention, interpretation, remembering, and responding (Glenn, 1989). Given the fact that these five components have been a part of listening definitions for more than 60 years, the next section will address each of these components in greater detail.

Perception

Perception also called receiving is the first and most basic component of the listening process. As a listener, you must first become aware of the sounds you are hearing in an environment. In other listening process models, it is called "hearing." As a listener, you select which auditory sounds to focus on. For example, you walk into a party, see a group of friends. You can hear other sounds in the room; however, you most likely will instinctively focus on the conversation with your friends. As a listener in this initial stage you are actually absorbing the information being expressed to you verbally and nonverbally.

Attention

Attention is the second component in the listening process where you place your focus as a listener on the speaker. This part of the listening process is selective. The sounds we hear have no meaning until we give them their meaning in context. Attending to a message requires active engagement. For example, you put away your cell phone and say to your colleague, "Go ahead, keep talking. I'm listening," Now your colleague truly does have your undivided attention. You are actively avoiding distractions, not interrupting the speaker and not rehearsing a response. In this component, your top priority is only to listen.

Interpretation

Interpretation is the third component in the listening process where the listener assigns meaning to a message based on verbal and nonverbal messages. Interpretation takes place after you have received the information from the speaker and begin to interpret its meaning. You can share your interpretation by asking questions, or rephrasing parts of the speaker's message. Interpretation allows you to demonstrate your active engagement with their words, and help you better understand their key points or even ambiguous messages. For example, your supervisor says, "You and I definitely should schedule to meet sometime next week" but then walks away. Most people would not know how to interpret this because the message is vague. Does your supervisor want to meet next week on Monday, Tuesday, Friday? Is this really a "meeting" or are you being demoted, transferred, or perhaps even promoted? Furthermore, "sometime" is not a specific time and they could possibly be referring to a meeting early in the morning, noon or late in the afternoon. In this phase of the listening process, listening fidelity is crucial. **Listening fidelity** is "the degree of congruence between the cognitions of a listener and the cognition of a source following a communication event (Mulanax & Powers, 2001; Powers & Bodie, 2003, p. 24). It is possible to listen and still not understand what the message the sender was attempting to communicate.

Remembering

Remembering is the ability to recall information. What good would it do in a conversation if you could not remember key points of the speaker's message? Remembering is important in the listening process because it means that an individual has not only received and understood a message but has also added it to the mind's storage bank. However, just as our attention is selective, so too is our memory. What is remembered may be quite different from what was originally seen or heard (Tyagi, 2013). Too often, people equate being a good or bad listener with their ability to remember information. Wolvin and Coakley (1996) note that the most common reason for not remembering a message after the fact is because it was not really learned in the first place.

There are two types of memory: short-term or active memory, and long-term or passive memory. As its name suggests, short-term or active memory is made up of the information we are processing at any given time. **Short-term memory** involves information being captured at the moment (such as listening in class) as well as from information retrieved from our passive memory for doing complex mental tasks (such as thinking critically and drawing conclusions). But short-term memory is limited and suffers from the passing of time and lack of use. We begin to forget data within 30 seconds of not using it, and interruptions (such as phone calls or distractions) require us to rebuild the short-term memory structure—to get "back on task."

Long-term memory involves the storage and recall of information over a long period of time (such as days, weeks, or years). Long-term memories aren't all of equal strength. Stronger memories enable you to recall an event, procedure, or fact on demand—for example, you may be able to vividly remember exactly where you were, who you were with; and, what you were doing the moment you learned about "9/11," the deadliest terrorist attacks on American soil in U.S. history. Theoretically, the capacity of long-term memory could be unlimited, the main constraint on recall being accessibility rather than availability. Long-term memories can last for just a few days, or for many years. The fact is, memory fails everyone from time to time.

Responding

If you have completed the perception, attention, interpretation and remembering components of the listening process, verbally responding to a speaker is not only appropriate it is probably expected. Responding entails sending verbal and nonverbal messages that indicate attentiveness and understanding or a lack thereof. We send verbal and nonverbal feedback while another person is talking and after they are done. For example, using phrases such as, "yeah", "uh-huh," "hmm," and "right,") and/or nonverbal cues

like direct eye contact, head nods, and leaning forward. **Back channel cues** are behaviors that generally show interest, attention and/or a willingness to continue listening.

Now that all five components (perception, attention, interpretation, remembering, and responding) in the listening process have been examined, you are now less likely to mistake listening as a simple, passive activity. Listening is a process, and an active one that does not unfold in a linear, step-by-step fashion. While each component seems like a lengthy process, this all happens in a short amount of time, and should feel natural during a conversation.

Conclusion

In this Module, you learned what listening is. Second, you learned why listening is important. Finally, you learned about a number of different features in the listening process. Each component plays an important role in your ability to communicate and listen effectively with others. Being familiar with each part of the listening process will help you become a better thinker, listener, speaker and communicator.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Activity: How do YOU define Listening?

Listening scholars have come up with a variety of definitions for listening. Take five minutes to write down your own definition of listening. Next, get into small groups and share your definition with others. Are there any similarities/differences?

2. Activity: Practice With the Listening Process

For one week practice using each of the five components in the listening process with a friend, classmate, co-worker. What differences did you notice based on the different relationship contexts?

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GLOSSARY

Attention: The process of filtering out some messages and focusing on others.

Back channel cues: Verbal and nonverbal signals we send while someone is talking and can consist of typically short utterances (e.g., "yeah", "uh-huh," "hmm," and "right,") and/or nonverbal cues like direct eye contact, head nods, and leaning forward.

Interpretation: Occurs in the third phase of the listening process where the listener attempts to assign meaning to a message.

Listen: Give attention to a sound, both verbal and nonverbal in an effort to make meaning .

Listening: The process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages

Listening fidelity: The degree of congruence between the cognitions of a listener and the cognition of a source following a communication event.

Long-term memory: Involves the storage and recall of information over a long period of time

Perception: Is the first step of the listening process where the listener initially becomes aware of the sounds

Remembering: Ability to recall information

Responding: Giving verbal and nonverbal feedback

Short-term memory: Involves information being captured at the moment

MEDIA

1. **Finding Dory: Short Term Memory Loss:** Here is a clip from the film Finding Dory (2016). While Dory forgets conversations within minutes of having them, she never quite forgets who she is, or the fact that she has short-term memory loss, and can therefore explain her bizarre behavior to those around her. Use this video to spark a discussion about how you failed to remember some basic information in a conversation and how it impacted your ability to listen: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LhFiJd8GnE
2. **Relational Listening: It's Not About the Nail:** This clip very clearly shows how important it is to LISTEN even though there might be other obvious concerns that we might want to discuss with the sender. In interpersonal communication, relational listening includes providing reactions and responses for the person who is speaking. How would you have used relational listening in this situation? See the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWcEhtg7W3s

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7.2: Listening Types and Habits

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Demonstrate an understanding of different listening types.
- Be able to distinguish between several different listening habits.

LISTENING TYPES AND HABITS

Now that you are becoming more confident in your ability to define listening in your own terms and have a deeper understanding of the listening process, you might be asking yourself, what is all the hype about listening? In this Module, first, you will learn about several different types of listening. Second, you will also learn about different listening habits.

Listening Types

Given the many different kinds of relationships, you might have noticed that you listen to different people in different ways and for different reasons. For instance, you may find it easier to listen to your grandmother than to your younger brother. You may be able to pay attention to your professor's lecture for 50 minutes, but listening to your co-worker's five-minute presentation makes you incredibly sleepy. If you can relate to at least one of these scenarios, then you may have already started to suspect that there isn't just one way to listen. Just to be clear, in this Module, an **interpersonal relationship** refers to the association, connection, interaction and bond between two or more people.

There are many different types of listening. By some accounts, there are at least 18 different types of listening (See Table 1 in Appendices). If you are motivated and interested in listening to another person then *that type* of listening is important at that moment. For readers being introduced to interpersonal communication for the first time, *that type* of listening is most likely called interpersonal listening. "**Interpersonal listening** is listening that occurs between people; it occurs in both informal and formal contexts" (Wolvin, 2017, p. 4). Another term similar to interpersonal listening is relationally oriented listening. "**Relationally oriented listening** is the dynamic, interdependent, and uniquely human process of signaling attention, affection, empathy, understanding and responsiveness through a vast repertoire of specific behaviors (Beard & Bodie, 2014; Bodie, 2010, 2011b, 2012a)" (Bodie & Denham, 2017, p. 46). Listening is a social and contextual act. The various types of listening can be categorized based on the listeners' goals which can enhance or impede effective listening.

Many of today's well-known listening standard books were published in the 1980s, like *Listening* (1996, 1985) by Andrew Wolvin and Carolyn Gwynn Coakley. A major part of that book is about developing purposeful listening skills with a "taxonomy of listening that describes how listeners function at various listening purposes or levels" (1996, p. 151). For the purposes of this section, Wolvin and Coakley's five listening types will be covered: *discriminative listening*, *comprehensive listening*, *critical listening*, *appreciative listening and therapeutic listening*. These five listening types were selected because they all provide an important framework in the listening process and they have stood the test of time, as scholars have not been able to add on to them.

Discriminative listening

Discriminative listening is listening to distinguish aural and sometimes visual stimuli (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996). This most basic type of listening helps you determine what sound is coming from where or who is making the sound. If you cannot hear differences, then you cannot make sense of the meaning that is expressed by such differences. We learn to discriminate between sounds within our own language early, and later are unable to discriminate between the phonemes of other languages. The importance of using this listening type in an interpersonal relationship is because you actively determine which auditory sounds to listen to and filter out all the other sounds that are not important to you.

Suppose April and her older brother Ed are having lunch at a bar-and-grill type restaurant, which gets rather loud especially during "happy hour". Although the two of them are seated inside at a booth and across from one another, April uses discriminative listening to focus on what her brother is talking about instead of the other noises, sounds, music or even other people talking in the background.

Comprehensive listening

Comprehensive listening (also known as content listening, informative listening and full listening) builds on discriminative listening and involves comprehending the speaker's message based on a number of different features such as vocabulary, language skill, one's perception, and nonverbal cues. In comprehensive listening we strive for a level of listening fidelity that will allow us to assign meanings to a message. If you are getting directions, watching the news, listening to a lecture, you are listening to

understand or listening to comprehend the message that is being sent. The importance of using this type of listening type in an interpersonal relationship is fundamental. Misunderstandings in relationships are caused by one or both partners who did not fully comprehend a message.

Going back to the original scenario, suppose after several glasses of water, April wants to get to the restroom quickly but isn't certain of the exact location. When the waiter comes to the table to drop off the bill, April asks for directions. The waiter explains that the restrooms are downstairs, past the pool tables and emphasizes that the hallway on the right leads to the "ladies" room while the hallway on the left leads to the "gentlemen's" room. April uses comprehensive listening to get to the restroom.

Critical listening

Critical listening analyzes and evaluates the accuracy, legitimacy and value of a message. As a critical listener, you are listening to all parts of the message, analyzing it, and evaluating what you heard. When engaging in critical listening, you are also critically thinking. You are making mental judgments based on what you see, hear, and read. Your goal as a critical listener is to evaluate the message that is being sent and decide for yourself if the information is valid. Critical listening plays an important role in everyday life decision-making.

In another scenario, suppose that Sofía is an undecided democratic voter in an up-coming United States (U.S.) primary election. Although the presidential election is still months away, she watches and listens to several presidential candidates on television debate each other on issues ranging from economic inequality, gun control, voter suppression, health care coverage to immigration policies. Sofía uses critical listening to evaluate each candidates' responses to help her decide who she will vote for in the next U.S. presidential election.

Appreciative listening

Appreciative listening is "listening for sensory stimulation or enjoyment" (Wolvin & Coakley, 1996, p. 363). This type of listening in interpersonal relationships becomes important when you become aware that you will need to suspend critical thoughts and instead listen. When you listen to someone and appreciate what they have to say without being critical it can have a profoundly positive impact on the relationship. We also can listen appreciatively to music and nature, among other sounds.

Here is another scenario: in school, Ashton interacts with a variety of people many of which are international students. Presentational speaking class in particular affords him with opportunities to use appreciative listening. During speeches, Ashton appreciates and values the wide range of accents, inflections and cadence offered by his classmates.

Therapeutic listening

Therapeutic listening, also referred to as empathic listening (Myers, 2000), is a way of listening and responding to another person when you are trying to understand the others point of view. This type of listening is most appropriate where the listener conveys their support and concern for the speakers' emotional well-being without giving advice or trying to fix anything.

Although sympathetic and empathetic listening are closely related. They are different. In Brené Brown's (2013) animated Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts (RSA) Short, on Empathy she explains the difference between sympathy and empathy. Sympathy = "I see your pain". Empathy = "I feel your pain". Empathetic listening is really about the listeners' ability to feel "with" while sympathetic listening is really about the listener's ability to feel "for" the speaker. Empathy is important in listening in that the listener seeks to relate to the speaker beyond the words.

Scenario: Carlos and Sylvia have been married for nearly 35 years. Over time, Carlos has started to lose his hearing which secretly frustrates him because he hasn't been able to notice when his wife is trying to get his attention. Although he is contemplating getting a hearing aid, he does not want to admit that he could use the assistance of this kind of device. Finally, Carlos finally shares with Sylvia what has been bothering him. Sylvia uses therapeutic listening as her husband talks about not only his frustrations about getting older but also his reservations about getting a hearing aid.

Indeed, these are only five of many different listening types. You may start using one, shift to another and even use three of four different types of listening with a single speaker. There are, of course, many others you can use depending upon a variety of factors. In additional to know about various listening types you will also want to become familiar with different listening habits.

Listening Habits

Make a list of at least five things off the top of your head that you can think of that would annoy or irritate you if someone were doing them while you were speaking. Chances are your list would include examples such as: interrupting, finishing the thoughts of or suggesting words for the speaker, doodling, drawing, pen-tapping, fidgeting, changing the topic, checking your cell phone.

When it comes to listening, “each person listens to and for different types of information based partially on the routines they have established by listening in particular ways (i.e., listening habit” (Bodie, Winter, Dupuis & Tompkins, 2019, p. 3). In this section, we are going to examine four primary listening habits, specifically analytical listening, conceptual listening, connective listening, and reflective listening which represent how people come to understand the content and relational meaning of messages. The more you know about listening habits the more likely you are to identify how you process information.

Everyone *interprets messages differently* based on their prior experience, knowledge and values. It should come as no surprise that our everyday conversations sometimes result in misunderstandings. Some of these misunderstandings derive from a habitual listening orientation. Based on the ECHO (Effective Communication for Healthy Organizations) Listening Profile, a 10 question, statistically validated survey that identifies listening habits as a brain-based cognitive function, people have four primary listening habits. The first two listening habits **(**analytical listening, conceptual listening**)** deal primarily with how people tend to focus on different aspects of a speaker’s message. **Analytical listening** focuses on what the interaction means to an issue or objective situations and filters what is heard through an interest in results and facts. **Conceptual listening** focuses on the big picture and ideas, often abstract, and filters what is heard through an interest in concepts and possibilities. The second two listening habits (connective listening, and reflective listening) deal primarily with how people construct relational meaning from messages. **Connective listening** focuses on what the interaction means for others and filters what is heard through interests in other people, groups, processes, and audiences. **Reflective listening** focuses on what the interaction means for them and filters what is heard through their own interests and purposes.

Each of these four listening habits have their own set of strengths and weaknesses. For example, if you were to score high on the ECHO Listening Profile as a connective listener you listen to offer encouragement and support and nod approvingly which adds value to the speaker and reinforces their ideas. On the other hand, as a connective listener you may find yourself inadvertently agreeing with the speaker and dismiss listening for facts/data. The ECHO Listening Profile does not rate whether you are a “good” or “bad” listener. It is however, one of two valid listening assessment tools (also see LSP-R; Bodie et al., 2013) that establishes a listening habit and does not advocate for an “ideal” profile but rather “all people hold some level of each of these filters in their cognitive system even if these filters are more prominent in some people in some contexts, compared to others” (Bodie et al., 2019, p. 22). The point being made here is that we all habitually listen to and for certain types of information, while filtering out other types of information. And, since listening is a cognitive habit, we tend to listen the same way through our dominant habit and our listening blind spots are the habits we’re not using. So, we all miss something. But, we can learn to listen through our non-dominant habits because we have the control of our cognitive processes.

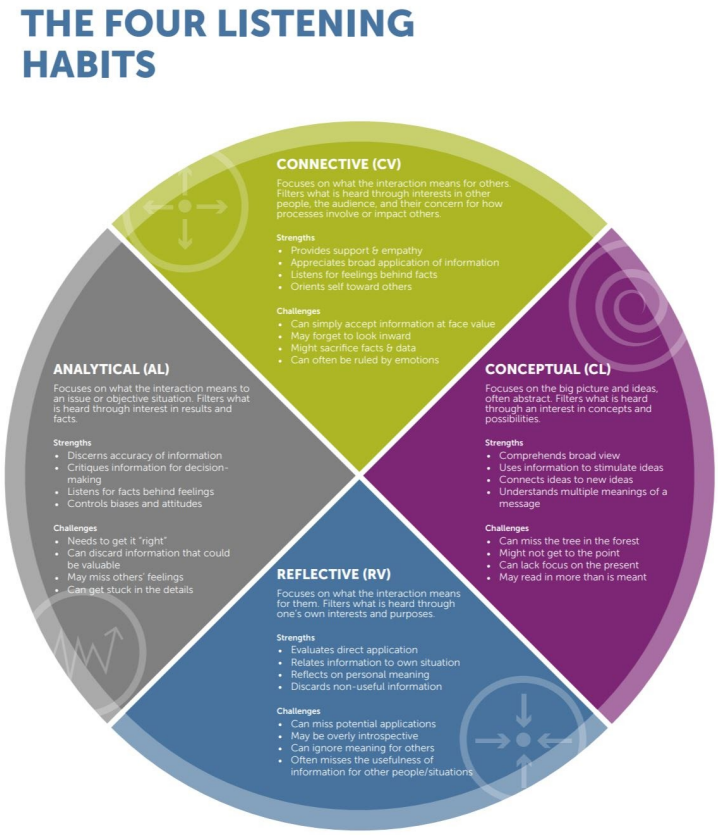

Figure 7.2.1: The Four Listening Habits

Source. Adapted from Dupuis, D. & Winter, J. (2019). *Sample ECHO Profile Report: The four listening habits* [PDF File]. Used with permission.

Conclusion

In this Module, we first examined five types of listening. Next, we addressed four listening habits that individuals use to filter and interpret what they hear, and how that interpretation affects our ability to listen. There are several key takeaways from this Module. There are many different listening types (e.g., interpersonal, relationally oriented, discriminative, comprehensive, critical, appreciative and therapeutic listening). Regardless of the relationship, everyone falls into listening habits and listens to different auditory stimuli for a variety of reasons.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Activity: Are You a Good Listener?

Are you a good listener? Find out by completing one of five free listening assessments from the list below:

Listening Models/Assessment Instruments:

- The Listening Concepts Inventory (Imhof & Janusik, 2006)
- Active Empathic Listening Scale (Bodie, 2011)
- Metacognitive Listening Strategies Instrument (Janusik & Keaton, 2011)
- The Revised Listening Styles Profile (Bodie, Worthington & Gearhart, 2013)
- The Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity Test, (Rosenthal, Hall, DiMatteo, Rogers & Archer, 2013)

2. Activity: Listening Habits

What are good listening habits? What are bad listening habits? In order to identify “good” and “bad” listening habits have student work in small groups, generate a list of Ineffective Listening Habits and Effective Listening Habits. Compare and discuss what is on each list. Keep in mind that culture plays a role here too. Being able to identify ineffective and effective listening habits will help your awareness of what to do and not to do in your interpersonal relationships.

INEFFECTIVE LISTENING HABITS EFFECTIVE LISTENING HABITS

e.g., Stare without expression, fakes attention e.g., Ask questions, “Tell me more . . . “

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GLOSSARY

Analytical listening: A listening habit where the listener tends to focus on what the interaction means to an issue or objective situations and filters what is heard through an interest in results and facts.

Appreciative listening: Listening to enjoy or to gain enjoyment.

Comprehensive listening: Listening to understand information.

Conceptual listening: A listening habit where the listener tends to focus on the big picture and ideas, often abstract and filters what is heard through an interest in concepts and possibilities.

Connective listening: A listening habit where the listener tends to focus on what the interaction means for others and filters what is heard through interests in other people groups, processes, and audiences.

Critical listening: Listening to evaluate or judge what is being said.

Discriminative listening: Involves distinguishing the auditory and/or visual sounds.

Intrapersonal listening: Informally termed “self-talk” the listener is cognizant of their inner thoughts, monologue.

Interpersonal listening (also **relational Listening**): A listening style where the listener makes an active attempt to understand and attend to the speaker’s message. In relational listening when tend to focus on the content of the conversation and the emotional feelings expressed by the speaker.

Reflective listening: A listening habit where the listener tends to focus on what the interaction means for them and filters what is heard through their own interests and purposes.

Therapeutic/empathic listening: Paying attention to the other person with emotional identification (empathy), compassion, feeling, insight, etc.

MEDIA

1. Pseudo/False Listening: When You’re Not Listening

Most of us have had an experience with a friend or family member where they have been sharing what to them seems like a fascinating story but the problem is it’s exhausting to listen to them rant on and on. Usually we are polite and pretend to listen. Here is a clip that we can all relate to. Use this video to spark a discussion about a time when you used pseudo/false listening. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZizCoOctPo

2. Listening Styles: Rainbow Needs to Listen Better

Rainbow (Tracee Ellis Ross) isn't sure what Zoey's (Yara Shahidi) personal drama is all about, so Bow tries to bluff her way through the conversation by stuffing food in her mouth. From Episode 2 of Black-ish Season 1, "The Talk." ABC Wednesdays 9:30|8:30c. In this situation, what listening style might be the most effective in this situation? What listening style might be the most ineffective in this situation?

Here is the link: https://abc.com/shows/blackish/video/the-best-of-bow/vdka0_8lyy8891

3. Listening Types: Everybody Loves Raymond Uses Active Listening

In this episode of Everybody Loves Raymond, Ray uses the Active Listening skills that he learned in "Parent Effectiveness Training" workshop. Do you think he was effective? What other types of listening might have worked in this situation?

The link is here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=178&v=4VOubVB4CTU&feature=emb_title

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7.3: How Can I Become a Better Listener?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Identify verbal listening responses.
- Recognize nonverbal listening responses.
- Explain how active listening can be used in interpersonal relationships.

BECOMING A BETTER LISTENER

Imagine what could be possible for you and all of your current and even future relationships if you became familiar with a variety of listening responses. Listening is a cognitive activity, but within the communication context, it is perceived behaviorally. Imagine how your interpersonal relationships might be even further enriched if you could combine the two. Applying what you have been reading about in this Unit on listening has not been addressed, until now. In this module you will first learn several verbal listening responses and then you will learn several nonverbal listening ones.

Verbal Listening Responses

In face-to-face conversations listeners provide feedback and comments at the same time as the speakers are uttering their words and sentences. Listeners, through short verbalizations and nonverbal signals, show how they are engaged in the dialogue. Responsiveness is a key element of effective communication in most relationships. Speakers usually want listeners to demonstrate they are listening by responding appropriately to what they are saying. In fact, research demonstrates that perceived partner responsiveness or relationship quality depends on beliefs about a relationship partner's responsiveness--that is, on the perception that a partner understands, values, and supports important aspects of the self (Reis & Gable, 2015). These discernable reactions and responses of a receiver to a sender's message is known as feedback. **Feedback** is any form of response to the speaker's message and can include both verbal and nonverbal elements. It is feedback to the speaker that makes listening a more active process. Keep in mind that culture does impact our listening behaviors (Imhof & Janusik, 2006). Furthermore, people differ in how they display emotions. For example, people that listen without challenging the speaker, may be members of collectivistic cultures. They tend to be more attentive to and concerned with the opinions of others. On the other hand, people from individualistic cultures, such as people that grew up in the United States, tend to view their primary responsibility as being to themselves. Several examples of common verbal listening responses follow:

Paraphrasing

In a conversation, paraphrasing demonstrates that the listener is understanding the speaker. It is an effective form of verbal feedback. One example is provided below:

Speaker: "I feel really awful today."

Listener: "Sounds like you're under the weather."

*Speake*r: "No...I just found out that I got a really low score on my science quiz."

In this example, when the listener paraphrased what they believed the speaker meant, the speaker clarified for the listener what they really were trying to communicate. Paraphrasing is not using the same words the speaker used. When paraphrasing, it is important to keep the original meaning so that the facts remain intact.

Sophisticated Questions

The best conversations are interactive. Sitting silently nodding your head does not provide any evidence that you are listening to a speaker. People perceive the best listeners to be those who periodically ask questions. In your efforts to become a better listener, asking a sophisticated question which is "a question that shows you have been listening, but still have some confusion" will work effectively (Janusik, 2017, p. 200). The question first paraphrases what is known or understood and then asks a question[1] . For example, "I understand that you want to have a meeting with me next week, and that it sometime in the morning, What I do not know is where exactly will the meeting take place. In your office or mine?" In this example, the listener has asked a sophisticated question because while they were uncertain about the location of the meeting you were listening and knew that the speaker had asked to meet.

Perception Checking

This is another effective way that a listener demonstrates that they are actively listening and being attentive to the speaker. Perception checking occurs in three steps. The first step is the listener describes the speakers' behavior. The second step is the listener offers two interpretations of the speakers' behavior. The third step is the listener asks for confirmation about the two interpretations. One example is provided below:

Speaker: "I feel really awful today and I don't feel like talking."

Listener: "I noticed that you haven't been saying much." (describe behavior)

"Do you have a migraine?" (interpretation #1)

"Or, did I say something to upset you?" (interpretation #2)

"Are either of these interpretations accurate?" (request for confirmation)

Speaker: "Neither are right. I got a really low score on my science quiz."

In this example, the listener did not decode the behavior or verbal messages accurately. If the listener had not used perception checking and just listened to the verbal message, the outcome of this relationship might have started to slowly deteriorate over time.

Nonverbal Listening Responses

In face-to-face conversations, speakers usually expect listeners to display nonverbal signs of listening. **Nonverbal listening behaviors** show others that you are listening. The top four most important behaviors in the United States that show others you are listening are eye contact, facial expressions, posture, and head nodding (Bodie et al., 2012). As these are addressed in this section, review these, keep in mind that many of these nonverbal listening responses displayed in U.S. culture are not perceived the same in other cultures.

Eye contact

It is usually encouraging and normal for a listener to look at a speaker (Bavelas, Coates, & Johnson, 2002). However, too much eye contact can be intimidating, especially for more shy speakers. In some cultures, too much eye contact is disrespectful, viewed as shameful or even a signal of aggression (McCarthy, Lee, Itakura, & Muir, 2008). In other words, make certain that you are aware of how much eye contact is appropriate for any given situation. Combine eye contact with smiles and other nonverbal messages to encourage a speaker.

Facial expressions

As a listener your face will reveal whether or not you are emotionally present and filled with interest. Facial expressions such as happiness, sadness, anger, surprise fear and disgust are universal meaning they are the same across cultures (Ekman, 1970). As an active listener, displaying these emotions as you are listening is not only appropriate but expected. A smile conveys a positive disposition to a speaker, while furrowed eyebrows accompanied with a frown conveys a negative or even concerned disposition. These are just a few facial expressions that reflect the level of understanding and degree of empathy the listener while listening to a speaker.

Posture

Are your arms crossed, shoulders raised, and fists clenched while you are listening? The posture of a listener signals involvement and attentiveness to the speaker. An active listener may naturally lean slightly forward and orient their body positions completely toward the speaker (Bodie & Jones, 2012). Other signs of active listening may include resting your head in your hand or even tilting your head.

Head nodding

Listeners show that they are engaged in a face-to-face conversation by using head movements, primarily nodding and shaking their head (Rosenfeld, 1978). This behavior can sometimes be purposeful and other times unconscious and even arbitrary (Hadar, Steiner & Rose, 1985). For example, an active listener might occasionally, nod their head vertically – as in 'yes' to show the speaker they agree or horizontally as in 'no' following a direct question or perhaps the speaker said something that the listener did not agree with. Keep in mind, though, that there are other cultures (e.g., Bulgaria) where the horizontal means yes and the vertical means no.

Using Listening to Enhance Interpersonal Relationships

You can improve the quality of your interpersonal relationships by wanting to improve your listening skills and practicing your listening skills. For the most part, “good listeners” are able to adopt the other’s perspective. This view of the other is known as **perspective taking** and also includes the use of nonverbal signals such head nodding your head and using eye contact. In fact, having an appropriate response is crucial when listening. Listening does not mean complete silence and restraining from interrupting the other person. In interpersonal communication, **“**listening is deeply rooted in the context of its ability to help create, maintain, and enhance positive interpersonal relationships” (Bodie, St. Cyr, Pence, Rold & Honeycutt, J., 2012, p. 2**)**. Conversations are usually an exchange of ideas between a sender and a receiver.

Practice Listening Using Active Listening

Listening has become significantly more difficult, especially in the digital age. While there are benefits to technological advances that can increase capability for socialization and even a mixed blessing in the academic classroom, the virtual world leads us — quite ironically — to social isolation (Neiterman, 2019). It’s never too late to work on your listening skills, and, by doing so, improve your quality of life and deepen your interpersonal relationships. Whether they are your colleagues, clients from work, friends or members of your family, listening is the key to better communication. Scholars point out that, “listening is a daily activity that constitutes a critical aspect of interpersonal communication and of professional competence” (Imhof & Janusik, 2006, p. 79). How well we listen not only affects our understanding and responses to other people, but also it ultimately affects our relationships with them. “Being heard” is vitally important for many types of conversation and is an expected part of many relationships (Myers, 2000). One way to improve all of your interpersonal relationships is to practice using active listening.

Active listening

The term “active listening” was formally popularized Thomas Gordon (1975) as a description of a set of verbal and nonverbal skills essential in his training of parents and children. “In the field of communication, almost all of the most popular interpersonal communication textbooks include a treatment of active listening” (e.g., Canary, Cody, & Manusov, 2003; Devito, 2007; Adler, Rosenfeld, & Proctor, 2006; Trenholm & Jensen, 2004; Verderber & Verderber, 2004; Wood, 1998)” (Weger et al, 2010, p.35). Active listening is most often used to improve personal relationships, reduce misunderstandings and conflicts, strengthen cooperation, and foster understanding. **Active listening** is defined as an attempt to demonstrate unconditional acceptance and unbiased reflection by the listener of a sender’s message. Active listening means participating in the listening process by asking questions or by encouraging the speaker to share more information. This type of listening is encouraged in every interpersonal context where the participation of the listener makes the information obtained through listening more useful and effective.

Listening Strategies

Listening has been described throughout this unit as a complex multifunctional process. Within the context of communication, listening is increasingly recognized as an active and complex cognitive, psychosocial, and behavioral activity (Janusik, 2002, 2007; Witkin, 1990). Listening effectively requires considerable skill and practice. Often people think skill and strategy are the same; however, they are notably different. “A strategy is more complex than a skill because it includes the ability to switch thinking processes in the moment when one recognizes that one is not understanding” (Janusik, 2017, p.194). **Listening strategies** are techniques or activities that contribute directly to the comprehension and recall of listening input (Tyagi, 2013). Listening strategies generally are classified as cognitive, affective, psychomotor strategies and metacognitive. **Cognitive strategies** are comprised of thinking and making meaning. Cognitive strategies include paying attention, taking notes, making associations and analogies, asking questions, integrating information, making inferences, getting the main idea, and setting an objective. **Affective strategies** are comprised of emotion and feeling. Some examples in the context of the classroom include attending class on time, being motivated, staying calm, and enjoying the lesson. **Psychomotor strategies** are comprised of physical/kinesthetic. Some examples in the context of the classroom include being close to the board, following along with both the head and eyes, making eye contact, generating feedback, sitting up straight, and paying attention to gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, and stresses in speech. Metacognition also plays an important role (Imhoff, 2000; Janusik & Varner, 2015).

Metacognitive listening strategies are “higher order thinking where we are thinking about our thinking” (Janusik, 2017, p.194). Metacognition is basically defined as ‘thinking about one’s own thinking’, or ‘thinking about cognition’. Flavell (1976) coined the term ‘metacognition’ and, explains that, “Metacognition refers to one’s knowledge concerning one’s own cognitive processes and products or anything related to them…the active monitoring and consequent regulation and orchestration of these processes in relation to the cognitive objects on which they bear, usually in the service of some concrete goals or objectives” (p. 232). Listening strategies can be classified by how the listener processes the input.

Given the various components described, one way to start to improve your listening skills prior to starting a conversation with friends and family members may be to make a plan to listen, before, during and after. To prepare yourself to actively listen, think about the needs of the speaker. One way to do this is to start a conversation by asking, “How would you like for me to listen?” Most people are never asked and may be surprised but share with them what you’ve learned in the previous unit in this chapter. You now know, there are many different ways to listen. Are they wanting to vent? Are they expecting, wanting and expecting advice? Should you just listen for the sake of listening? As an active listener you need to be certain that you have time to listen. If the person needs your undivided attention and it is likely they have something important to share. Do not try to cram them in especially if you need to be somewhere else in the next 5-10 minutes. Sometimes, all the speaker really needs is a listener who actively listens. Wait until the speaker has truly finished. Ask if you are not certain, “Is there anything more you would like to share?” An acknowledgement would then be appropriate. Effective listening requires a plan. This plan to actively listen could be divided into three distinct phases before, during and after.

Step 1: Before Listening Phase: prepare mentally and emotionally for listening, remove all distractions (e.g., cell phone, electronics, turn off TV, radio, external auditory sounds. Physically, get comfortable.

Step 2: During Listening Phase: Use active listening techniques to listen. This means using nonverbal language for approval and short words to encourage a speaker to express themselves without time constraints or any other interruptions. Withhold judgment and work on listening objectively.

- Adapt to the speaker’s way of communication – focus on the speaker’s tone, volume and try to decipher the speaker’s emotions and feelings.
- Be patient – allow the speaker to continue over long pauses and avoid the temptation to fill the silence with your own sounds or commentary.
- Focus on ideas – place the speaker’s ideas into context. If you have difficulties understanding or are confused, ask a sophisticated question and paraphrase.
- Observe nonverbal behaviors – focus on gestures, facial expressions, eye movement, while also being mindful of cultural differences about nonverbal behaviors.
- Show empathy – use acknowledgements that demonstrate your understanding of the speaker’s point of view.

Step 3: After Listening Phase: Reflect on what the speaker’s overall message or point of the conversation is.

Assess your verbal responses and nonverbal behaviors. You may not agree with the speaker’s message, you may not especially like the speaker, but active listening requires that you demonstrate unconditional acceptance and unbiased reflection of a sender’s message.

Conclusion

Effective listening is the foundation of strong relationships with others, at home, socially, in education and in the workplace. In interpersonal communication, listening includes providing reactions and responses for the person who is speaking. Always remember that listening is a complex cognitive skill. Like any skill, you must continually practice in order to improve. Additionally, just because you have applied one or two listening strategies does not mean you will be successful every time without fail in every context and with every person. Learning when and how to successfully apply different listening responses is a lifelong process.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Activity: Journal Exercise

Directions: Have students keep a personal journal of their listening activities for a full day. The journal should include brief descriptions of all the listening situations each student experienced during that day. It should also include the student’s analysis of how well they listened in each situation and of why they did (or did not) listen effectively in each situation (e.g., Use of verbal responses and nonverbal responses). Finally, the journal should conclude with the student’s honest assessment of their strengths and weaknesses as a listener and explanation of what specific steps the student should take to become a better listener.

Discussion: This activity is a way to get students to think about their personal listening habits and how to improve them. Some instructors have students complete a listening journal two or three times during the course, as a way for students to keep track of their progress (or lack of progress) in strengthening their listening skills.

2. Activity: Practice Using Phrases and Expressions for Active Listening

Directions: In class have students practice using active listening accompanied by verbal listening responses. Useful phrases and expressions are listed below: List them on a handout and then meet with your students as a group to discuss appropriate usage. During the discussion, encourage the students to ask about and/or to describe other expressions they may have heard.

Asking for Clarification Clarifying or Restating

"What do you mean?" "I mean. . . "

"I'm not sure what you mean." "In other words . . . "

"Sorry, but I don't understand." "The point I'm trying to make is . . . "

"Could you explain what you mean by . . . ?" "So, you think that . . . "

Paraphrasing Checking for Understanding

"What she means is . . . " "Do you see what I mean?"

"I believe their point is . . ." "Is that clear?

"I think she feels. . . Isn't that right?" "So, you think that . . ."

To reinforce these phases and expressions, give your students an optional assignment in which they observe a class and take note of expressions that demonstrate active listening. You may want to hold a follow-up meeting with the students in which they discuss their observations.

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GLOSSARY

Active listening: An attempt to demonstrate unconditional acceptance and unbiased reflection by the listener of a sender's message.

Affective strategies: Listening strategies composed of emotion and feeling.

Cognitive strategies: Listening strategies that involve thinking and making meaning.

Feedback: Any form of response to the speaker's message; any discernible reactions and responses of a receiver to a sender's message is known as feedback.

Listening strategies: Techniques or activities that contribute directly to the comprehension and recall of listening input

Metacognitive listening strategies: Higher-order thinking skills that aid in understanding the control of one's thinking processes where we are thinking about our thinking

Paraphrasing: An effective form of verbal feedback and also a way to make sure that you have correctly understood what the other person has said.

Perception checking : Three-part method for verifying the accuracy of what the listener believes the intended message.

Psychomotor strategies: Listening strategies that highlight physical/kinesthetic aspects of communication.

Speech-thought differential: The difference in our rate of speaking versus our rate of thinking.

MEDIA

1. **Effective Listening Responses: The Big Bang Theory - Chess Clock Conversation**:

In this clip Leonard (played by Johnny Galecki) is really hoping Sheldon (Jim Parsons) to listen to a problem he is having, however Sheldon can't seem to think let alone listen to anything other than his own concerns. Leonard initiates a plan to get Sheldon to give him advice. Use this video to talk about different effective listening responses. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sr1uS8KZbto&list=PL7h3LoLBjzWbBSarpNvTRUV8Pgj6O7fyY&index=1

2. **Characteristics of a Competent Listener: Teaching Dwight active listening - The Office**

In this brief clip Dwight claims to be using active listening however he is not very convincing. Listening involves not only appropriate verbal responses but also nonverbal behavioral actions. Discuss how Dwight could improve by using characteristics of a competent listening. Here is the link: https://vimeo.com/157447379

PODCASTS

1. Podcast: Oscar Trimboli, Deep Listening

Listen to any one of 67 episodes featured in Oscar Trimboli's podcast, Deep Listening and implement two or three suggestions into your next conversation.

Discussion: After listening to this podcast, reflect on the following questions:

- What were your key takeaways?
- What did you learn about listening that you didn't know before?
- What is something you plan on doing to improve your listening based on listening to this podcast?

2. Podcast: FrankGarten's "Clarity in Conversations"; Why it's so hard to listen to others; featuring Dr. Laura Janusik.

Discussion: After listening to this podcast, reflect on the following questions:

- What were your key takeaways?
- According to the guest why is it so hard to listen to others?
- What did you learn about listening that you didn't know before?

3. Podcast: Hosted by Tuck Self, The Rebel Belle; featuring Dr. Carol McCall: The 9 Tools of Mindful Listening.

Discussion: After listening to this podcast, reflect on the following questions:

- What were your key takeaways?
- According to the guest why is it so hard to listen to others?
- What did you learn about listening that you didn't know before?

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Emotions

Learning Objectives

- Define emotions.
- Differentiate between emotions and mood.
- Describe the physiological, cognitive, and social theories of emotions.
- Identify characteristics of different types of emotion.
- Differentiate between various influences on emotional expression.
- Identify whether people are more or less likely to express certain types of emotions.
- Reappraise negative emotions.
- Describe methods for accepting responsibility for emotions.
- Identify emotional fallacies.
- Recall methods for choosing the best time and place to express emotions.

8.1: Our Emotional Experiences

Learning Objectives

- Define emotions
- Differentiate between emotions and mood.
- Describe the physiological, cognitive, and social theories of emotions.
- Identify characteristics of different types of emotion.

You are about to get up to give a speech and you are *really* nervous. You may feel sick to your stomach, weak, dizzy, your heart might be racing. When you start giving your speech you start to feel better and by the time your speech is over and you sit down, you a relief washes over you—you are finished. The intensity that you felt before you gave the presentation (also called public speaking apprehension) was draining. What you experienced was an **emotion.** In this Module, we want to introduce you to human emotions and their characteristics.

What are Emotions?

We define emotions as our bodies responses and our interpretation of internal or external triggers that can either help or hinder our goals (Oatley, Johnson-Laird, 1996). There are many different definitions of emotion, but common ones include anger, sadness, and joy. Emotions are different from moods**. Moods** our general disposition or state of feeling. Moods can last for days. They have no specific cause or trigger**.**

For example, we have little problem identifying what specifically triggered our disgust. Perhaps it was the smelly diaper in the living room. But we might not be able to tell why we started out the day with such a poor outlook. We are almost certain that anything that we touch will not work. Sure enough, you burn the toast, put the car into the wrong gear, slip on the sidewalk and almost fall on your way to class, then spill your coffee on your papers you have to hand in, and then, when you finally get home from classes, you realize you locked yourself out of your apartment. We might just wake up one morning and feel like nothing will go right that day.

Moods are not usually intense enough to cause the physiological changes that emotions often do. When we experience emotions, they are intense and thankfully short-lived. For example, that feeling of anxiety that you felt before giving a speech probably dissipated after the speech was over, or if you found out that the speech was no longer required to be given. You would not keep that intensity of emotion for very long—experiencing intense emotion stresses the body and can be emotionally exhausting (Gaines, 1983). Table 1 below summarizes some key differentiating features between emotions and moods.

Table 1: Emotions vs Moods

Emotions	Moods
Specific trigger	No specific trigger
Quick	Slower to change or dissipate
High Intensity	Lower Intensity than emotions
Accompanied by sudden physiological changes	Little to no changes; changes might be more gradual

Researchers have focused on seven **basic emotions**: joy/happiness; sadness; anger; disgust; contempt; surprise; and fear. These basic emotions are said to be **primary emotions (Ekman & Friesen, 1986)**. Yet, only looking at these basic emotions is really oversimplifying what we humans actually experience. In other words, they are discrete and only made up of one emotion. **Mixed emotions** are opposite valences (one is positive, like joy, and one is negative like sadness) that are experienced simultaneously (Trampe et al., 2015).

For example, we may experience sadness but also joy when we reach a milestone like graduating from high school. We typically experience blends of emotions. **Secondary emotions** are made up of several **primary emotions**. An example would be when someone experiences jealousy in a romantic relationship. Jealousy is often a mixture of anger, fear of losing that person, and sadness or anxiety over the anticipation of that loss.

If we make a mistake during a job interview we may feel angry but also embarrassed because other people saw our mistake. Imagine that you earn an A on a chemistry exam, you may feel proud of a job well done, and also relieved that your studying paid

off as well as happy that you can relax over the weekend instead of studying.

Dr. Paul Ekman, one of the world's leading experts on emotion, showed the strongest evidence to date of the seven universal facial expressions of emotion. His studies explored people's accuracy after viewing photographs of facial expressions (Ekman, et al., 1969). Facial expressions of disgust, for example, are easily and accurately recognized across cultures when identifying emotional expressions. Ekman's research strongly suggests that there are certain emotions that are universal.

Researchers have also conceptualized emotions as varying along two axes (Russell & Barrett, 1999). This two-dimensional conceptualization of emotions is displayed in Figure 1 below. Any emotional experience was a certain combination of points or coordinates that varied along an X (**valence)** and Y (**arousal)** axis. Valence is whether something is positive (pleasant) or negative (unpleasant). Arousal refers to the level of intensity or activation in the body when we experience an emotion. In Figure 1, you can see that the emotion, surprise has the highest level of activation out of all of the emotions, while sadness has the lowest level of activation and is in the quadrant with other experiences that involve deactivation (e.g. depressed, lethargic, fatigued). So, for example anger would be considered a negative, unpleasant (valence) and higher (intensity/arousal level) activation level than sadness..

The inner circle represents the core affect or mood while the outer circle shows the typical emotion that is felt. The two dimensions are useful in order to further identify emotions from each other. For example, disgust, anger and fear are all unpleasant and mid to high range on the body's activation. Similarly, happiness and surprise are separated by the level of activation and how pleasant the experience of the emotion is.

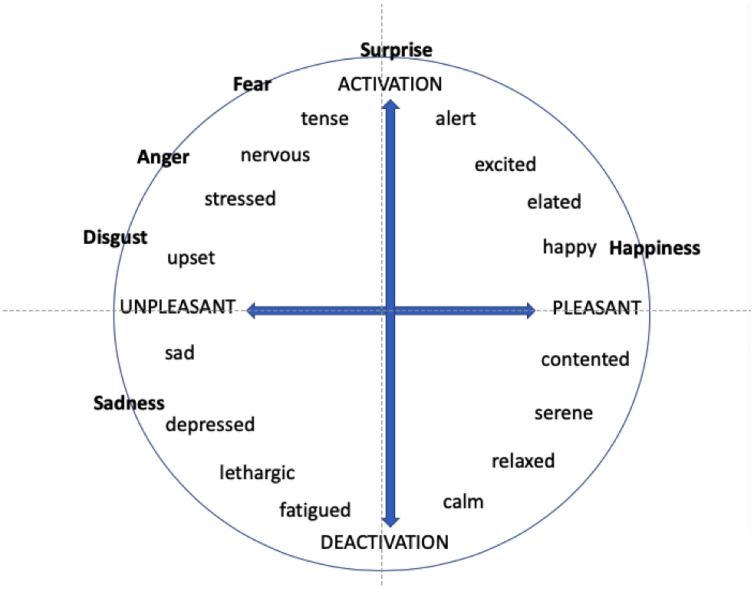

Figure 1: Emotions in the circumplex model (Barrett & Russell, 1988) vary on two dimensions

After thinking about the complexity of the process and experience of emotional expression, it makes sense that the structure of emotions is more complex than researchers once thought.

Structure of Emotions

Since emotions are subjective (Barrett et al., 2007), researchers rely on participants' report of what emotions they are experiencing from certain triggers. Researchers have explored the structure of emotions and emotions are said to have "fuzzy boundaries" in that it is difficult to tell where one emotion starts and the other one ends (Fehr & Russell, 1984**)**. It makes sense that there are fuzzy boundaries or gradients that slide into each emotion. People have a difficult time accurately identifying their own emotions, there are blends of emotions, and emotions with differing intensities. And according to that two-dimensional model of emotions in Figure 1, we see that what separates one emotion from another is the level of activation or deactivation and whether the experience is pleasant or more unpleasant. For example, if you see a small child being bullied outside of a department store and you are deciding how to intervene, is it anger, fear, or dread that you feel?

Level of activation can help us understand when you might be more likely to feel fear versus anger. You might label it anger if you experience the enough activation from the trigger (seeing the child being bullied) to result in a fight or flight response. The fight

response would mean that you would probably approach the bully and intervene. If you experience an even higher level of activation, you might be actually experiencing fear. You might be more likely to flee or decide not to approach the bully.

The valence or degree to which we see the experience as pleasant or unpleasant can also shed some light on whether we are experiencing one emotion versus another. For example, think about the difference between when you experience sadness or experience fatigue. Feeling sad is more unpleasant than just feeling fatigue. Another difference between sad and fatigue is that when you experience fatigue you are even more deactivated than when you feel sad. Depressed is more unpleasant than fatigued and has a slightly higher level of activation than lethargic.

Now that we see how it is useful to examine the structure of emotions in order to tell one emotional experience from another, we will look at a study that aimed to further our understanding of every day emotional experiences. Researchers have recently categorized emotions into 27 emotions that are all interconnected (Cowen & Keltner, 2017) almost shaped like the outside points of a spider web

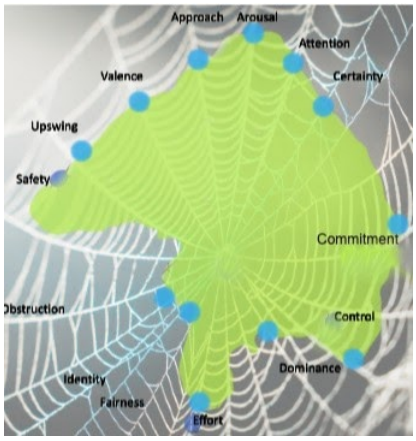

Figure 2: The experience of feeling nostalgic. Adapted from Cowen & Keltner (2017)

These emotions all vary in the amounts of 14 affects that participants said they experienced. These affect categories were Approach; arousal; attention; certainty; commitment; control; dominance; effort; fairness; identity; obstruction; safety; upswing; and valence. In figure 2 the experience of feeling nostalgic involves varying levels in the 14 affect categories. The yellow area shows the degree to which people experience each of the 14 affect categories when feeling nostalgic.

All this adds up to what can be described as one big spider web of possible emotions that we experience. Cowen & Keltner (2017) sought to gather data on individuals' emotional experiences by combing the internet for more than 2120 videos clips averaging in five seconds in length that would all be likely to arouse emotion in viewers.

The clips showed evocative life events including births, sexual acts, death, vomit, feces, embarrassment, anger, sadness, anxiety, calmness, nostalgia, and many others. They used over 2100 people who watched 20-30 videos and self-reported their emotions.

Certain groups watched and rated 30 videos also along certain different gradients of emotion. Participants watched the random videos and described their emotional experiences during the videos. They also rated the emotional experience for the 14 affect categories: Approach; arousal; attention; certainty; commitment; control; dominance; effort; fairness; identity; obstruction; safety; upswing; and valence. When the study had finished the researchers had managed to gather data regarding emotional experiences on over 324,066 self-reported individual judgements of emotional experiences!

Three Views of Emotional Experience

There are multiple theories of emotions, but we will focus on theories from three broad views. Each of these views conceptualizes emotional functionality in everyday life. These views are either physiological, cognitive, or social.

Physiological

Physiological views of emotions see the body's reaction to stimuli as the emotion. 'A biological view of emotions believes certain neurotransmitters create different emotions. In other words, when a neuron crosses a synapse, this transmission makes up what we experience as an emotion. Different neurotransmitters create different **emotional states**. Critics of this approach argue that to only examine the neuron transmission is to miss the very human experience that are emotions. Most argue that emotions are not simply

one component and that emotions involve the other components (i.e. chemical reactions, behaviors, processes, appraisals of events, and thoughts). However, each of the views presents their way of explaining emotions as the most accurate. What most modern emotion researchers can agree on is that emotions are multidimensional, influenced by our environment, involve physiological processes, and also that emotions depend on our perceptions and interpretations.

While we might use our verbal and nonverbal behaviors in order to express emotion, emotions are not simply behaviors. Anger is not simply pounding your steering wheel when you get cut off in traffic. Researchers who agree with this physiological perspective often argue that it is difficult to separate the reaction of the body to a stimulus from the experience of the emotion. For example, is any anger that we experience simply a state of the nervous system? Physiological views of emotions claim that when we experience the emotional trigger (seeing a grizzly bear charge toward us) we experience the emotion either simultaneously to the trigger or because of the trigger. In the physiological view, as we see the bear, we experience fear and that fear *is* the body's reaction (increased heart rate, dilated pupils and adrenalin).

Other researchers in this view argue that the emotional response is a two-step process. First, we see the bear. Then the body responds to the trigger by communicating with the brain to release chemicals. The release of the chemicals causes the emotion. We know that our emotions are more than just neurological processes, (Barrett et al., 2007).

Let's look at an example that illustrates the physiological view. A day-time talk show invited guests who were extremely afraid of clowns. Any type of clowns caused one guest to lock up with fear. What would be the most effective way to decrease the guest's fear around clowns (trigger)? Instead of gradually exposing the guest to pictures of clowns, then movies about circuses, then trying on clown makeup, then finally interacting with a live clown, the talk show staff stranded the guest at a horror house of evil-looking clowns. Rather than ridding the guest of intense fear of clowns the event most likely increased the fear and caused even more trauma.

Instead of focusing on the cause-effect relationship other researchers focus their exploration on what people *say* their emotional experiences are like. These researchers believe people's reports of what they experience offer the best source of information. We feel something when we experience emotion and that feeling makes up a part of the structure of emotions. What do you think that talk show guest recalls of the experience in the horror house filled with people dressed as clowns?

We know that intense emotions cause changes in our bodies. For example, if someone accidentally hits their thumb with a hammer, they will probably yell out in pain and perhaps swear out loud. Their eyes might start watering, their pulse might increase and they might start to sweat. Are these physiological outcomes the same as the emotion? Some emotion theorists would explain the physiological outcomes occur because of the emotional experience. they are occurring because of the emotional experience of what we would characterize as the reaction to pain.

Anger is not the only emotion that can cause physiological outcomes. We can make ourselves sick with worry. Students who experience intense anxiety before public speaking, can feel weak, sweaty, faint, develop stomach issues, and have a racing pulse (Bodie, 2010). Grief is another intense emotion that causes changes in our bodies. Perhaps you receive some bad news, you may experience tunnel vision, lack of awareness of your surroundings, pressure in the chest, shortness of breath. When one is able to identify what changes in their body they are experiencing, it can help him/her to know how to deal with those emotions.

We also know that physiological changes can cause emotion. Increase in hormones such as oxytocin after having a baby results in an intense experience of love and warmth toward the infant (Scatliffe, 2019). When we lack a certain amount of hormone stored in the body, such as the necessary buildup of serotonin, we can experience depression.

Cognitive

Cognitive theorists believe that what we label an emotion depends on whether we assign a label of positive or negative to the trigger. So, two people could have the same trigger, let's say they both sleep through the alarm going off in the morning in order to get to work. However, person A doesn't worry or experience as much anxiety over this event as person B. Person A tends to assign a more neutral or even positive meaning to sleeping through the alarm because they get to have twenty more minutes of sleep. The person might look at the situation and think, "That was so worth it!" They might continue to reason that, "I'm just going to have to explain what happened and work another 30 minutes to make up for it. I'm in control of this situation."

Person B wakes up with a start, you are confused. What did you forget? The alarm! Now you are going to be late, you think. Your pulse quickens, a sheen of sweat gathers at your neck. You are panicking. Therefore, even though the two people have the same trigger, the emotion experienced and the body's reaction to the experience can be quite different. Why is this? A look at the social view of emotions may offer some answers.

Social

One reason that you may experience intense emotion when someone else doesn't is that our perception of a trigger matters when we experience emotion. Indeed, it is difficult to discuss cognitive perspectives of emotions without mentioning the social environment. Verbal and nonverbal symbols communicate emotion. Averill (1980) argued that emotions are socially constructed and we give verbal and nonverbal cues as to what emotions we are experiencing and what emotions are appropriate for others to experience. Averill's argument constitutes the **social** approach to emotions. When faced with an emotional situation, we look to those in our environment for visual cues.

For example, have you ever seen a little kid running and they fall and look around to see how people are reacting to them falling? They are using the expression of others to help determine whether they should produce tears or not. Their thoughts might go something like this: If it is a big deal, my parents will come running over and look concerned (visual cues) and therefore that episode of falling should hurt more. However, when a parent says something like, "nice save!", or pretends that the child has just successfully slid into a base in baseball, "you're safe!" then the child sees that his or her parents are okay with them falling, they will be more likely to not label the experience (falling) as negative. They may be less likely to produce some tears for their parents. Ultimately, they will be less likely to experience any pain from the fall. It is in this way that the child's emotional experience is socially constructed and communicated through interaction with others. Later, we will see that our thoughts play a large role in forming emotions.

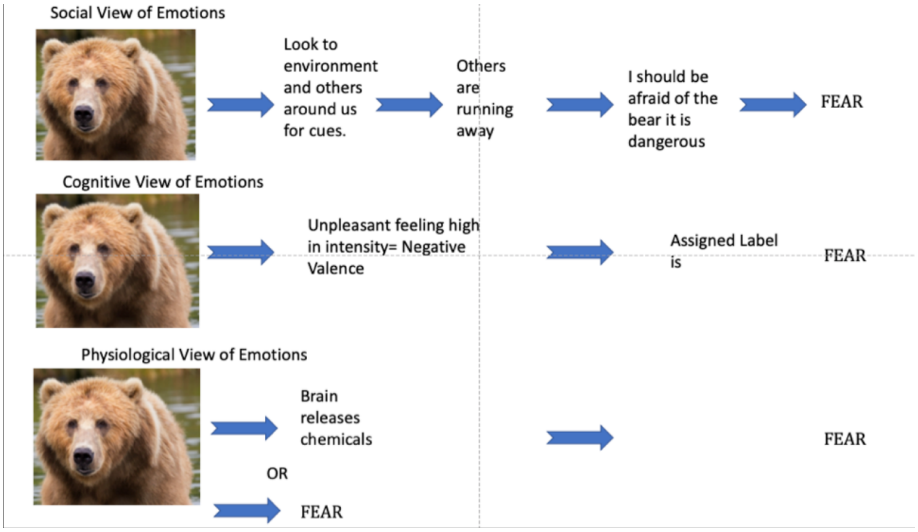

Figure 3: Three Approaches to Emotion

Summary

In this unit, we defined emotion and distinguished it from mood, or general disposition. We then saw how emotions are structured. Our emotions are complex and can be compared to the outside points of a spider web. Finally, we were introduced to the physiological, cognitive and social views of emotions.

Learning Activities

Class Activity 1: Discussion Questions

Ask your students the following questions below to spark a discussion about emotions:

- Have you ever been paralyzed with fear? How long did it take for the emotion to wear off? Did you tell yourself get away from the trigger? What worked best? So, how do you get someone to be less afraid of something?
- Can you recall having an emotional reaction to something going wrong? Did you have a more intense reaction than you thought you might? What was the trigger?
- How do you think you would feel if you tripped and fell while in an empty classroom? How about a room full of classmates?

Class Activity 2: Phone Selfie Activity

This activity gives your students a chance to use their most prized possession in class—their smart phone. After discussing the importance of identifying emotions in ourselves and in others have students break up into small groups and assign them a certain emotion. For example, you can use the basics seven emotions or you can have them try to tackle accuracy using a couple of the 27 emotional experiences that are explored in emotion research. Have students take selfies of their own faces attempting each one of the emotional displays. Then, have the partner look at the pictures on the phone and try to decode what each one of the emotions is. Have students talk about their guesses/interpretations of each selfie. If there is enough time, have a couple of groups share their photos that were the most difficult to decode.

Debrief: How accurate were you in decoding these emotions? What would help you to be more accurate?

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Glossary

Basic emotions: The physiological response and cognitive interpretation of internal or external triggers that result in seven universal facial expressions including joy/happiness; sadness; anger; disgust; contempt; surprise; and fear.

Emotion: A physiological response and cognitive interpretation of internal or external triggers.

Expression: Conveying one's emotion through both verbal and nonverbal communication.

Mixed emotion: Experiencing two different and opposite emotions at the same time (e.g., joy and sadness).

Mood: General disposition or state of feeling of a person.

Intensity/arousal level: Characterizes whether an emotion is high (e.g., anger) or low (e.g., calmness).

Primary emotion: Emotions that are combined or blended to become a secondary emotion.

Secondary emotion: A blend of two or more primary emotions.

Valence: Indicating whether an emotional experience or emotion is perceived as negative or positive.

Media

Media Activity 1: Interactive Experiment

Check out the **Interactive research site** set up from Cowen & Keltner (2017) emotions study. The site provides access to the interactive map of all the videos that were used in the experiment. You are able to select a clip and then view the explanation of the structure of emotion that the participants experienced. For each of the videos there is a different figure similar to Figure 2 in the module. See if you can identify a clip for the following emotions: Joy, embarrassment, and love. How are the pictures of the 14 affect categories different?

Media Activity 2: "It's Not Your Fault"

Watch this famous clip from the movie, Good Will Hunting. Apply the three perspectives of emotions to this interaction. How do the characters experience emotion according to these perspectives? How does the therapist respond to them?

Here is the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYa6gbDcx18

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8.2: Influences on Emotional Expression

Learning Objectives

- Differentiate between various influences on emotional expression.
- Identify whether people are more or less likely to express emotions in a hypothetical situation.

As you can see from the previous discussion, emotions are complex and can both enhance and hinder interpersonal relationships. What emotions have you experienced lately? No one knows better than you about what you are experiencing emotionally. I would urge you to trust yourself to know that what you perceive you are experiencing is important.

Perhaps you are in a conflict with a friend or partner. Perhaps you feel guilty for something that you did or said to a family member. Whatever the emotions, you get to choose how and if you will fully communicate those emotional experiences with others. This unit explores what impacts both how we experience emotions and several factors that might influence whether we choose to express these emotions.

Physiological

Our emotions are affected by how our bodies react to the release of hormones and how those hormones are processed by neurotransmitters. Our genetic code determines how we react to positive feedback (Forbes et al., 2009). When we are rewarded we feel good. A chemical called dopamine is released in the neural circuitry in our bodies. People vary in their processing and their reaction to the release of dopamine during a reward situation (Nikolova et al., 2016).

There are genetic differences in how our bodies experience threat and negative emotion (Haviland-Jones et al., 2016) but since there is not a single hormone that controls fear and negative emotion like in the case of dopamine for reward processing, researchers have focused on how we might vary in the functioning of the brain in the amygdala. It is this variability in how our amygdala functions, that influences our experience of emotionality (Haviland-Jones et al., 2016). In fact, genetic variations in how well we are able to absorb the transmitter of serotonin a hormone impacts our experience of anxiety and depression (Karg, et al., 2011). People who have less reuptake ability of the neurotransmitter pathway of serotonin are more vulnerable to major depressive disorders especially in reaction to major life stresses (Caspi et al., 2003). People who have higher levels of the hormone testosterone are more reactive toward angry and fearful faces (Manuck et al., 2010). Taken together, the differences in ability of our bodies to absorb and transmit hormones, and genetic differences in how reactive our amygdala is, impacts how we experience stress, anxiety, emotional experiences, anger, and fear.

Recently, researchers have also explored how our sense of taste and smell is strongly tied to our emotional experiences. Remember the aromas that wafted out of the kitchen of your childhood home? Was there homemade bread? Or perhaps spaghetti sauces simmering on the stove? Our sense of smell causes emotions. Your sense of taste can also bring back memories and cause emotions. If you have ever smelled a familiar cologne or perfume you might remember emotions that you used to experience when a close other wore that scent. Advertisers use this strong tie between emotional experiences and sense of taste or smell to encourage us to buy their products (Haviland-Jones et al., 2016). When you tour a home that you are looking to buy don't be surprised if you encounter the aroma of recently baked bread or cookies.

Researchers have also explored the positive impact of seeing flowers has on emotional experience. Just being around flowers increases positive mood, but it can even increase the positive perception that we have toward someone! Smelling flowers has been shown to make us more likely to accept a date (Guéguen, 2011). How could this be? Natural odors from plants can affect our emotional experiences and motivation (Haviland-Jones, et al., 2016). When substituted for anti-depressants, the smell of flowers (i.e., floral odors) decreased depressive symptoms (Komori, et al., 1995).

If both the sense of smell and taste cause trigger emotions then it is reasonable to think that individuals who have dulled sense of taste or smell will be less likely to experience a trigger from their sense of smell or taste.

Relational Culture

Our interpersonal relationships are characterized by some of the most intense emotions that we experience. For example, have you ever experienced puppy love or a new love? Did it feel exhilarating to anticipate seeing them? The end of relationships can bring a variety of intense emotions. Guilt for having done something to end the relationship, anxiety for starting a new relationship, anger

at the partner, or sadness for missing being with them. The emotions that we experience can vary in intensity along the spectrum gradients from sadness to despair or mild amusement to joy.

How we talk about emotions with relational partners also influences our experience of those emotions. This is particularly evident in our emotional experiences surrounding imagined infidelity in romantic partners (Harris, 2000). When we have a supportive and non-judgmental conversational partner, we will usually be more likely to express our emotions. This makes sense because it is easy to discuss our emotions with someone who is genuinely interested and not going to criticize us. If we are around an encouraging partner, we will start to be more emotionally expressive as well.

Another factor in how we express our emotions in our close relationships is **emotional co-regulation** which occurs between partners, and results in the tendency to react similarly to your partner in a close relationship (Butler & Randall, 2013). Butler and Randall (2013) have found evidence that interpersonal partners impact each other's experience of emotions.

Cultural Expectations

If a culture is individualistic or collectivistic will impact how emotions are felt and displayed. In Western cultures people try to influence others, so high arousal emotions are utilized. Emotions such as excitement or enthusiasm are preferred states of emotion in Americans (Lim, 2016). However, in Eastern cultures where interdependence is promoted between individuals, emotions such as sympathy are encouraged (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Additionally, Kacen and Lee (2002) found that Caucasian individualistic persons reported to feel high arousal emotional states (stimulated, excited, frenzied, and aroused) compared to Asian collectivistic individuals who reported low arousal emotional states (relaxed, calm, sluggish, and unaroused) in impulse buying. Collectivistic cultures may suppress the urge to engage in impulse buying, since it is related to "highly individualistic, emotionally charged behavior" (Kacen & Lee, 2002, p. 173). See Table 2 below for distinctions.

How a culture views happiness can shed light on how low arousal and high arousal emotions are experienced and expressed. In the Chinese culture happiness focusses on being solemn and reserved, being harmonious within oneself. Conversely, American individuals describe happiness with upbeat and described happiness in absolute terms: "Happiness is life!" (Lu & Golmour, 2004).

Although emotions are felt across all people, your experiences are dependent on your culture, how you experience stimuli, and how you label that stimuli within that certain culture. Are you excited or enthusiastic or are you relaxed and calm? Do you emphasize individualism or look to those around you to promote harmony?

Table 2: Low Arousal vs. High Arousal Emotions

Low Arousal Emotions	High Arousal Emotions
Predominant in Eastern Cultures	Predominate in Western Cultures
Calm	Agitated
Serene	Jittery
Relaxed	Stressed

Display Rules

Ekman (1969) found that there are five display rules which govern our use of emotional expression. He made the argument that we follow these sociological rules in order to preserve social expectations in our interactions. The five display rules are: intensification, de-intensification, simulation, inhibition, and masking. We describe each in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Five Types of Display Rules

Display Rule	Description	Example
Intensification	Increasing the intensity of the emotion that we feel in order to better match social or role expectations	A friend says they just bought a new car and you are impressed. You decide to act even more impressed than you actually feel
De-intensification	Minimizing the intensity of the emotion that we feel in order to better match social or role expectations.	You are so angry you cannot concentrate at work, you attempt to decrease how angry you feel because other people are not showing their anger.

Display Rule	Description	Example
Simulation	Pretending that you feel a certain emotion that you don't feel.	You pretend to feel sad when at a graduation.
Inhibition	Attempting to display neutrality or indifference when actually experiencing an emotion.	You try to keep your emotions from showing on your face when someone says something hurtful.
Masking	Selecting a different emotion to display than the one that you are actually experiencing.	You are experiencing a severe anxiety attack but you manage to display anger.

Age

Have you ever tried to talk to someone who is uncomfortable talking about emotions to talk about them? The process of aging also plays a role in how much we express our emotions. The generation who was alive during the 1930's Great Depression is greatly impacted by the scarcity of food and, people of this generation were expected to not ask others for help even if they needed it. During the recession of 2008 in the United States, you might have been similarly impacted by your expectations of financial scarcity. While you are reading this think back to how you have communicated with close others about your financial concerns. Did you avoid these conversations?

Research that investigates the emotional experiences of people between their seventies and nineties, consistently find that there is a positivity effect- the tendency to recall more positive events/effects than negative; this effect often increases with age (Reed, Chan, & Michaels, 2014).

People in their later years use different emotion regulation strategies than younger people. Younger people may use cognitive re-appraisal – reinterpreting situations to modulate emotional responses (Goss, 1999). They also tend to use rumination for regulating their emotions (Goss, 1999). Elderly people are more likely to report that they use suppression – restricting the outward expression of an emotion (Nolen-Hoeksema & Aldao, 2011; Goss 1999) and avoid situations that are emotional in order to decrease the need for using emotional regulation – the process of monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions for what is socially acceptable (Lawton, Kleban, Rajagopal, & Dean, 1992).

Sex and Gender

The idea that men and women differ greatly in how often they express emotions is mostly exaggerated and often there are more differences among women and among men than between women and men.

In a study of imagined emotional experiences surrounding infidelity in romantic partners women did not have stronger reactions compared to men when it came to emotional infidelity. "Moreover, women with committed sexual relationship experience showed reactivity patterns similar to those of men" (Harris, 2000, p. 1082).

In the correct context, like while watching a favorite sports team, there is absolutely very little gender difference in emotional expression. However, there can be a significant gender difference in decoding ability of emotional expression of others. Women tend to be more accurate at decoding emotions than men.

Technology and Social Media

Our use of social media may also impact our emotional expression. Look at the women in this picture.

How likely is it that they will share emotions with each other when they are busy looking at their phones? While these friends might not express themselves with each other in this picture, they are quite likely to use emotional expression online. The act of being on social media can also impact the likelihood of emotional expression on that particular platform. On Twitter, we often see that people's emotional intensity in their comments and posts is high. They may use exclamation points and all caps or emojis in order to express this intensity. Although even without this nonverbal communication, readers are still impacted by others posts (Kramer, Guillory, & Hancock, 2014). Researchers found that abuse of technology in the form of bullying and antisocial behavior was related to low emotional intelligence (Nasaescu et. al., 2018). **Emotional intelligence** is defined as the ability to monitor your own feelings and emotions and to use this information to guide your thinking and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Remember that it is more emotionally intelligent to filter what you express on online platforms because of its permanence and impact on others.

Emotional Contagion

Emotional Contagion is the ability to pass emotions from one person to another or also known as "catching" someone else's emotions (Hatfield et al, 1994). Perhaps you are around someone who is beaming because they have just become a mother or father. You leave their hospital room with a sense of new-found joy. In addition to nonverbal emotional contagion, exposure to others' written emotions can also be catching (Ferrara & Yang, 2015) . When people post depressing statuses and updates on social media, we are also more likely to report feelings of sadness even when in excellent spirits before the exposure (Coviello et al.,

2014). Additionally, Coviello found that positive posts had an even stronger impact on readers' emotions. Every positive post had a ripple effect in that, followers posted 1.75 positive posts after seeing the initial positive post.

Summary

In this unit, we examined influences on emotions. We saw how relational culture and cultural experiences impact our emotions. We discussed how, genetic differences in how we process hormones affects our emotional experiences. We explored how age, sex and gender, and our use of technology will influence our emotions. We learned the importance of emotional intelligence and how we can "catch" other people's emotions. Each of these factors, relational culture, cultural experiences, age, sex and gender and technology, all influence how our emotions are developed.

Learning Activities

Activity 1: Anger Management

Write down three common triggers that make you angry. How do you go about expressing your anger? Then write down three common ways you soothe your anger. What should a relational partner do to help you when you are angry?

Activity 2: Display Rules

Go back to Table 3. Think about what kinds of display rules would apply to you in the following scenarios:

- Your friend informs you that they got a promotion that you had also applied for but did not get.
- You shake hands with an opponent whom you had just lost a very close match to in a sport that you love.
- In a class where the workload was excessive, your professor informs you that you will earn a B, even though you felt like you had put in A-level work all semester.

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Glossary

Emotional Regulation: The process of monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions for what is socially acceptable

Intensification: Increasing the intensity of the emotion that we feel in order to better match social or role expectations.

De-intensification: Minimizing the intensity of the emotion that we feel in order to better match social or role expectations.

Simulation: Pretending that you feel a certain emotion that you don't feel.

Suppression: Restricting the outward expression of an emotion

Inhibition: Attempting to display neutrality or indifference when actually experiencing an emotion.

Masking: Selecting a different emotion to display than the one that you are actually experiencing.

Positivity effect: The tendency to recall more positive events/effects than negative; this effect often increases with age

Media

1. TED Talk: Emotional Intelligence

Watch this Tedtalk that focuses on emotional intelligence from the perspective of a teenager**.** How does Emotional Intelligence change across the lifespan?

Here is the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbmLNr89L-A

2. NPR: Emotional Contagion

Watch this NPR presentation that discusses emotional contagion. How does it happen? Can you think of other examples where it occurs?

Here is the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VW1PH6B9p20

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8.3: Communication Skills and Emotion

Learning Objectives

- Recall communication skills for identifying emotions.
- Recall the process of reappraising negative emotions.
- Describe the methods for accepting responsibility for emotions.
- Differentiate between emotions and actions.
- Identify emotional fallacies.
- Recall methods for choosing the best time and place to express emotions.

Are you skilled at identifying when other people are angry? How about sad? Our accuracy when identifying others' emotions relies on how much expressivity those people are able to use. Research suggests that our accuracy increases with experience.

However, our accuracy in defining our own emotions is limited by our vocabulary. Since we use our language in order to describe our emotional experiences, using a limited emotional vocabulary can keep us from getting the support that we need from others. Sometimes it is vital to our safety and the safety of others to be able to identify emotions. Have you ever been so filled with grief it was difficult to describe?

A broader vocabulary can help us to better communicate our emotional experiences and get better support from those around us. For example, The National Suicide Lifeline uses an emotional vocabulary list in order to better help callers and workers pinpoint words that callers use in order to gauge their risk.

Identifying Emotional Fallacies

Sometimes when we experience an unpleasant emotion, it is useful to try to reappraise negative emotions and dispute any irrational thinking also known as **emotional fallacies**. Seven emotional fallacies were discussed by Adler (1978). Even though we are the best judge of what emotions we are experiencing, sometimes we quickly assign a negative meaning to our emotions even though they may not be quite that negative. For example, "I am panicking and my heart feels like it will explode!" versus "my heart rate is increasing because I am anxious right now" In other words, we might overreact and use our self-talk to become more anxious.

These emotional fallacies are listed in Table 4. They include **perfectionism** ("I have to make sure that every bit of my grass is even in my front yard"), **catastrophic thinking** ("If I don't watch my family sleep through the night, I am afraid that they will die and I will be alone"), **shoulds**, ("I should have said that I wouldn't babysit this dog") **overgeneralization** (Everytime that my friend talks to me he avoids eye contact with me"), **taking responsibility for others**, (I wish that my uncle wouldn't say such mean things online about other people") and **helplessness** (It doesn't really matter what I choose to do because I don't have any control over my fate anyway.")

Table 4: Identifying Emotional Fallacies

Fallacy	Description
Perfectionism	Your attempts are perfect or a failure. Things are wonderful or awful. There is no middle ground.
Catastrophic Thinking	You expect disaster and imagine extreme negative scenarios. You are rendered unable to act because of what might happen.
Shoulds	You have a list of ironclad rules about how you and others should act. You get angry when people break the rules and you feel guilty if you violate the rules.
Overgeneralization	If something bad happens once you expect it to happen over & over again. If you fail once, you expect to fail again. You may generalize inadequacy in one situation to your self-concept, e.g. "I made a mistake = I'm a total failure."
Taking responsibility for others' emotions	You see yourself as responsible for the pain & happiness of everyone around you & feel guilty if they're not satisfied. You take the blame for the way others feel. You think it's your fault

Fallacy	Description
Helplessness	You are resigned to your emotions and believe there is nothing you can do to change how you feel. You might even blame others for your emotions, e.g. “You made me feel this way.”
Magnifying the Negative	You magnify negative details while filtering out all positive aspects of a situation. You probably think you’re being realistic and that others are unrealistic in their positive thinking.
Being Right	You are continually on trial to prove that your opinions and actions are correct. Being wrong is unthinkable and you will go to great lengths to demonstrate your rightness.
Fallacy of Fairness	You feel resentful because you think you know what’s fair but other people won’t agree with you.
Mind Reading	Without them saying so, you know what people are feeling and why they act the way they do. In particular, you are able to divine how people are feeling toward you.
Personalizing	Thinking that everything people do or say is some kind of reaction to you. You also compare yourself to others, trying to determine who’s smarter, better looking.

Now that we see that emotional fallacies can often exaggerate our emotional experiences, let’s focus on how we can counter emotional fallacies. You can fight these fallacies by using what Cognitive Behavioral Therapists (CBT) call the **Rational-Emotive Approach**. In this approach, first we must be aware of the emotions that we are experiencing. Sometimes it helps to take time to reflect on what we are experiencing by keeping a journal. Next, we reach back into our memory attempt to connect what this trigger has in common with triggers in the past. “I’ve experienced a racing heart once before when I ran too fast and again when I got scared at the Halloween House of Horrors.”

Once the trigger is spotted, we identify any negative self-talk and refute any emotional fallacies. “I am just jogging” “My heart is not going to explode (catastrophic thinking) because it didn’t explode the last time I felt like this while I jogged (disputing irrational thoughts).” Once we have disputed the irrational thought, we can begin to use our self-talk in order to deal with our emotions.

Managing Emotions

In this section, we introduce the idea of emotional work. When you think of a surgeon in the operating room, what is the worst emotion that they could express? The most effective? Most jobs and social roles demand that we suppress our emotions. For example, a firefighter would not be effective if they ran away from burning buildings with people left inside. Even though the firefighter might momentarily want to get to safety, their role as a firefighter demands that they calmly and methodically go into buildings in order to save others.

Have you ever known someone who blurts out everything that they are thinking? Goleman (2002) coined the term **emotional intelligence (EQ)** to describe the ability of identifying, managing and discussing emotions. Let’s take each part of that definition and pull it apart to see how emotional intelligence is demonstrated.

Let’s say you are driving your child to school and they will not stop loudly singing off-key. You sense that you are growing irritated and your thoughts are getting interrupted. In this case, you have identified the emotion and the trigger of that emotion. You are getting a headache from the noise coming from the back seat. If you are able to demonstrate emotional intelligence in this situation you would say something like, “Mommy is getting a headache because it is too loud. I am trying to keep from getting a headache so let’s just talk with our indoor voices right now.”

When you think of someone who shouts, “We’re all going to die!” while experiencing a bumpy ride on an airplane, we might say that they have a low emotional intelligence because they have blurted out what they were thinking instead of thinking about what they are going to say and considering the impact of their words on others..

The part of emotional intelligence that allows us to identify that we are feeling fearful and then manage this emotion is often what might be missing in this situation. People are able to demonstrate different amounts of emotional intelligence depending on the context. For example, if someone is extremely frightened of snakes, and they walk into a room with a snake on the floor, they

might jump up on a chair, run away, or try to flee the room. Seeing the snake is such a strong trigger, it would be difficult to demonstrate emotional intelligence. When we say that someone has high EQ, they are able to discuss emotions effectively with others (Butler & Modaff, 2012). In the snake situation, the person would be able to tell their friends that they are afraid of snakes and that they feel very uncomfortable.

In a different situation, like the one on the plane, they may not have as much problem filtering what they are feeling for the benefit of others. They might see that there is a small child two seats down who is looking worried by the bumpy flight, and think, I don't want to upset any of the other passengers.

Accepting Responsibility for Emotions

Have you ever said to someone, "You're making me angry!" and they replied "No I'm not!"? No matter how much it might seem like it, other people do not cause your emotions and to think so would allow us to have no control over our emotions. In order to take responsibility for your emotions, try to consciously communicate using I-statements.

You can say something like, "When you say that you don't want to help with the dishes, I feel myself becoming angry." Avoid saying, "You are making me so angry right now!" We learned that humans also have a tendency to blame others when things go wrong. It can be a challenge to accept that our emotions are caused and regulated by ourselves. Especially when we feel intense and unpleasant emotions.

Separating Emotions from Actions

It can often be difficult to separate our emotions from our actions. Just because we feel anger doesn't mean we have to smash things or yell at others. We can choose to funnel our anger into something else. When we are extremely angry, it helps to take a step back and examine why we are upset. We can accept responsibility for our emotions and be less likely to act on these emotions. For example, we may feel like backing over our enemy's bicycle with a car, but we need to keep in mind that we don't need to act on this impulse. By recognizing that we are experiencing the impulse to act, we can label this thought as only an "impulse" and can usually refrain from acting on these impulses.

Choosing the Best Time and Place to Express Emotions

The next time you identify that you are experiencing intense emotions, here are some suggestions for how to determine whether you will communicate your emotional experiences with others. Below there are six questions you can ask yourself when debating whether to show your actual emotions. Most of these questions address the social expectations for emotional expression:

- Bystanders: Who is around--who will see?
- Privacy: Do I have enough privacy in order to feel comfortable enough to allow myself to express my emotions?
- Will expressing this emotion negatively impact me? Is it worth the risk?
- Can someone use this emotional display against me?
- Is it expected that I display emotion in this situation?
- How much time do I have in order to express this emotion? What happens after this? Do I have to go directly to work after this?

Sometimes, it may seem like there is no good time or place to express emotions. However, since you can choose when and how you express emotions, you can set aside time specifically for dealing with emotions so that you don't feel as if they are piling up and weighing you down. This is particularly true of emotions like grief. Grief is caused by a trigger of loss. Grief can cause both mental and physical pain and needs to be worked through. Allowing ourselves the time to examine and understand our grief can be exhausting, but can speed our healing from the loss.

When we do decide to express our emotions we should be aware of social expectations that rule how we express emotions. **Framing rules** are those rules that determine how we define an event in terms of its emotional tone. Often they are ambiguous and subjective, since they are unwritten and often not discussed before events. If you've ever been to a funeral of an elderly person, you might have experienced the framing rule that defines a funeral as a chance to gather and celebrate a long life - and is therefore, a happy occasion.

The **feeling rules** are socially shared norms that influence how people want to try to feel emotions in given social relations." They help us to know what emotions are socially acceptable in a certain situation (Hochschild, 1979). In the funeral example, the feeling rules were that people were to feel joyful. If someone caused a spectacle with loud, wailing crying, they would be ignoring the feeling rules. Anytime our actual emotional experience doesn't match the feelings rules, it requires **emotion work** or emotional labor (Tracy, 2005). Emotion work is defined as the work required to generate feelings that are "appropriate" for a situation. In this case, the emotion work necessary to follow the feeling rules would have been to mask or conceal one emotion by portraying another emotion.

Summary

In this unit we focused on the communication skills utilized in identifying and managing emotions. In order to identify our emotions, we must first be able to name what we are feeling. We learned about emotional fallacies, such as: perfectionism, catastrophic thinking, shoulds, overgeneralizations, taking responsibility for others, and helplessness. We ended the unit discussing how we manage our emotions, and how managing our emotions relates to emotional intelligence.

Learning Activities

1. Discussion:

Look at the photo of the flight attendants below. What types of emotion work do you think is required to be successful in this field?

2. Activity: Emotional Vocabulary List

Read through the **emotional vocabulary list** similar to the one used at the National Suicide Hotline. The link is here: https://www.karlamclaren.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Emotional-Vocabulary-List-Color.pdf

After reading through some of the emotional vocabulary are there some words that you wouldn't readily use? Are there some new words that you might start using to describe your emotional state to others?

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Glossary

Emotion work: Changing the emotion that one is feeling to be more in line with the feeling rules for the situation.

Emotional fallacies: Cognitive exaggerations that often increase the intensity of emotional experiences. Some of these fallacies include perfectionism, catastrophic thinking, shoulds, overgeneralization, taking responsibility for others, and helplessness.

Emotional intelligence: The ability to accurately identify, analyze, and effectively communicate an emotional experience.

Framing rules: Unwritten rules that determine how we define an event.

Feeling rules: Socially shared norms that determine how we feel in a social interaction.

Mask emotions: Selecting a different emotion to display than the one that you are actually experiencing.

Rational-Emotive Approach: The process of identifying exaggerations in one's thoughts, and refuting each of the exaggerated thoughts in order to decrease emotional intensity to external and internal emotional triggers.

Media

1. Daniel Goleman Introduces Emotional Intelligence.

Watch this Big Think video to learn from Daniel Goleman himself about the concept of EQ:

Here is the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7m9eNoB3NU

2. Six Steps to Improve your Emotional Intelligence.

Watch this TedTalk to learn how to improve your EQ. Do you agree with all of the steps?

Here is the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6_J7FfgWVc

Contributors and Attributions

Media Attributions

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"Women in brown blazer and brown skirt set" licensed by Jeffrey Paa Kwesi Opare is in the Public Domain, CC0.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Conversation Skills

Learning Objectives

- Define conversation and what makes it unique to other forms of interaction.
- Recognize basic conversational structure and how it works.
- Synthesize Grice's Maxims with basic conversational structure.
- Describe the greeting process and its importance to conversation.
- Analyze the typical greeting sequence as it occurs in real conversation.
- Apply opening techniques to begin conversations with unacquainted people.
- Describe the process of topicalization and its role in conversation.
- Apply topicalization techniques that eliciting conversation of increased breadth and depth.
- Differentiate kinds of closing sequences used in everyday conversation.
- Apply pre-closing techniques to effectively close conversation.

9.1: Principles of Conversation

Learning Objectives

- Define conversation and what makes it unique to other forms of interaction.
- Recognize basic conversational structure and how it works.
- Synthesize Grice's Maxims with basic conversational structure.

Principles of Conversation

Consider these scenarios:

1. You are attending a professional networking event where you know no one. However, you need to make brand new contacts because it is crucial for your job duties.
2. Your boss sends you and an unacquainted co-worker on a business trip. You will be taking a rental car together and will be driving eight hours each way to your destination.
3. You are on a first date with someone whom you met in passing on a public transit. You and your date plan to have dinner at a nice sit-down restaurant before going miniature golfing.

There are times when we must be able to make conversation with "strangers." While we can certainly choose to just sit in silence, imagine the repercussions in each of the above scenarios. You will have a hard time making new contacts in scenario 1, you will have a very awkward road trip in scenario 2, and your date might lack the emotional "chemistry" to lead to a second one in scenario 3.

Even if you feel confident in the above three scenarios, the ability to converse is a skillset. Just like the ability to play tennis, paint, or speak a foreign language, our conversation skills take years of practice to master, and we can always learn more to improve them. There is no state of perfection in conversation skills, just as there is no "perfect" tennis player. Just like how art students learn color theory and then apply it to their paint canvasses to become more sophisticated painters, you too can learn conversation theory and apply its techniques to your everyday conversations to become a more capable conversationalist.

In this Unit, you will learn the art of conversation through the lens of a field called Conversation Analysis. In Module 1, you will learn some foundational concepts to the idea of "conversation." In Module 2, you will learn how to "open" a conversation with an unacquainted person by learning the typical greeting sequence. Then in Module 3, you will learn how to elicit topics so that your conversations "go somewhere." Finally, you will learn how to terminate conversation in Module 4, so you don't "get stuck" in one. In the next section, you will begin with principles of conversation.

Grice's Maxims

Consider the three statements below:

1. My car broke down. 2. Joe is home. 3. Do you have a phone?

Upon first glance, these three statements appear to not have any relevance to each other. One is about a car breaking down. Another is about whether someone is home. And the other is a question about a person is possessing a phone. Taking the sentences literally, there is no connection between them.

However, now suppose I present the three sentences in the following format:

John: My car broke down.

Mark: Joe is home.

John: Do you have a phone?

Chances are you, read the three statements as if John and Mark were having a conversation where John is requesting help from Mark. John's car has broke down and now he is telling Mark, an acquaintance. Mark is suggesting that Joe is home, perhaps implying that Joe can help Mark. John then asks Mark if he has a phone, perhaps because he wants to use it to call Joe. Although we cannot confirm the accuracy of this interpretation without further information, it is a plausible one.

What conversational scholars find fascinating is that we are able to make sense of the three statements in the context of a conversation, whereas we could not if they were presented independently.

Paul Grice (1975) was a philosopher who argued that there is an implicit logic that enables us to make sense of conversations like the one above, and that logic is based on the belief that both participants are cooperating with each other. He called this assumption the **cooperative principle.** According to the cooperative principle, the basis of cooperation is the norm that one should make their interactional contribution fitting for the point in time and for the purpose of the engaged conversation.

When you review the conversation above, you probably assumed that Mark was cooperating with John when he suggested that Joe is home, and that John was cooperating with Mark when he asked if he had a phone. You didn't assume that Joe was just a random stranger who lives across country whom Mark knows but John does not. And you probably did not assume John was asking if Mark had a phone just out of pure curiosity.

Based on the cooperative principle Grice argues that there are four conversational maxims (rules) that speakers and listeners use to conversationally cooperate:

1. *Quantity:* Say just enough to make your contribution informative, but not any more informative as to become excessive or "TMI."
2. *Quality:* Do not say things that you know to be false or lack adequate evidence for.
3. *Relation:* Make your contributions relevant to the immediate conversation.
4. *Manner:* Avoid obscurity and ambiguity. Make sure to say your contribution briefly and orderly.

Some scholars argue that the most essential of the four maxims is relation (Sperber & Wilson, 1996). The fact that we can make the above statements between John and Mark relevant to each other is what makes conversational logic work.

Grice proposed the four maxims as both descriptive and prescriptive principles. They are descriptive because they describe the norms by which we actually converse and make sense of others' utterances. They are also prescriptive because they tell us how we ought to converse to ensure our contributions are received as we intend.

Overall, Grice's maxims serve as a foundation for understanding how people do and should converse. But simply knowing the principles of cooperation alone does not necessarily make you a good conversationalist. Moreover, there are many aspects of conversation where these principles come into play. In the next sections, we will go deeper into basic conversational structure.

What Is A Conversation?

According to Svennevig (1999), **conversation** is a joint activity consisting of participatory actions (verbal and nonverbal) between at least two participants that are sequentially organized, locally managed, and improvised. There are several aspects to unpack in this definition.

First, conversation is a *joint activity*. It requires at least two different persons to act cooperatively. Though there is such thing as "intrapersonal" communication where people do talk to themselves, it is unlikely that they hold conversations with themselves in the same sense that two different people hold one. For this unit, we will focus exclusively on conversation with exactly two participants, but some principles can still apply to multi-party interactions (conversations involving three or more people).

Second, the participatory actions are *sequentially organized*; there are mutual expectations about the order in which action are supposed to occur. For example, we would find it normal if a conversation started with someone saying "hello" at the beginning of the conversation and then moving toward to a topic. It would be strange to us if we were conversing with someone and right in the middle of the topic, the person says "hello." There is a normative sequential order to conversation.

Third, conversations are *locally managed*. In your daily conversations, there is no referee or adjudicator who decides whether someone broke a conversational rule, nor is there a third-party enforcer of rules. Any "rules" that are broken must be called upon and enforced by the participants themselves. If your friend interrupts you while you are talking, you will have to let your friend know and attempt to take back your turn. It is comparable to the difference between a game of pick-up basketball where players call their own fouls, and a NCAA basketball game where highly trained referees adjudicate them. Conversation is more like the former, unless it occurs in some institutional setting like a courtroom where a judge manages the turn-taking and conduct of talk.

Fourth, conversational actions are *improvisational* in nature. Though there might be mutual expectations about how a conversation should proceed, there are no scripts nor joint pre-planning about how a conversation will go. Before you ask your friend for a ride, you do not tell your friend: "Friend, I am going to ask you a question. Once I finish asking the question, it will be your turn to answer 'yes' or 'no'…" Instead, you just ask your friend for the ride, and your friend knows to answer it with a "yes" or "no" (or some strategic answer that suits your friend's goal of maintaining the relationship while answering the task). Conversations are distinct from theatre or film scripts, where every single turn and word is pre-planned for the actors. Metacommunication

(discussion about how you converse) is not the norm unless something goes unexpectedly. If you think about your daily interaction, most are probably improvisational in nature.

Grice's Maxims tie to the definition of conversation because we define interactants as cooperative when we presume that their actions are contributing to the furtherance of the conversation topically. Their actions should be relevant to our actions, in sequence with what we expect to occur, and responsive/improvisational in response to us.

Basic Concepts

Now that you know what a conversation is, you will now learn some basic concepts commonly studied in the field of conversation analysis. Conversation analysis focuses on analyzing two foundations in conversation: actions (what people do in talk) and sequences (how they go about accomplishing it) (Clift, 2016). Each of the concepts that you will be introduced to in this section have a deep literature behind them, so I encourage you to explore the additional readings. For now, you'll get a basic understanding of four key conversation concepts: turn-taking, adjacency pairs, preference organization, and repair.

Turn-taking is the foundation of conversation. Humans do not have the cognitive capacity to listen to language and speak it simultaneously. In order to have a conversation, the conversationalists must therefore take turns where one speaker talks while the other listens, and vice versa. How do speakers know when it's their turn to speak in a conversation? While there is no formally established signal that guarantees that we have finished our turn (consider radio communications where each turn ends with the speaker saying "over"), there are several cues that we implicitly give each other to signal it: pauses, intonation, eye contact, or by the implications of what was said. Our partners must also project when they think we have finished our turns. If our partners project correctly, we let them begin their turn. If they project incorrectly, then you may seek to take back the turn using different strategies.

While it may be tempting to think that all conversation follows the one-at-time rule, there are certainly exceptions to this practice. For example, we might engage in simultaneous laughter at a joke; you do not take turns laughing when you and your partner see something funny. When you first greet someone, you might also engage in a simultaneous greeting of delight, or you might be engaging in backchannel feedback as you listen to your partner tell a very riveting story that causes you to express emotions, sympathy, and awe. In such cases, you and your partner "overlap" each other, but it's not a problem to be fixed as if you had rudely interrupted your partner. We will discuss "repair" later in this module.

There are many issues that you can explore with turn-taking. How do parties manage turn-taking? What happens when two parties want to speak at the same time? What happens when we want to take back our turn? These are all issues that Conversation Analysts explore in depth under the term "turn allocation" (Ford, 2013). Overall, turn-taking is not a hard-and-fast rule like a board game; it is a guideline that partners use to project when their opportunity to speak should occur.

Now that we understand the timing of the participatory actions via turn-taking, we can now explore the basic composition of conversation which often occurs in **adjacency pairs.** Adjacency pairs are a pair of utterances that are expected to go together (ten Have, 2010). For example, a "hello" is expected to be met with a "hello," an "invitation" is expected to be met with a "reply," the word "thank you" is expected to be met with "you're welcome," a "question" is supposed to met with an "answer," and so on. The first utterance in an adjacency pair is called a first-pair part (FPP), and the response is called the second-pair part (SPP).

Think of a time when you invited a friend through text-message to have lunch with you, and that friend never replied. You might feel wronged because your friend did not complete the adjacency pair of your invitation, or more colloquially, they "left you hanging." Your friend not replying is not just a problem conversationally, it is a problem relationally. Is your friend mad at you? Is your friend just not a reliable person? We draw inferences about our relationships based on how we converse.

Adjacency pairs can be expanded (Schegloff, 2007). For example, before you ask your friend to lunch, you can do a **pre-invitation** where you ask your friend "are you doing anything this weekend?" Once your friend says no, then you can issue the invitation. Once your friend hears the invitation to lunch, your friend might want to know when and where the lunch will take place before giving an official "yes" or "no." Asking "what time and where?" would be an **insert expansion** within the adjacency pair since it occurs between the invitation (FPP) and the reply (SPP). Once you give an answer that it would be at Applebee's at 12:00, your friend can then reply with a "yes." Once your friend says "yes", you might then say "cool, see you there" which would count as a **post-expansion** since it speaks to what occurred after the invitation has been replied to.

Here is a conversation that demonstrates each adjacency pair:

A: Hey, do you have any plans this weekend? [Pre-invitation, FPP1]

B: No. [Pre-invitation answer, SPP1]

A: Do you want to go see a movie at 5:00 on Saturday? [Invitation, FPP2]

B: What movie? [Insert Expansion: Question about invitation, FPP3]

A: Star Wars. [Insert Expansion: Answer to question, SPP3]

B: Ok, sure. [Invitation Answer, SPP2]

A: Great, I'll pick you at 4:00. [Post-expansion: Reply to invitation answer, FPP3]

Adjacency pairs can be studied and explored in many ways too. Keep in mind that when you first teach a child "manners," you teach them basic adjacency pairs like saying "thank you" after receiving a favor, or saying "hello" back to someone who says hello. Are there other adjacency pairs that you recall being taught as a kid?

Preference Organization is the concept that there are sequences that are "preferred" and do not require explanation for their occurrence, and there are actions that are "dispreferred" that do require explanation for their occurrence. For example, suppose your friend invites to his/her wedding. If you said "yes," you would not need to explain why you said "yes." Accepting an invitation is a preferred action. However, if you said "No" to the invitation, your friend will probably expect an account for why you will not attend. Declining an invitation is generally a dispreferred action that then requires some accounting for why the preferred action did not occur. Generally, preferred responses are ones that enable an action to be completed, dispreferred are ones that prevent it from doing so (Schlegoff, 2007).

More abstractly, conversations work on a preference for agreement. When our response is in agreement with our partner, then our actions are in "flow" of the conversation and do not require justification. Consider the phrasing of the question, "Did you win?" The question is phrased to where the expected answer is "yes" to winning. Compare that phrasing to "Did you lose?" The latter question is phrased to where the expected answer is a "yes" to losing. In the former phrasing, if you did win, you can just say "yes." If you lost, then you might need to explain what happened. In the latter phrasing, it is the opposite.

There is much deeper theory and research behind what a preferred action is, how culture impacts these norms, and what constitutes preference for agreement. For now, just know that conversation rests on participants "going with the flow" with each other's actions. If there is a "bump in the road" regarding a dis-preferred response, then it may require the participant to explain his/her actions. Or it just might require "repair" which we will discuss next.

Conversational repair is a set of methods that we use to fix problems that arise with conversing. These methods can either be self-initiated or other-initiated (Kitzinger, 2013). For example, you can self-repair a mistake that you make in your own turn. You might say, "I'll see you Thursday...I mean Friday." Or a partner might correct you after you say, "I'll see you Thursday" by saying "Do you mean Friday?" Repair is a way of "correcting' someone. There are risks to constantly correcting someone; you might come across as condescending, rude, or disagreeable. You might be afraid to correct someone like your boss or a person who exercises significant power over you. What do you do in those situations?

There are strategic ways that you can repair as well. You can just simply repeat what the person said and let that person catch the error and self-correct accordingly. Or you can implicitly correct the person. Suppose you are walking your dog and passer-by asks "What's her name?" If your dog is actually male, you might just say, "His name is Jack." By doing that, you are implicitly correcting the passer-by without making it too much of an attack. The passer-by can then correct their language choice accordingly. Overall, turn-taking and repair have been two large topics widely studied by Conversation Analysts (Mortensen & Wagner, 2012).

Conclusion

Overall, you have learned about four basic concepts of conversation theory; turn-taking, adjacency pairs, preference organization, and repair. Each of these concepts has unique issues and theoretical underpinnings that can you can explore deeply outside of this book. But each of these tools will help you achieve the objective of this unit which is to be able to effectively open, elicit, and close conversation with both acquainted and unacquainted partners. We will start with opening in the next module.

Learning Activities

Activity 1: Questions Only Game

Have the class form into pairs. Suggest a conversation topic like shopping, sports, etc. Then have the students hold a conversation where they can only ask questions. No statements nor answers to questions. See how long the students are able to hold a conversation with questions only before one of them answers or makes a statement. This helps teach the idea of adjacency pairs. You can also YouTube Questions Only Game to see clips of improvisational troupes playing this game.

Activity 2: Turn-Taking Demonstration

Have the class form into pairs. Suggest that each pair hold a normal conversation. However, to manage turn taking, each partner will be tasked with pointing at the other partner when it is their turn to speak. If a partner speaks when they have not been pointed to, they lose the game. Then have the pairs keep trying to see how long they go with this turn-taking system. This drill teaches the complexity of turn-taking and how it is not just a "one-at-a-time" principle and how awkward it can be to formalize turn-management with signals like pointing.

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Glossary

Adjacency pair: A pair of utterances from two partners that are expected to go together.

Conversation: A joint activity consisting of participatory actions (verbal and nonverbal) between at least two participants that are sequentially organized, locally managed, and improvised.

Cooperative Principle: Grice's principle that one should make their interactional contribution fitting for the point in time and for the purpose of the conversation at hand.

Grice's Maxims: The set of four maxims that describe what cooperation looks like in the context of conversation: quantity, quality, relation, and manner.

Insert Sequences: Sequences that occur between the first-pair part and second-pair part of an adjacency pair.

Preference Organization: The conversational concept that certain actions are "preferred" and do not require explanation for their occurrence, whereas other actions are "dispreferred" and do require explanation for their occurrence.

Repair: A set of methods used to fix problems that arise with the process of conversing.

Turn-Taking: The jointly-created system by which two interlocutors manage the timing and manner of their talking to maintain a cooperative conversation.

Media

1. Questions-Only Game

Watch a scene from "Whose Line Is it Anyway" where the players may only interact using questions. Why is this game so difficult and entertaining?

The link is here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89iZ8Dwim4E

2. Grice's Maxims

Watch this clip of the Big Bang Theory and see how Grice's Maxims are flouted. Which ones and when?

The link is here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEM8gZCWQ2w

3. The Science of Analyzing Conversation

Watch this Ted Talk by Elizabeth Stokoe (a notable conversation analyst) about how conversation analysis works. Did you come to the same conclusions in her analysis?

The link is here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtOG5PK8xDA

9.2: Opening Conversation

Learning Objectives

- Describe the greeting process and its importance to conversation.
- Analyze the typical greeting sequence as it occurs in real conversation.
- Apply opening techniques to begin conversations with unacquainted people

Opening Conversation

There is a stranger across the room whom you'd like to speak to. Maybe that person is a possible client, lover, or friend. When you approach the stranger, what do you say? How do you justify walking across the room to hold a conversation?

In this Module, you will learn about the process of opening conversation in face-to-face contexts. You will learn about greeting rituals, the typical greeting sequence, and specific openings among unacquainted people. By the end of this module, you will be able to speak theoretically about opening conversation and apply it to your everyday life.

Greeting rituals

A **greeting** is a verbal mutual acknowledgment of two or more people. Verbally, greetings can expressed with words like "hello," "hey," and others like it. Greetings do not necessarily have to be verbal, however, they can be simple nods, waves with the hands, smiles, or winks, to name a few. Before you can even greet, you might have to engage in a **pre-beginning sequence** where you orient your body, proximity, and gaze towards the person, and the person possibly reciprocates to indicate their openness to greeting (Mondada, 2009). In fact, De Stefani and Mondada (2018) suggest that in public spaces, this pre-beginning sequence includes sighting, identifying, recognizing, greeting, and then conversing.

Suppose you are at the grocery store and you sight a friend who happens to be there too. There are two types of greetings: passing and open-contact (Goffman, 1982). A **passing greeting** is done when two individuals greet each other in circumstances that limit any further interaction beyond it. Suppose you are walking down the hallway to your next class in a hurry and you see your professor walking in the opposite direction. You might greet each other with a "hello" while still walking in opposite directions, without saying much beyond that. Passing greetings typically occur when one or both of the parties are in motion. In the grocery store example, you and your friend might be walking down the same aisle as you briefly exchange nods or "hellos" as you both continue walking in opposite directions.

Open-contact greetings occur in circumstances that invite extended conversation. Suppose you are again walking down the hallway after class and you see your professor walking in the opposite direction. Now let's suppose that you actually had a question that you have been wanting to ask your professor. Instead of just saying "hello" and continuing to walk in the opposite direction, you actually stop and face your professor and your professor responds in kind. You then proceed to have a short conversation regarding your question. The positioning of your body to indicate that you want an extended conversation coupled with the "hello" is an example of an open-contact greeting. In the grocery example, you and your friend would stop to talk to each other for few moments after making contact and orienting yourselves to each other.

The purpose of a greeting is to acknowledge to someone that you see them as significant. When you are walking in a grocery store filled with unacquainted others, you are not expected to greet every single person who comes into your view. In fact, it might raise eyebrows if you did that. But let's suppose that as you walked down an aisle, you saw your best friend from a distance and your best friend appears to see you. Your friend might find it to be an affront if you did not then go out of your way to say "hello." Imagine if your best friend saw and then ignored you, how might you interpret that action? As notable sociologist, Erving Goffman (1966, p. 124) once put it, "As a general rule, acquainted persons in a social situation require a reason not to enter into a face engagement with each other, while unacquainted persons require a reason to do so."

There are three general purposes for greetings. First, they help begin conversational activity. A typical conversation will involve some kind of acknowledgment procedure, whether it's verbal or nonverbal. Second, greetings serve phatic purposes. **Phatic communication** is talk that occurs just for the sake of being social, and not for any type of information-transaction (Coupland et al., 1992). Suppose you are walking down a hall of cubicles at your workplace and that you are acquainted with your colleagues. As you pass by your colleague named Chris, you might just say, "Hello Chris" and keep walking without expecting the conversation go further than that. Why would you do that? Because the passing greeting is an acknowledgment of your

acquaintanceship with Chris, it was not intended to beget any further conversation for information or other speech acts. This greeting would then serve a phatic purpose.

Lastly, greetings can serve as relational and emotional measurement tests. For example, a set of parents might be concerned that their teenager is upset about something. They ask their teenager about how their day is going. If the teen replies sullenly, they might take that to mean something is wrong. You might also use this test of "hello" to see if your friend is upset with you. If your friend does not reply or replies negatively, then you know that your friend is not happy with you.

One thing to note about greetings is that they provide ritual bracketing (Goffman, 1982). They do not have to be repeated once they have been conducted once within a specific context. For example, suppose you see a friend at a party that you are attending. You greet your friend, hold a conversation for a few moments, and then go your separate ways to mingle with others. Now that you have gone through the greeting ritual once with your friend in that context, you do not have to continue to say "hello" every instance you see that person at the party. The initial ritual covers the entire context.

Five types of openings among the unacquainted

Now that you have learned about the types of greetings, you may still wonder, "how do I begin a conversation with someone who I am unacquainted with?" While you have learned about types of greetings, there are general **openings** that you can use to initiate a conversation. An opening is a bid to begin a conversation on a prescribed topic.

First, there are ***direct openings.*** A direct opening is where you directly introduce yourself with your name (e.g. "Hi, my name is Jaime"). You can find direct openings being widely used at professional networking events, also at the beginning of a semester when you first meet classmates for group work. Simply open with a salutation and your name.

Second, there are ***situational openings*** which speak about something occurring in the shared context between you and the recipient. Suppose you show up to a movie theatre and notice the long line for buying tickets. As you get in line, you turn around to the unacquainted stranger behind you and say, "Quite a long line for the movies today." That would be a situational opening as it addresses a mutually shared context. When you want to use a situational opening, look for some common object or focal point in the environment and comment on it.

Third, there are ***other-oriented openings***, which speak to something about the person's looks, dress, artifacts, or any other apparent features. Suppose you are standing in line at the movies and you notice that the person in front of you has an interesting tattoo on their arm. You might just ask the person after making eye contact, "What's the story behind your tattoo?" In that case, you have inquired about the person to open the conversation. When you want to use an other-oriented opening, you can compliment, inquire, or share an observation about the person.

Fourth, there are ***personal disclosures***. While the first three openings discussed are often formatted as questions, you can begin a conversation with a statement that discloses something about you; your beliefs, feelings, personal history, or observations about something. Suppose you are on an airplane with an unacquainted person sitting next to you. You might open the conversation by saying, "This is my first time ever on an airplane." That statement is offer to your fellow passengers to ask about your experience so far or to disclose their own experience flying.

Finally, you can use a ***task-oriented opening,*** which asks the person to complete some kind of task. Stopping a stranger and asking them for the time or directions to the nearest pharmacy are examples of a task-oriented opening. The challenge with task-oriented openings is that once the unacquainted person has completed the task, you must then transition to another topic that is not task-related if you want to maintain the conversation. When you want to use a task-oriented opening, ask for help with completing a certain task.

Each of these openings can help kickstart a conversation by suggesting an initial topic to explore. Try each of these openings in different contexts with unacquainted people. You will be surprised how a basic opening can lead to the exploration of unexpected topics. Just be sure that your partner is clearly open to having a conversation with you.

Typical greeting sequence

Now that you have an understanding of the basic features of a greeting, we now need to understand it in the context of a sequence; specifically for beginning conversations. As you learned in the previous Module, conversations happen in sequences. In this Module, you will learn what conversation analysts have called the Typical Greeting Sequence (Sidnell, 2010). This sequence is best explained using the context of phone interactions, since such interactions more explicitly outline the essential ingredients of a greeting. However, the sequence still applies in face-to-face interactions with some minor contextualization.

The Typical Greeting Sequence is comprised of the following adjacency pairs: summons-answer, mutual recognition-identification, reciprocal state inquiries, and pursuit. To illustrate each component, below is a script based on a real phone call (Sidnell, 2010, p. 205):

"((Phone Rings))

1 Charles: Hello?

2 Yolk: Hello Charles.

3 (one second pause)

4 Yolk: This is Yolk.

5 Charles: Oh, hello Yolk!

6 Yolk: How are you haha

7 Charles: Alright haha. It's very funny to hear from you."

We will refer to this script throughout the next four sub-sections.

Summons-Answer

Before you can hold a conversation with someone, you must first have their attention. The process of gaining and verifying that two parties have each others' attention is called the summons-answer sequence. Let us understand this sequence in the context of a phone call first before applying it to face-to-face interactions.

Suppose you want to call your friend to ask them for a quick favor. The first step will be dialing your friend's phone number on your phone, which will then make their phone ring or vibrate. That ringing or vibration of your friend's phone is an act of gaining their attention from whatever activities that they are currently focusing on. **Summoning** is the act of gaining another party's attention.

Through the phone, the summons is the ringing or vibrating. In face-to-face interactions, it can be several things. It could be haptic by tapping on the person's shoulder. It could be visual by just making eye contact with someone or standing in front of them. It could also be verbal by saying "Hey Corey!." Summoning can be done through objects as well. Suppose your friend is in their dorm with their door closed. If you are not authorized to just "barge in" as you please, you would then knock on the door. The knocking is a form of summoning.

Of course, how you summon matters. Verbally, it might be perfectly fine with your best friend to summon them by saying "Hey" or "Yo!", but that would probably not be received well by your professor. Haptically, it might be fine to politely tap someone on the shoulder to get their attention, but grabbing them by the arm and yanking them might be taken as a violent affront. With knocking, there is definitely a difference in reception when you lightly knock on the door, versus pound on the door with all of your might. Your friend in the room might assume it is you in the former and possibly the police in the latter.

How do you know when you have someone's attention? They generally respond to you in some way. In the case of the phone ringing, they answer the call. Haptically, they turn around or orient their body language to you. Verbally, they can respond to you with words (e.g. they say "What?") or by just making eye contact with you. The ***answer*** is a reception to a person's summons.

If you are the recipient of a person's summons, you do not necessarily have to answer. You have the choice of not answering your phone or hitting the "decline" button when you see your friend is calling. Haptically, you can ignore or resist any touching for summoning. If someone says "hello" you can pretend to not hear them or ignore the summons. If you hear a knock on your door, you can pretend to not be home and not answer it.

If you ignore a friend's summons, then your friend might take it as an affront to the relationship. You friend might think that you are mad or upset about something. You have may have been in a situation where a friend did not reply to your text message; you were upset that your friend did not uphold their end of an adjacency pair.

When you are talking with unacquainted people, your opening line can serve as the summons. Any of the five types of openings can be said as a summons, and how your partner responds to them is the answer. Overall, the summons-answer pair is the process of gaining and establishing attention between two parties. Summons-answer avails two speakers to each other and then enables for the next segments of greeting to take place.

Mutual Recognition-Identification

Once you have gained your friend's attention either through verbal, nonverbal, or electronic summoning, the next step is establishing speaker identities, which is done in a mutual recognition-identification sequence. In some contexts, this is done automatically due to voice or facial recognition. But in other contexts, this is a step that can become a topic of conversation on its own.

To best understand this step, suppose you get a call from an unknown number on your cell phone. Let's also suppose that you decide to answer it because you figure that if someone is calling you, that it must be something important. After answering with a "hello" (your answer to their summons), you will probably then expect the caller to self-identify. You may even ask "who is this?" Before you go any further into the conversation, you will want to know the exactly you are speaking to.

If the speaker says, "This is Chris, your landlord." Then you now know how the caller identifies. But you still might not know who the caller is; perhaps you do not recall having a landlord named "Chris." In that case, you may inquire further about Chris's identity; you might ask how he knows you, received your number, etc. But if you do recognize Chris as your landlord, then the mutual recognition-identification is halfway complete.

The other half lies in Chris ensuring that he recognizes you. Suppose Chris says, "This is Chris, your landlord, am I speaking to Jessica?" If you are not Jessica, then you will have to clarify that and tell Chris that he has the wrong number or recipient. Even if you recognize Chris, Chris does not recognize you as the intended recipient of the call (even if he does know you personally), so he will probably then end the conversation right then. If you are indeed the intended caller, then the mutual recognition-identification step is complete.

In face-to-face settings, mutual recognition-identification can happen automatically. If your best friend gains your attention by saying "hey," then you should automatically recognize your friend by their face and voice. And your friend should have already recognized you since they addressed you first. A possible scenario where this might not happen is if your friend tapped someone on the shoulder thinking it was you, but then the person turns around and it is not.

But let's say that you are talking to a stranger for the first time. After saying "hello," you would probably introduce yourself with your name and a handshake. There can also be times when someone recognizes you, but you do not recognize them. The person might begin speaking to you like as if you are already acquainted, while you have trouble recalling ever meeting that person. This would be another case where there is asymmetry in recognition.

In any case, mutual recognition is an important step. The summons-answer sequence avails the speakers to each other, the mutual recognition-identification step identifies them. In some contexts, this step can be skipped. When boarding a plane, the flight attendant might just issue a command to you without self-identifying (although you will recognize the attendant's status by the uniform), or a stranger might ask you scoot your bag under the seat as the they squeeze into the middle seat.

In the sample phone conversation above, you can see that there was an issue with mutual recognition. When Yolk says, "Hello Charles," (line 2) there is no immediate reply from Charles indicating his recognition of Yolk by his voice (line 3). So then Yolk self-identifies (line 4), and then Charles recognizes him (line 5). You can notice the laughter afterward which is probably a result of the awkwardness of asymmetrical recognition.

Reciprocal State Inquiries

Once the speakers have availed and recognized each other, often there is third step where they inquire about each others' well-being, which are called ***reciprocal state inquiries***. Reciprocal state inquiries can include phrases like "how are you doing?", "how's your day going?," and others (Pillet-Shore, 2018). They do not always occur in a typical greeting sequence and can be skipped.

Reciprocal state inquiries generally fall into three categories: positive, negative, and neutral. A positive example would be answering an inquiry with some sort of positive status. If someone asks, "How you are doing?" and you answer with "good," "great," or something along those lines then that would be a positive example. A negative example would be answering the question with something like "not well," "hurt," etc. A neutral example would be answering with some like "ok" or "fine."

One note about reciprocal state inquiries is the emphasis on preference for agreement, or in this case, the preference for the positive. If you answer "how are you?" with a positive statement like "great!," then your fellow interlocutor can continue onto business or another topic. See an example below:

A: How are you doing today?

B: I'm great, how are you?

A: I'm great. I was wondering if you could work my shift on Saturday?

Notice how the inquiries serve more or less as a formality since there is no topicalization of the inquiry. A does not ask B why they are doing great nor turns it into any topic of conversation. Instead, B goes straight into business about working a Saturday shift. It is possible to do this with positive inquiries.

When you report that you are doing well, I am not expected as an interlocutor to ask "why?"

Now let's suppose the conversation between A and B went like this:

A: How are you doing today?

B: Not too well, actually...

A: Oh ok. I was wondering if you could work my shift on Saturday?

Reading this, you might think A was insensitive to B's status. In this case, the reciprocal state inquiry was a negative response; B was not doing too well. In these cases, a negative response requires an **account**. An account is an explanation for why the unexpected or normal did not happen in the course of a conversation. In western culture, we expect people to be well. If they are not well, then we must inquire why. So here is what a person might do in this case:

A: How are you doing today?

B: Not too well, actually...

A: Oh what happened?

B: My mom is in the hospital…

Here, A is seen as being more sensitive to B's plight by asking about it. Now A still might have the intention of eventually asking B to cover the Saturday shift, but that business will be delayed until B's negative status has been adequately acknowledged. Hence, there is a preference for positivity because it does not require an account to be addressed, and thus allows the conversation to move forward to business more quickly.

Reciprocal state inquiries do not always occur in a typical greeting sequence. They can be skipped in task-oriented communication or when such inquiries have already been expressed at a previous time. In the sample phone conversation, you see on line 6 how Yolk asks "How are you?" and Charles reciprocates with an answer and the same question on line 7.

Pursuit

The last component of the typical greeting sequence is pursuit. ***Pursuit*** is the addressing of the reason for the conversation. If the conversation is task-oriented, then pursuit would be the task. In a phone call from a salesperson, pursuit might be their sales pitch for the product. In a doctor's office visit, pursuit might be the presentation of a medical inquiry by the patient. Pursuit also encompasses the practice of alignment, where participants seek to jointly construct each other's identities and accomplish each others' relevant goals in the particular interaction (Kidwell, 2018). We pursue based on how we established each other's identities earlier in the conversation through our summons-answer, mutual recognition-identification, and reciprocal state inquiries.

If you ever receive a call from a salesperson, they do not begin the call with "Do you want to buy our product?" Instead, they begin by saying "hello," introducing themselves, and perhaps asking how you are doing. Once you go through that sequence, then they state the reason for their call.

What about non-task-oriented interactions? You may have a best friend or family member whom you talk to regularly on the phone or via video chat of some kind. There may not be some kind of business associated with these conversations, these may just be phatic conversations. In that case, pursuit can be extended conversation about reciprocal state inquiries. Perhaps you start the conversation by asking your friend how their day went, and that leads to a story about what happened at the mall, which leads to another topic about what happened at school, etc. You will learn more about topic elicitation the next Module, which will explain how conversations evolve after the typical greeting sequence.

Conclusion

The typical greeting sequence can be seen as LEGO™ building blocks. While some conversations feature all four components, there are contexts where skipping one or several of them is justifiable. Remember that the five types of openings can also be incorporated into the sequence when talking with unacquainted partners.

How you begin a conversation is important. It establishes your identity as the speaker and how the conversation will proceed. In the next module, you will learn how to have deeper and more involved conversations by learning eliciting techniques.

Learning Activities

Activity 1: Opening Sequence Practice

Find a picture of someone in a social context and identify three different openings that you could use to initiate conversation with that person.

Activity 2: Mini-Networking Event

Have students get out of their chairs and stand up. Have them pretend that this is a networking event, where the goal is to mingle with people they do not know. Give them 5 minutes to have this networking event and ask them recall how they greeted each person. What kinds of openings did they use? How did the typical greeting sequence apply or not apply?

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Glossary

Account: An explanation for why the unexpected or normal did not happen in the course of a conversation

Greeting: A verbal mutual acknowledgment of two or more people.

Opening: A bid to begin a conversation on a prescribed topic.

Open-contact greetings: Greetings that occur in circumstances that invite extended conversation.

Passing greeting: When two individuals greet each other in circumstances that limit any further interaction beyond it.

Phatic Communication: Talk that occurs just for the sake of being social, and not for any type of information-transaction

Pre-beginning Sequence: The nonverbal process of two people orienting themselves to greet each other.

Summoning: The act of gaining another party's attention.

Typical Greeting Sequence: The sequence by which parties open a conversation generally on the phone and in face-to-face encounters with some recontextualization.

Media

1. How to make conversation with anyone

Watch this talk about how to make conversation with anyone. How do the principles taught in this Module apply or not? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4Zu5ZZAG7I

2. Talk to Strangers

Watch this Ted Talk about why you should talk to strangers. How does this compare with what we are taught about "stranger danger?" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fv9Loq-yNWI

9.3: Eliciting Conversation

Learning Objectives

- Describe the process of topicalization and its role in conversation.
- Apply topicalization techniques that eliciting conversation of increased breadth and depth.

Eliciting Conversation

Once you have successfully opened the conversation with one of the five types of openings and continued through one or more aspects of the typical greeting sequence, what do you do next? Depending on what your pursuit is, you will probably want to elicit (create) certain topics of conversation.

In this Module, you will learn some specific topic eliciting techniques for creating deeper and more exploratory conversation. You will learn elicitors that you can use as a speaker and as a listener. You will also learn about the process of topicalization, and the four layers of talk for building intimacy and rapport.

Topic Elicitors

As Initiator

Suppose you are in class and you are assigned a project that involves working with a partner who turns out to be shy. In your first meeting, you decide that you want to try to elicit conversation to get to know your partner. We will call you the "initiator" of conversation since you will be taking the active role in eliciting conversation.

As the initiator, there are three types of elicitors that you can use (Sidnell, 2010). First, you can use an **open elicitor**. An open elicitor is a broad question that does not suggest a particular topic. Examples of open elicitors would be "how's life?", "what's up?", or "anything new?". There are many ways to answer these types of questions since they are so broad, so your partner must then narrow down from a list of possibilities to suggest something **mentionable**. Mentionable means that the topic is something that your partner projects as conversation-worthy in a particular context.

The key theme to open elicitors is that they are open-ended questions that do not suggest any topic in particular. In fact, they are so unspecific and open-ended, that they put the burden on your partner to actually suggest a topic. That is the advantage and also disadvantage to using open elicitors. If you have a partner who is talkative, then open elicitors should work well since your partner will not hesitate to suggest a topic. If you ask a talkative partner "anything new?", they will probably have no problem mentioning what happened at work today or at their gym class. However, if you have a less talkative partner, open elicitors might not work well. If you ask your shy partner "anything new?," they might reply with "nothing" or something that will not be topically expansive enough.

The second type of topic elicitor are **itemized news inquiries**. These are questions that inquire about a specific topic. Unlike open elicitors which are wide open as far as topic selection for the recipient, itemized news inquiries suggest a particular topic. Examples include: "how did you do on your final exam yesterday?", "did you see the new Star Wars movie?", or "what did you think of that thunderstorm last night?" You can see that the specific question will narrow down your partners list of options to respond, as opposed to the open elicitor where the list is wider. The three aforementioned examples prompt your partner to discuss exams, Star Wars, and thunderstorms accordingly.

The advantage to itemized news inquiries is that they inherently suggest a topic to your partner, which relieves them of the burden of finding a topic. But again, that is also the disadvantage to using an itemized new inquiry. If your questions suggest topics that your partner is not interested in or cannot say much about, then the answers might not be topically expansive.

The third type of topic elicitor are **general news announcements**, which are personal disclosures that you make as the initiator of conversation. Instead of asking your partner a question, you offer a topic by stating something. An example of a general news announcement would be "I found out how I scored on my final exam today." The personal disclosure can then prompt your partner to ask for more information about how your exam went (an itemized news inquiry), to disclose how an exam that they took went (a general news announcement), or offer a related topic that tangentially relates the idea of doing well on exams.

The advantage to using general news announcements is that they are topics volunteered by you that do not "prod" your partner with questions. Your partner has the freedom to then reply how they want. The disadvantage is that these general news announcements might not elicit any kind of expansive response by your partner. Perhaps your partner has not taken any exams recently or has done

poorly on them, and does not want to share. In that case, if you use general news announcements, be prepared to follow them up with another announcement or topic eliciting question to prompt conversation.

As Listener

Now let's suppose that you are interacting with a more talkative partner who enjoys disclosing information to you. While your partner talks, you can use certain topic eliciting techniques as a listener. These techniques include summarizing, parroting, continuing, stare-nodding, and using questions.

Suppose your conversation partner says the following:

A: I really enjoy going on hikes at Lake Travis.

Summarizing involves restating what your partner is saying while they talk. Your reply might be, "Lake Travis is your favorite hiking spot then?" or "That's cool that you're a hiker." The key principle is that you are simply stating what your partner said in your own words. ***Parroting*** is where you repeat word-for-word what your partner said, prompting them to then elaborate or continue with their disclosing. An example in this case would be, "You enjoy going on hikes at Lake Travis?" Notice that you just repeat or "parrot" what your partner said.

Continuers are utterances (grammatical or ungrammatical) that can be used as a stand-alone turns or as backchannel feedback as your partner speaks (ten Have, 2010). Common continuer phrases are response cries like "uh huh," "mmhmm," or "yeah" which can help the listener build affiliation or rapport with the speaker (Lindstrom & Sorjonen, 2013). You may notice that continuers are used more frequently when you are talking on the phone since there are no visual cues shared between you and your partner.

When speaking face-to-face, you can use a ***stare-nod*** where you maintain your eye contact with your partner will nodding your head. As you and your partner gaze at each other during conversation, you mutually establish a "gaze window" where your gaze serves not only to monitor your partner, but as a method of eliciting a response from them (Rossano, 2013). Silence will prompt your partner to keep talking since you are still displaying a listening status through the gaze window with your eye contact and nodding.

You can also ***ask questions*** that probe for more disclosure from your partner. Going back to the hiking statement, you can ask questions like "When do you like to go hiking?," or "How long have you been hiking?"

Lastly, you can offer ***statements,*** such as "I enjoy hiking too" or any other statement related to theirs. Of course, if you offer statements, your partner may then yield the speaking to you for extended turns. Schegloff (2007) discusses statements as being a method of topic proffering, which serves as an offer for the respondent to "buy in" to the statement by expanding upon it through reciprocal questions or statements.

In any case, all of these elicitation techniques can prompt and encourage your shy partner to converse with you. In the next section, we will tell you more about topicalization; specifically expansion and curtailing, which either can keep conversation alive or keep it from going.

Topicalization

Conversation rests on the expansion or curtailing of topics. The process of turning an idea or phrase into a conversation topic is known as **topicalization**. One of the most common ways topicalization happens is through **topical pivots** (Holt & Drew, 2005). A topical pivot a specific idea or phrase in a statement that leads to either further expansion upon it or the introduction of a related topic to it. Let's go back to the hiking example from earlier:

A: I really enjoy going on hikes at Lake Travis.

Depending on what interests you in that statement, there many ideas that can be topicalized. Here are a few possible responses:

B: What's Lake Travis like? (Topical pivot: Lake Travis)

B: How long have you been hiking? (Topical pivot: hiking)

B: What else do you enjoy doing? (Topical pivot: "enjoy" and other favorite hobbies)

There are many more possible responses to the statement. The main idea of topical pivots and topicalization generally is that it rests on logical expansion of something mentioned in the conversation. If your partner enjoys talking about Lake Travis, for example, then they should embrace answering the question about what it is like.

Now there may be times when you will try to prompt your partner to expand on a topical pivot, but your partner will not add much. See the conversation below as an example:

A: What did you think of the movie last night?

B: It was good.

A: What was your favorite part?

B: The beginning.

A: What did you do afterward?

B: Went home.

You can see that A is asking open-ended questions that can prompt a range of answers from B. However, B's answers are generally short and difficult to expand upon. The practice of limiting topic expansion by using short answers is known as **topic curtailing**. In colloquial terms, you might have heard this practice as " being short" with someone.

Your partner might topic curtail for many reasons. Perhaps they are not interested in the topic, or it contains private or sensitive information, or they are just not in the mood for conversation generally at that moment. In relational contexts, part of intimacy is having our partners be "open" with us, as suggested by Social Penetration theory. Topic curtailing might be seen as a sign of trouble if no contextualization is given.

Overall, the life of a conversation rests in the introduction and expansion of topics. The more partners are willing to disclose, the more expansive their topic selections are, leading to longer and "deeper" conversations. When you learn about Social Penetration Theory in Unit 10, you will see how this ties in with the concept of permeability.

Four Layers of Talk

Not only do conversations move among topics logically, but are more emotional and psychological level, they also move between layers of each person's personality. Altman and Taylor (1976)'s Social Penetration Theory suggest that the human personality has three layers: peripheral (biographical information), intermediate (attitudes/opinions), and central (core beliefs, values). Correspondingly, there are four layers of talk: clichés, facts, opinions, and personal layers. Each of these layers of talk speak to a deeper layer of one's personality that exist according to Social Penetration Theory.

The first layer, ***clichés,*** are statements that are generally scripted and mundane in everyday talk. They reveal very little about the person and are used more or less as just pleasantries. Examples of cliché statements can include questions about how one's day is going, statements about the weather, etc.

The second layer***, facts,*** speaks to specific facts about the person. When you talk about facts with someone, you are sharing things that are verifiable or measurable. Examples of a fact question might be: "where are you from?," "what do you do for work?", or even "how many kids do you have?" Notice that these questions call for declarative answers and merely allow for the exchange of biographical information.

The third layer***, feelings,*** speaks to how a person feels about something either emotionally or intellectually. Feelings questions elicit a person's opinion or viewpoint about something. Examples of a feeling question, "how do you feel about traveling without an itinerary?", or "what do you think of cold weather?" This layer of talk will prompt your to share deeper thoughts and feelings about a topic, which can lead to you sharing yours in exchange.

The fourth and final layer is the ***personal layer,*** which speaks to how a person views their personality in totality. Examples of a personal question might be "Are you more of a warm weather or cold weather type of person?" Or "are a deeply religious person?" The personal layer can prompt your partner to share not only their feelings but their own self-perceptions, which you can share your views of them along of the ones about yourself.

There are some complications to the four layers of talk. For one thing, context may drive what is considered personal versus factual. When you go to a doctor's office, questions about your medical history are common and may be among the first topics addressed (although HIPPA ensures that the information stays private). Second, there are some fact questions that can still be seen as deeply personal. Asking someone how much money they make per year or how old they are could still be considered very private to someone even though it is only a fact-layer question.

It is best to use the four layers of talk then as a guideline and tool for evoking deeper conversation, while recognizing some grey areas between each layer. If you are merely sticking to cliché and fact questions, you may want to throw in a feelings or personal

question if you want to evoke more personal conversation, such as when you are on a date with someone. If you are wanting to keep someone at "arm's length" intimately, then sticking to facts and clichés would work well. Use the layers according to your relational goals.

Conclusion

Overall, you learned several techniques for eliciting conversation with your partner. You learned techniques for asking questions, disclosing, and listening. Conversations rest on the life of topics, so you learned more about topicalization and how to pivot accordingly.

Ultimately, the greatest listeners are the greatest conversationalists, so make sure you study Unit 7 on Listening for further mastery. Topic elicitation is a listening enterprise, so it will further enhance you to master all aspects of listening and eliciting. Conversations are the "building blocks of social life" (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2011, p. 24) and being able to elicit them enables you to build relationships, business opportunities, and a better life. In the next and final Module for this Unit, you will learn how to properly end a conversation.

Learning Activities

Activity 1: Speed Networking

Have your students form a row of desks facing each other. Then create a "speed networking event" where each pair of students holds a conversation for 2-3 minutes. When time is up, one row rotates one seat to the left or right, and the other row stays constant. Do a couple of rounds of this. Then discuss how openings and elicitation went in their conversations.

Activity 2: Listening Drill

Have your students break into pairs. Have one person be assigned the "speaker" role, and the other as the "listener." The speaker's job will be to talk about anything they want. The listener's job is to try to use all of the passive eliciting techniques (summarize, stare-nod, etc.) except for personal disclosure. The speaker should do most of the talking, but the listener should do most of the eliciting. Set a time limit and then have the partners switch roles. Then discuss how the techniques went.

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Glossary

General news announcements: Personal disclosures that you make as the initiator of conversation.

Itemized News Inquiries: Questions that inquire about a specific topic

Mentionable: A topic projected as conversation-worthy in a particular context.

Open elicitor: A broad question that does not suggest a particular topic.

Topic Curtailing: The practice of limiting topic expansion by using short answers.

Topicalization: The process of turning an idea or phrase into a conversation topic.

Topical Pivot: A specific idea or phrase in a statement that leads to either further expansion upon it or the introduction of a related topic to it.

Media

1. Breaking the habit of small talk

Watch this Ted Talk about how to get past small talk, aka: elicit deeper conversation. How do the principles relate to this Module? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkrWneKlNwM

2. The art of asking questions

Watch this Ted Talk about how to ask beter questions in conversation. Questions are used to elicit topics, and better questions lead to better topics. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZSY0PssqH0

9.4: Closing Conversation

Learning Objectives

- Differentiate kinds of closing sequences used in everyday conversation.
- Apply pre-closing techniques to effectively close conversation.

Closing Conversation

So far, you have learned to start a conversation and elicit topics to exchange varying levels of information ranging from clichés, facts, feelings, and personal values. For this final Module, you will learn how to end conversations gracefully.

There may be times when your partner may want to continue, but you will want to end the conversation. In this Module, you will learn about interactional challenges to exiting conversations. You will then learn about two types of conversational endings that will help you overcome those challenges, and specific pre-closing sequences that you can use to "tip" the ending of the conversation. Lastly, you will learn about how bids to ending conversation can be rejected, which can help you prepare for those situations accordingly.

Interactional Challenges

Just as the beginning of a conversation serves as a ritual, ending a conversation has a ritual procedure to it. Imagine a conversation that went like this:

A: Hi B!

B: Hi A!

A: So what's your favorite food?

B: I really like Mac and cheese.

A: Bye!

Reading the conversation above, you would think that B perhaps made a mistake in the answer or that A was rude in some way. Why did A suddenly just say "bye" without any warning or prompting? To end a conversation requires more than just saying "bye" at a given moment, there is a **pre-closing sequence** that generally precedes the "bye" (the **terminal exchange**). We will discuss these pre-closing sequences in-depth in a later section in this Module.

There are many reasons why you would end a conversation. Perhaps you have to go to your next class, you need to get started on a paper that you have been procrastinating, or you just reached your limit on conversation that day. In any case, there are three general challenges that face you when ending a conversation.

The first is relational vulnerability. Ending a conversation in a way that is unsatisfying to your partner can hurt the relationship. For example, if your partner is sharing a very deep thought with you in a phone conversation and you decide to abruptly hang up the phone, then your partner might perceive that as hurtful. When ending a conversation, we want to show that we still care about our partners' feelings and needs, while still attending to our reason for ending it. The methods by which we end the conversation speak to relational vulnerability.

The second challenge is ensuring finality of the conversation. Did your partner have the opportunity to mention the important topics that they hoped to discuss in this situation? Perhaps your partner called you and began talking about their day, you might wonder whether that was the purpose of the phone call or if there was some other "business" that they hoped to eventually discuss. Before you end a conversation, you want to make sure that your partner's needs were addressed before leaving them.

The third challenge is disengaging from the turn-taking system properly. When you need to leave, you may not want to abruptly interrupt your partner mid-sentence to announce your departure, unless it was truly some immediate emergency. Instead, you must wait for your turn to speak and then begin the process of bidding to end the conversation. However, if you have a partner who likes to take extended turns, this can be a challenge.

Now that you have learned three challenges to ending a conversation, you will learn how to end a conversation in a way that can satisfy each of them.

Pre-Closing Sequences

Let's say that you want to end a conversation with a partner. First, you will need to bid to end the conversation, and that is called a **pre-closing sequence**. A pre-closing sequence mutually establishes that the conversation should come to an end. A pre-closing sequence precedes a terminal exchange, which is the actual exchange of "goodbyes" or closings. We will discuss terminal exchanges in the next section. For now, there are a few pre-closing sequences that you can use as bids to end a conversation: warrants, arrangements, summaries, appreciations, solicitudes, and topic elicitors (Sidnell, 2010).

Warrants are pre-closing sequences where a partner announces a next activity that they must attend to that necessitates ending the conversation. Sample warrants can be, "I need to go study," "I need to get ready for work," and so forth. An example of a warrant in use would be A:

A: Well I gotta go to a meeting.

B: Ok then.

Warrants can be very broad ("I got to go") or very specific ("I need to pick up my kids from school in 10 minutes). In any case, they will indicate that the speaker is losing their ability to give any attention to the partner in conversation.

Arrangements offer to set up a future interaction to continue the conversation at a later time, since the speaker wants to end the conversation for now. Arrangements can be phrased like, "This is a very interesting topic. How about we continue this conversation tomorrow after work?" Just like warrants, arrangements can be very vague ("we should hang out sometime") or concrete ("how about we meet for coffee tomorrow at 5:00 at Starbuck's?). Arrangements can be paired with warrants or other pre-closing sequences.

Summaries recapitulate all business discussed in a conversation to indicate its ending. Suppose you call a friend who just had surgery. The first question you ask your friend is how the surgery went. After some conversation, you decide that you want to end the conversation. So you give a summary statement: "sounds like you're doing well then." Once your friend gives a reply that does not introduce any new topics, you can then bid to end the conversation.

Appreciations express some kind of appreciation or reward for your partner taking the time to converse with you. Suppose you are the person who just had surgery and you receive a phone call from a friend. Once you want to end the conversation, you might express an appreciation: "I appreciate you calling and checking in on me." If your partner does not topicalize that statement, then you can proceed to end the conversation with a terminal exchange sequence.

Sequence-closing sequences are bids to end the conversation based on the business proffered at the beginning of it. Suppose an employee comes to your office and says that they want to ask you a question. Once they have asked the question and you have answered, there might be some post-question conversation that will occur. A way to bid to end the conversation might be the employee saying, "Ok, well that was my question." Even utterances like "okay then" can work in a telephone conversation to end the original purpose of the call (Wright, 2010), or the word "well" in some cases (Heritage, 2015).

Solicitudes generally are well-wishes that you offer to someone as they embark on a next action. Common solicitudes are "have a nice day," "have a safe trip," or "I hope you enjoy your breakfast." You can use a solicitude to encourage your partner to move on to their next activity, without issuing a direct command. Suppose your partner mentions in the conversation that they are getting up early in the morning to go on a road trip. Later in the conversation you can initiate its ending by saying "Well, I hope you have a great trip tomorrow."

Lastly, you can use a ***topic elicitor*** as a method of closing. As you recall from eliciting conversation, you can just ask a general topic eliciting question, like "anything else new?". If your partner does not introduce any new topics, then you can use response as a reason to then terminate the conversation.

An important note about pre-closing sequences is that they depend on your partner accepting the pre-closing sequence by not introducing new topics. The particular closing sequence that you choose may also depend on the medium you are communicating in (Pojanapunya & Jaroenkitboworn, 2011). In the next section, you will learn how closing sequences can be rejected by the partner.

Two Types of Conversational Endings

There are two types of conversational endings: terminal exchanges and closing implicative situations. In this section, you will learn about both and why their differences matter.

Terminal exchanges occur after a pre-closing sequence where the speaker bids to end the conversation and the conversation partner either accepts the bid or rejects it (Sidnell, 2010). Terminal exchanges involve the partners cooperatively ending the conversation using phrases like "goodbye," "see you later," or "talk to you tomorrow." Conversational closure happens in these cases when both partners pass up on the opportunity to mention new topics. Terminal exchanges are your most typical way of imagining how a conversation ends; two partners work jointly to terminate the conversing. Here is how a terminal exchange works generally:

Pre-Closing Sequence

A: Bids to end conversation

B: Accepts bid to end conversation

Terminal Exchange

A: Offers terminal exchange

B: Accepts terminal exchange

Closing implicative situations occur when a feature of the environment or outside circumstances make ending the conversation a relevant next activity for the conversation partners. These situations do not require that the conversation ends, but it creates an option to do so. A common example would be when you are talking to your classmate right before class starts, and then the professor begins the lecture. When the lecture starts, ending your conversation right then is possible since both of you would want to pay attention to the lecture. In those cases, you do not need to do a pre-closing sequence or terminal exchange. You can just cease talking and then avert your attention to the lecture. One other example might be when you are being driven by a taxi and you arrive at your destination (Haddington, 2019), when you and your partner are walking and reach a destination (Broth & Mondada, 2013) or perhaps when you and your partner both finish your drinks at a café (Laurier, 2008). Closing implicative situations make both pre-closing sequences and terminal exchanges optional.

Overall, terminal exchanges occur when two partners cooperatively bid to end a conversation using typical terminal exchange phrases like "goodbye" or "later." Closing implicative situations may lead to the end of a conversation with the environment suggesting the bid to close, and the partners optionally bidding to say goodbye or not.

Rejection of Closing Sequences

There are two ways that your partner can reject a pre-closing sequence. First, they can topicalize the pre-closing sequence itself. Let's say that you try to end the conversation using a warrant. Here is what might happen:

A: I need to go pick up my kids from daycare.

B: Oh, what daycare do you go to? I've been looking for a new one for my toddler…

You can see that the pre-closing sequence was topicalized once A mentioned "daycare." Now A will face a delay in leaving, since B will take a turn.

The other way a closing sequence can be rejected is by topicalizing the terminal exchange, after "goodbyes" have been stated. For example:

A: It was great talking to you.

B: You too.

A: See you at the meeting tomorrow!

B: What meeting?

The final terminal statement of "meeting" was topicalized, which then creates a delay in ending the conversation.

Overall, rejection of closing sequences happens when something in pre-closing sequence or in the terminal exchanges gets topicalized. Acceptance of the closing sequence happens when a partner "passes up" the opportunity to introduce new topics. If you have a partner who is aware of your tone and body language, they should be able to infer that you need to go when you say so. However, not all partners are capable or willing to do this, so just reinitiate the closing sequence when this happens.

Conclusion

In this entire Unit, you learned the basic principles of conversation and how it works. You learned how to open a conversation with an unacquainted person. You then learned how to elicit topics at varying layers of intimacy to build rapport. Lastly, you learned how to close a conversation in a way that does not threaten the relationship and ensures finality.

Conversation is the lifeblood of relationships. It is the method by which we build rapport, chemistry, and all other feelings of psychological intimacy with others. Conversation is also a skill, which implies that some people perform better than others at it. Nevertheless, as a skill, every person has room for improvement and can always use additional practice. So practice your conversation skills every day with people you know, and also with people you do not know as well.

Learning Activities

Activity 1. Class Mingle

Have the students get out of their chairs and mingle with each other for 30 seconds. When 30 seconds are up, let them know that they need to end their conversations. Then have them switch partners after 60 seconds. Ask your students what types of closing sequences that they used.

Activity 2. Reflection

Ask your students to think of a time when they were "stuck" in a conversation. What kind of closing sequence did they use to get out of it?

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Glossary

Closing implicative situation: When a feature of the environment or outside circumstances make ending the conversation a relevant next activity for the conversation partners.

Pre-Closing Sequence: A sequence that mutually establishes that the conversation should start to come to an end. It precedes a terminal exchange sequence.

Terminal exchanges: The process by which two partners end a conversation by offering and accepting each other's final bids to close the conversation; the actual exchange of final "goodbyes" before the parties depart each other.

Media

1. **Seinfeld – Stuck in Conversation:** Watch this clip from the show Seinfeld where Jerry and Elaine develop a "signal" to get each other out of bad conversations. Only watch it up until 2:00, the last two minutes are unnecessary. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCFy9hUWOPA

2. **Stuck between two conversations:** Watch this clip about being stuck between a bad and a good conversation. What can the person do in this situation to maintain the relationship with the person she is stuck with? https://www.youtube.com/watch?

v=aEa2hbBDHYo

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Theories of Relational Communication

Learning Objectives

- Define a theory.
- Differentiate between theories that explain interpersonal interaction.
- Apply interpersonal communication theory propositions to real life scenarios.
- Explain how communication affects relationship development.
- Describe how uncertainty impacts our communication.
- Articulate how communication changes during different relationship stages.
- Describe the importance of affectionate communication in relationship interactions.
- Explain how interaction expectations affect interpersonal communication.
- Discuss how individuals manage private information in their everyday interactions.
- Discuss how our communication reflects tensions experienced in interpersonal relationships.
- Identify helpful elements of supportive communication.
- Describe the stages of relationship dissolution.

10.1: Relationship Development

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Explain how communication affects relationship development.
- Describe how uncertainty impacts our communication.
- Articulate how communication changes during different relationship stages

RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Imagine you walk into class on the first day of the semester. You sit down and start talking to one of your new classmates. What are the first three pieces of information you would share with each other? That initial conversation might involve each of you sharing 1) your name, 2) where you are from, and 3) maybe something like your college majors, which is all pretty basic information.

Now imagine you and this classmate become friends. At the end of the semester (e.g., 16 weeks later), you meet for coffee and talk about your class. What would be three pieces of information you might discuss then? Your conversation might include information like how you felt about the class, what your opinion was of the professor, and maybe what you learned.

In these situations, notice that the main change was in 1) the relationship and 2) the communication over time. For example, if these were real situations, you and your classmate would begin as acquaintances and perhaps later become friends. Your conversations would also likely start off with basic information (e.g., name, hometown, etc.), but progress in detail (e.g., talk more about feelings, opinions, ideas) as your friendship developed.

What we experience in these types of situations is what is often called **relationship development**. And as we mentioned, relationship development includes changes in the intimacy of the relationship (e.g., moving from classmates to friends), but also in the communication within the relationship (e.g., moving from sharing basic to more detailed information about each other).

To better understand the "How?" and "Why?" behind these common changes we experience in our relationships and communication, let's look at three interpersonal communication theories that help answer these questions.

Knapps relational stage model

Knapp's Relational Stage Model (RSM; Knapp, 1978) is a type of theory (i.e., a model) that helps explain how our communication changes as our relationships change. In most cases, we recognize when individuals come together (i.e., start a relationship) or come apart (i.e., end a relationship). But Knapp's (1978) RSM identifies 5 specific stages that usually occur during those two periods in a relationship.

Period	*Stage*	*Description*	*Example*
Coming Together	Initiating	First "contact" with another individual involving observation and initial assessment of mood, interest, attraction, personality, and interaction opportunity.	-"Hi! I'm Buddy. Your name is…?" -"I'm Jovie. Nice to meet you, Buddy!"
	Experimenting	Exchanges of surface-level information such as name, hometown, and other "small talk" topics in an effort to reduce uncertainty about each other	-"I gather you have an affinity for rhinos?" -"Yes! Do you too?"
	Intensifying	Increases in intimacy through greater depth of communication (i.e., sharing more intimate, personal information) and progressions of physical touch	-"I struggle with addiction." -"I had no idea. How can I help?"
	Integrating	A merging of "identities" marked by increasingly shared interests, opinions, social circles, possessions, routines, and understanding of one another	-"I just feel like we're soulmates." -"Same here. We are so much alike!"

	Bonding	Public “rituals” or markers acknowledging the relationship (e.g., posting a Facebook relationship status, going “Instagram official”, engagements, or weddings).	-“Did you know we got engaged?!” -“Yes! I saw your Instagram post!”
Coming Apart	*Differentiating*	*Progressive separation of interests, activities, hobbies, and “identities”. Shifts toward a more predominant concept of “I/You” versus “We” in the relationship*	*-“I want to see Lizzo on Saturday.”* *-“I don’t know why you like her music.”*
	Circumscribing	*Shifts toward less depth/breadth of shared information. Potential introduction of more topic avoidance and less intimacy in communication.*	*-“Why did you text your ex again?”* *-“Not your business. Anything else you want to discuss?”*
	Stagnating	*Perceptions that individuals have very little worth saying to each other. Expectations that communication often will be unpleasant, predictable, and pointless.*	*-“We’ve talked about this before.”* *-“Exactly! So what’s the point now?”*
	Avoiding	*More significant decreases in communication frequency (if any exists). Physical distancing and more explicit avoidance of one another occurs.*	*-“I’d rather go on the trip by myself.”* *-“I wasn’t planning on going with you.”*
	Terminating	*Decisive moves to psychologically and physically leave the relationship. Actions and communication targeted at achieving a final ending.*	*-“I’m not doing this anymore. It’s over.”* *-“Good. It was over years ago for me!”*

Figure 10.1.1: Knapp's Relational Stage Model

Knapp’s RSM proposes that our relationships can move through these various stages fast or slow, but we will generally experience these stages in this sequence. Additionally, our relationships may also move both forward and backward through these stages over time. But what about the communication? As you’ll notice in Figure 1, each stage includes a description of what our communication might look like at that time.

For example, if we return to the example of meeting a classmate for the first time, you would enter the “Initiating” stage as you sit down next to them and develop an initial first impression while probably introducing yourself. Your transition into the “Experimenting” stage would be marked by your choice to begin sharing information like your name, hometown, and college major.

To build on this example, think about another one of your current relationships, whether that is with a friend, co-worker, romantic partner, etc. Can you identify which stage your relationship is in? To do this, you would likely need to think about what your communication patterns looks like. How do they match up to the relationship stages outlined in Table 1?

You might be able to clearly identify your current “relationship stage” based on the KRSM, but it may also be difficult, especially if your current relationship communication patterns fit into a few different stages. And that is okay! The main idea is that the KRSM provides a general “model” that helps us understand 1) the common stages that our relationships move through and most importantly, 2) how our communication patterns will likely change as our relationships develop.

But do changes in our *relationships* create changes in our communication? Or do changes in our *communication* create changes in our relationships? These are difficult questions to definitively answer, but great to think about. So to help us think about these questions further (and potentially find some answers), let’s turn to our second theory: social penetration theory.

Social penetration theory

Social Penetration Theory (SPT) explains that communication is an important factor in interpersonal relationship development (Altman & Taylor, 1973). But more specifically, SPT focuses on self-disclosure as a primary mode through which relationship development occurs.

What exactly is self-disclosure though? Although definitions will vary, **self-disclosure** can be understood as "the intentional revelation of information about the self to another person through verbal communication" (Finkenauer, Kerkhof, & Pronk, 2018; p. 272). Notice the idea that self-disclosure involves 1) intention, 2) sharing information about one's self, and 3) *primarily* verbal communication.

So how does self-disclosure relate to relationship development? SPT says that self-disclosure and relationship development go hand-in-hand. Specifically, as individuals share more about themselves with each other, their relationship develops further.

Think back to our earlier example about you and your classmate. In that example, we said that the information you would likely *disclose* on the first day of class would be pretty basic: name, hometown, college major. However, as you learn more about each other, your relationship would likely develop to a point where you would be comfortable disclosing more private information like feelings, opinions, and ideas.

A common metaphor used to explain this process is an onion. When we initially meet someone, those first interactions usually involve "surface-level" information (i.e., the "outer layer" of the onion). But as you learn more about each other and share more private information (i.e., the "inner layers" of the onion), your relationship will develop further.

As we saw in the KRSM, SPT also explains relationship development is often marked by increases in both the *breadth* (i.e., variety or quantity) and *depth* (i.e., intimacy or privacy) of information shared.

As you can imagine, the more personal information you disclose to others (and the more they disclose to you), the closer you will feel with that person (Finkenauer & Buyukcan-Tetik, 2015). A great example of this is any of your current friendships. What did you know about your friends the first time you met them (before you were friends)?

You probably knew very little about them. They were likely just acquaintances, co-workers, or classmates when you first met. However, you learned more about each other as you disclosed more personal information to each other. And through this process, you grew closer in your relationship (i.e., moved from just being classmates to being good friends).

In this way, we see how self-disclosure and relationship development go hand-in-hand: the more that is disclosed, the more that is learned, the more a relationship is developed. And this process is central to how SPT answers the question of how communication and relationship development are connected.

However, has someone ever told you something about themselves that you made you think, "Oh, wow…okay, I'm *not* interested in developing this relationship *any* further." If you're like most people, this probably has happened at some point. So how does this example (i.e., more disclosure = *less* relationship development) fit with SPT?

Although this example seems to contradict SPT, it still demonstrates the tie between communication and relationship development, but in a different way. For example, instead of penetrating deeper into the "inner layers of the onion", disclosures can have the opposite effect where we move "outward" and away (i.e., gradually less communication and less intimacy in the relationship over time). SPT uses the term social *depenetration* for this effect.

In summary, SPT provides helpful explanations for *how* communication and relationship development are linked. Specifically, we have learned that as individuals share more about themselves with each other (i.e., engage in self-disclosure), their relationship develops further.

But what about the question of "Why?" For example, *why* do we see communication and relationship development work in this way? *Why* does learning more information about other people (via self-disclosure) make us more comfortable with developing the relationship (or terminating the relationship)?

To answer this question, we turn to our third theory: uncertainty reduction theory.

Uncertainty reduction theory

Have you ever used online dating apps? If so, after you find someone who might be a good match, what would you do next? Do you try to find out more about this person? If, let's say, you go out for a date with this person, what would you say and do?

Uncertainty reduction theory (URT; Berger & Calabrese, 1975) explains that individuals' initial interactions with strangers. According to URT, individuals reduce uncertainty in order to make explanations and predictions about their conversational partners in the initial stage of relationship development. There are seven predictions about how people reduce uncertainty displayed in Figure 3 below.

URT highlights two types of uncertainty. **Cognitive uncertainty** reflects the ambiguity about conversational partners' beliefs and attitudes (e.g., whether the person likes you). **Behavioral uncertainty** entails questions about the appropriateness and desirability of conversational partners' behaviors (e.g., why the person drives you home after the date).

One of the most important contributions of URT is the detailed explanations of how the processes of uncertainty reduction play our in everyday relationships.

Process	*Description*
1	As uncertainty *decreases*, the amount of verbal communication between strangers increases
2	As uncertainty *decreases*, nonverbal expressiveness increases
3	As uncertainty *increases*, information-seeking behaviors increase
4	As uncertainty *increases*, intimacy decreases
5	As uncertainty *increases*, similarity in communication styles between conversational partners increases
6	Similarities between individuals can reduce uncertainty
7	As uncertainty *increases*, liking decreases

Figure 10.1.2 Processes of Uncertainty Reduction

For example, Berger and Bradac (1982) specified three conditions that activate uncertainty reduction in initial encounters. Specifically, individuals are motivated to reduce uncertainty when 1) their conversational partner is rewarding, 2) the person's behaviors deviate from social norms, and 3) the possibility of future interactions increases.

So think about the last time you "Facebook stalked" someone you just met on Tinder. What motivated you to do that? Maybe it's because the person is attractive and has a high-paying job (i.e., the person is rewarding); maybe it's because the person strikes you as sincere and genuine (which deviates from what you would expect from people on Tinder), or maybe it's because the person is in the same town as you are and he/she has asked you out for dinner (i.e., the possibility of future interactions increase).

Current research has used URT to help explain how people use uncertainty reduction specifically in on-again/off-again relationships (i.e., relationships were partners break up and get back together multiple times). For example, Blight et al. (2019) found that people tend to use more passive strategies (e.g., Facebook surveillance) than active strategies (e.g., viewing their partner's Facebook page from a friend's account).

URT has also been helpful to researchers in understanding how people use uncertainty reduction strategies when seeking health information online. For example, Lin et al. (2016) found that people disclose more personal information when they use more uncertainty reduction behaviors online. In other words, people might be more willing to disclosure their own personal information if that coincides with them getting information they want (e.g., when they are seeking information about a prescription).

In summary, uncertainty reduction theory provides a useful explanation for why we use many information-seeking behaviors within interpersonal relationships. And together with the previous two theories (Social Penetration Theory, Knapp's Relational Stage Model), this first module has provided some helpful explanations for *how* and *why* our communication patterns and strategies affect, and are affected by, the processes of relationship development.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: A "Friendly" Case Study: Identifying Elements of Uncertainty Reduction

1. Watch "Friends – Season 9: Episode 3: https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6tcsdt
2. Watch the 10:00-11:44 / 13:47-15:55 minute mark
3. In this Friends episode "The One with a Pediatrician", Joey tries to find a date for Phoebe. On the date night, Mike, the guy who Joey finds in the café, is asked to pretend to know Joey well. Phoebe asks Mike many questions during the date in order to

know how Joey and Mike are related, and later angrily finds out that Mike does not know Joey at all.
4. Application Question: Which processes of URT are demonstrated in this episode?

Activity 2: Relationship Mapping Exercise: Think – Pair – Share

a. Instructions for Students

1. Identify one close relationship they have with someone outside of their own family.
2. Create a "timeline" (on a scrap piece of paper or in their notes) beginning with when they met this person and ending today.
3. Divide the timeline into four parts (i.e., draw four lines along your timeline).
4. For each line and starting at the beginning of the timeline, briefly write down 1) what you knew about them and 2) what you talked about at that point in your relationship
5. After completing this, find a partner.

b. Instructions for Partners

1. Discuss the relationship you used for your timeline and see how 1) what you knew and 2) what you talked about changed at the different points on timeline, from when your first met this person to today.

c. Instructions for Class

1. Gather observations from students about changes they observe in what they knew and what they talked about with this person over time.
2. Discuss how these observations might demonstrate (or not demonstrate) how these Module 1 theories describe communication and relationship development.

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GLOSSARY

Behavioral uncertainty: Questions about the appropriateness and desirability of conversational partners' behaviors

Cognitive uncertainty: Ambiguity about conversational partners' beliefs and attitudes

Self-disclosure: Intentionally sharing private information about yourself with another individual

Relationship development: A change in intimacy and closeness between two individuals

10.2: Relationship Interactions

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Describe the importance of affectionate communication in relationship interactions.
- Explain how interaction expectations affect interpersonal communication.
- Discuss how individuals manage private information in their everyday interactions.

RELATIONSHIP INTERACTIONS

We engage in social interaction every day with many different people, such as friends, family members, romantic partners, classmates, and even strangers. Each of those interactions and relationships brings with it a host of complexities that influence our communication.

For example, think about how your relationship with someone influences your expectations for the kind of affection you want to share with them. With a family member, sharing affection may not be weird at all and likely welcomed. However, sharing affection with strangers is likely not something we would be as comfortable with in most cases. So what it is about some relationships that make us okay with receiving affection, but in other relationships it is not okay?

Furthermore, consider what information you are willing to share with people. Does that differ based on our relationship with them? If you're like most people, the answer is yes. For example, you would probably be willing to share your name, hometown, and maybe your favorite ice cream flavor with mostly anyone. But what about your religious views, family history, or personal insecurities? That type of information would likely be more closely guarded.

So we come back to the question of *why* and *how*. Why do we engage in affectionate communication with some people and not others? Why might it bother us if someone violates our expectations for who can share affection with us? How do we determine what information we are okay sharing with people (e.g., name, hometown) and what information we are *not* okay sharing with people (e.g., religious views, personal insecurities)?

To help address these questions, this module will introduce three theories that explain important aspects of everyday relationship interactions. The three theories we will discuss are 1) affection exchange theory, 2) expectancy violations theory, and 3) communication privacy management theory.

Affection Exchange Theory

Affection Exchange Theory (AET) focuses on questions about why humans communicate affection to each other, as well as why affectionate communication is important (Floyd, 2001). To answer these questions of "Why?", AET relies on two different ideas:

Idea #1: From an evolutionary perspective, developing close relationships is a fundamental need for us to achieve two critical evolutionary objectives: survival and procreation.

Idea #2: Affectionate communication helps facilitate relationship development and thus, improves chances of survival and procreation (Floyd, 2006).

But what does "affectionate communication" look like? As you might imagine, affection can be communicated in various ways. However, Floyd and Morman (1998) identified three distinct categories of affectionate communication.

Type	Example
Nonverbal	• Hold hands • Kiss on lips or cheek • Sit close together • Hug each other
Verbal	• Say "You're my best friend." • Say "You're a good friend." • Say "I love you" • Say "I like you"

Support	• Help each other with problems • Give each other compliments • Praise each other's accomplishments • Acknowledge each other's birthday

Table 10.2.1: Categories of Affection Communication

Take a moment and consider these examples. Can you think of a time when someone said or did something like this for you or with you? How did it make you feel? If you're like most people, receiving these types of affectionate communication usually makes us feel really good!

Actually, beyond just "good feelings", research shows that both giving *and* receiving affectionate communication yields significant benefits. But it is also important to note that receiving less affectionate communication than you desire can also be detrimental.

When People…	*They Tend to Experience…*	*Research Citation*
Receive affection often…	• Better mental health • Greater self-esteem • Being less depressed • Being less stressed	Aloia & Brecht, 2017
Give affection often…	• Greater happiness • Greater self-esteem • Being less depressed • Being less stressed	Floyd, 2002
Don't receive as much affection as they desire…	• More feelings of loneliness • More routine physical pain • Being more stressed • Lower quality sleep	Floyd, 2014; 2016

Table 10.2.2: Benefits of Giving and Receiving Affection

In summary, AET provides a compelling explanation for why affectionate communication is so important to us as humans. Specifically, we have learned that affectionate communication is not only important to developing and maintaining close relationships, but it also yields significant physical, mental, and emotional benefits as well.

So does that mean we should start hugging everybody? No, not necessarily. All of us have different "limits" for how much affection we desire. For example, you might have a very high limit of desired affection with a romantic partner (i.e., we prefer more affection from people we are close to). But with a stranger, you probably have a very low limit of desired affection (i.e., we prefer less affection from people we don't know).

Therefore, the type of relationship we have with other people (e.g., friends, co-workers, romantic partners, etc.) will likely influence how much affectionate communication we desire from them, as well as what our expectations are for how they communicate affection to us. In turn, to experience the benefits of affectionate communication, we need to make sure it fits within the expectations of our relationships and the affection limits of the people in those relationships.

But what if someone gives us more affectionate communication than we expect or want? In other words, what happens when those expectations or limits are broken? Would that bother you? If your romantic partner gives you more affectionate communication than you expect, that would probably be viewed positively. However, if this happens with a classmate, you might not appreciate that very much, especially if its nonverbal in nature.

To dig into this deeper, we might question *why* it is okay when some people break these types of expectations, but not okay when others do it. How do we make those determinations? These types of questions about when people break communication expectations are quite common, yet difficult to answer at times. To help find some potential answers, we turn to our attention to the second theory in this module: expectancy violations theory.

Expectancy Violations Theory

Think about the last time you flew on an airplane. What were your expectations for how that would go? What would the flight be like? Specifically, what would the flight attendants do or say?

We generally have expectations for what flight attendants should do before taking off, such as making sure everyone finds their seat, reminding all passengers to fasten their seat belts, and performing the safety instructions. Some of us could probably even predict what they will say if we've traveled quite a bit.

However, imagine if your flight attendant did not make any announcement about seat belts or communicate any safety instructions. What if they performed no safety checks? What if all they did was say, "Welcome!" and then make a few jokes about crash landings. How would you feel? What would you do? If you're like most people, you might be pretty concerned and even scared! Why? This would most likely be due to the flight attendants drastically violating your expectations of what they should be doing.

Expectancy violations theory (EVT; Burgoon, 1978; Burgoon & Jones, 1976; Burgoon & Hale, 1988) initially explained the consequences of when people violate social norms and expectations about individuals' nonverbal behaviors, specifically those about personal space. For example, think of the time when a coworker stands awkwardly close to you. EVT would say that the way they handle personal space certainly violates your expectations.

EVT was later applied to both verbal *and* nonverbal encounters in a variety of communication contexts, such as emotional communication (Burgoon, 1993) and computer-mediated communication (e.g., Ramirez & Wang, 2008). The primary assumption of EVT is that individuals hold **expectations/expectancies** for interpersonal encounters and use them as frameworks to make sense of the world around them.

These expectations are influenced by individual, relational, and contextual factors. When individuals' expectations are violated (i.e., **expectancy violations**), their attention is deviated from the event to the violation; they experience heightened emotional and physiological reactions, and they try to assess and explain the violation (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). In essence, EVT explains both how people respond to unexpected communication incidents and why they do so.

Let's go back to the example presented at the beginning. The unusual behaviors of the flight attendant will certainly violate your expectations, and you probably will stop what you are doing (deviate your attention to the violation), start to feel knots in your stomach (heightened emotional and physiological reactions), and try to figure out what is going on about the flight attendant (assess and explain the violation). Hopefully no one would ever experience something like this!

According to Burgoon (1993), **communicator reward valence**, or the extent to which a communicator is positively or negatively perceived, encompasses an array of characteristics, such as physical attractiveness, competence, and intelligence. People often make a quick calculation of all the available characteristics of a communicator and then assess the potential benefits interaction with the communicator might offer.

But why does this matter? Communicator reward valence affects how people interpret and evaluate expectancy violations (i.e., whether the violation is important or unimportant and if it is desirable or undesirable). The result of the interpretation and evaluation process is what is called **violation valence**, which refers to how positive or negative we view a violation to be. It entails both the direction (i.e., positive or negative) and the magnitude (e.g., how much a violation deviates from an individual's expectation) of the valence.

Let's think about an example here to illustrate the process. You unexpectedly find out that your friend, Bob, who you have perceived as kind and trustworthy (communication reward valence), is cheating on his girlfriend. You've tried your best to figure out why Bob is doing this (interpretation and evaluation). Maybe he is unhappy with his relationship? Maybe his girlfriend is also cheating on him? Regardless of the reasons for his infidelity, you believe that Bob's behavior is quite unacceptable and wrongful (violation valence), and you decide to talk with him and give him a wake-up call.

It is important to note that early literature on relationship violations generally views violations as negative, but EVT explains that not all violations are negative and some are even favorable (Burgoon, 2015). Think about that time when an attractive stranger pays for your Starbucks order. That would be quite an unexpected, but delightful, surprise, right? So keep in mind that "expectancy violations" can be both positive and negative.

In summary, EVT provides a helpful perspective in understanding situations in which our expectations about social interactions are violated in some way. To help tie together a lot of what you have learned here, check out this video that provides a summary of the concepts and principles of EVT.

As you have likely experienced, our expectations are often violated by many different people, such as our friends, family members, romantic partners, and even strangers. One way that our expectations are often violated is in how people manage or share our

private information. For example, if your friend were to share one of your biggest secrets with someone else, that might violate your expectation for how your friend was supposed to behave and specifically how they were supposed to protect your information.

In order to reduce the chance of this type of expectancy violation, you may engage in conversations with your friend to set up rules to about how they should protect your private information. But how would we come up with these types of rules? Why would we feel those rules even necessary?

To help answer some of these questions about how we manage our private information, we turn to our third theory in this module: communication privacy management theory.

Communication Privacy Management Theory

Put yourself into this scenario: Your best friend, Anna, came up to you. She took a deep breath and said, "Okay, I am gonna tell you something, but you must promise that you won't tell anyone else. Jake and I just broke up." How would you feel? What would you say to her?

Communication privacy management (CPM) theory (Petronio, 2002) addresses the process of disclosing private information to others. Grounded in the assumption that individuals experience consistent tensions between revealing and concealing private information, CPM presents **a rule-based system** in which individuals make decisions to disclose or conceal private information and coordinate privacy management with others (Petronio, 2002).

CPM uses a boundary metaphor to explain the mechanisms through which individuals and collectives manage private information and coordinate privacy management. Unlike other theories on disclosure and privacy, it particularly highlights the role confidants play in the privacy management process.

Petronio (2004) has articulated five core principles of CPM explaining how a rule-based privacy management system functions. The first two principles lay out the foundational assumption of CPM by presuming individuals' perceptions about private information. Principle one states that people believe they have the **ownership** of their private information.

Due to the perception of possessing private information, people believe they have the right to control and regulate the dissemination of their private information, as principle two claims. For instance, when you are back home during winter break, your uncle may welcome you with all kinds of questions about your study, your social life at college, and your romantic relationship. You may feel a bit irritated as you believe that you own your private information and you have the right to choose whom you want to disclose the information to.

The third principle centers around privacy rule development. It proposes that people develop certain rules regarding whether to make the privacy boundary open or to keep it closed. Petronio (2002) identifies five criteria (i.e., culture, gender, motivation, risk and benefit ratio, specific contexts) people use to set up privacy management rules.

The culture we belong to, our gender and that of the confidant influence whether we choose to disclose or not. For example, there might be specific reasons why Anna decides to tell you about her breakup (e.g., to seek support). Additionally, she probably has considered the risks and benefits associated with disclosing and the context in which the disclosure should happen.

The fourth principle explains what happens when people disclose private information to others. According to CPM, individuals who reveal private information to others make others the **co-owners** of the private information. New privacy rules are thus needed to be negotiated so that all stakeholders are clear about their roles in managing the private information. According to CPM, there are three types of rules that are often discussed and negotiated: boundary linkage, boundary ownership, and boundary permeability (Petronio, 2010).

Boundary linkage refers to the considerations about whether co-owners of private information are allowed to grant access to others into the privacy boundary, and if so, the criteria for selecting new confidants privy to the information. Boundary ownership represents how much control co-owners independently have with regard to the management of private information. Boundary permeability involves concerns about how much private information can flow out of the boundary.

Going back to the example we talked about at the beginning of this module. Your best friend Anna told you that she broke up with her boyfriend Jake but did not want you to tell anyone else. This is an effort to establish privacy rules. Maybe a few days later, you said to Anna: "Kelly has been worrying about you since she hasn't seen you at the sorority gatherings. Do you think I can tell her that you broke up with Jake? Or at least you are having some issues with your relationship?"

Here, you are negotiating existing privacy rules with Anna, particularly about whether you have the control to distribute the information (boundary ownership), whether you can grant Kelly the access to the private information (boundary linkage), and if so,

how much you can share (boundary permeability).

The fifth principle considers the consequences of ineffective and unsuccessful boundary coordination. CPM predicts that **boundary turbulence** (e.g., unwanted intrusion, misunderstanding, interpersonal conflicts) will occur when expectations for privacy management are unmet; when privacy rules are violated by one or more of the co-owners, or when the privacy rules are unclear (e.g., fuzzy boundaries).

CPM has been a helpful perspective for researchers studying the management of private information in various contexts. For example, Brannon and Rauscher's (2019) study indicated that that boundary permeability was associated with how individuals responded to discussions about sexually transmitted infections (e.g., caring more for the partner or protecting oneself). Ledbetter's (2019) research suggested that family communication patterns were associated with the degree of parental privacy invasions and children's privacy defense during the first year of college.

At this point, you have been able to learn quite a bit about CPM, as well as the way this theory explains the processes and rules for how we manage our private information. To help tie this all together, let's take a look at the following video, which summarizes the main ideas discussed in this video.

With all of this in mind, the next time your friend tells you some private information and expect you to keep it to yourself, hopefully you can remember CPM. You can realize that you are included as the co-owner of your friend's private information and that it's better to clearly communicate about privacy rules for that information so that you don't get into trouble later!

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Identifying Factors of Expectancy Violations

1. Review the video clip from the movie "Love Actually:" https://youtu.be/2y-8vxObugM
2. Gather student perceptions of the context and what is happening.

- In short, Karen accidentally finds out a fancy gold necklace in her husband, Harry's coat pocket, and assumes that it is his Christmas gift for her. However, she ends up unwrapping a Joni Mitchell CD from Harry. Clearly, the gold necklace is not meant for her but for someone else. Although Karen is not fully aware of what is going on, we as audience know that Harry has an extramarital relationship with his secretary Mia.

3. Ask students to apply expectancy violations theory to this situation using the following prompt:

- Based on what we know about EVT, what factors might influence Karen's interpretation and evaluation of the fact that her husband gives a fancy necklace to someone other than her?

Activity 2: Comparing Affection Exchange Theory & the Pop Culture "5 Love Languages"

1. Introduce the concept of the "5 Love Languages" to student. The concept may be verbally introduced or students can individually have review the "5 Love Languages" website: https://www.5lovelanguages.com/
2. Review how each love language is defined.
3. Ask students to compare the categories of affectionate communication described by AET and the five love languages.

- What similarities do you see?
- How do they match up?

4. An additional step to this exercise might be to have students complete…

- The "Love Languages Quiz: https://www.5lovelanguages.com/quizzes/

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GLOSSARY

Affection: Feelings of liking, fondness.

Boundary turbulence: The relational outcomes that occur when expectations for privacy management are unfulfilled.

Communicator reward valence: The extent to which a communicator is positively or negatively perceived.

Expectancy violations: Specific communication behaviors that are recognizably discrepant from one's expectations and cause heightened emotional and psychological reactions.

Expectations/expectancies: The collection of one's judgments on and perceptions about what communication behaviors are feasible, appropriate, and typical in a particular setting.

Violation valence: The degree to which an unexpected behavior is perceived as positive or negative.

Co-owners: Individuals who have access to others' private information; also called confidants.

Ownership: The right and entitlement one perceives to have regarding the possession and dissemination of their private information.

Rule-based system: Refers to the systematic process of private information management as explained by CPM theory.

10.3: Relationship Challenges

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Discuss how our communication reflects tensions experienced in interpersonal relationships.
- Identify helpful elements of supportive communication.
- Describe the stages of relationship dissolution.

RELATIONSHIP CHALLENGES

Interpersonal relationships are an important part of our everyday life. These relationships, whether they are friendships, family relationships, or romantic relationships, can offer very rewarding benefits, such as love, support, affection, and a sense of belonging. However, as you have likely experienced, not everything in our day-to-day relationships is "roses and sunshine".. Relationships can also bring about some difficult challenges.

For example, conflict involving competing needs or desires can introduce challenges into a relationship. You may want to just chill and watch Netflix by yourself next Saturday, but your friends want you to come to a party. Alternatively, maybe your parents want to know everything about how your classes are going, but you also feel like your classes are your business, not theirs.

Other relationship challenges emerge when we are confronted with a significant challenge or problems. For example, if one of your friends is worried because she found out she is probably going to fail a class, what would you do? What would you tell her? Perhaps another friend tells you he found out he lost his job and doesn't know how he will pay for school. How would you respond?

Another challenge some people face is when their relationship is headed for a breakup or has already ended. For example, imagine your friend was just dumped by his girlfriend and needs help getting over the breakup. How would you respond to that situation? What if another friend is still in a relationship, but thinks it's going nowhere. How do you think she would handle that?

The questions presented within these examples are difficult ones without any easy answer. However, this third module introduces a set of three theories that might actually be helpful in better understanding some of the relationship challenges mentioned in these examples. The three theories we will focus on here are relational dialectics theory, the dual process theory of supportive communication, and the relationship dissolution model.

Relational Dialectics Theory

Relational Dialectics Theory (RDT; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) broadly explains that our communication is an important factor in how we see (or understand our) relationships. RDT demonstrates this through two important ideas.

Idea #1: Communication does not just *occur within* relationships, but rather relationships exist *because of* communication.

Idea #2: We come to understand our relationships based on various "tensions" that are reflected in our communication.

Since those two ideas may sound a bit odd, let's dig into them a bit more with some examples. First, let's talk about **Idea #1**…

Think about the last time you were in the grocery store and saw an individual that you did not know. At that moment, you had never communicated with that individual and thus did not share any type of relationship with them. However, if you were to approach them and say, "Hey! I like your Dallas Cowboys t-shirt. Are you from Dallas?" The communication you share (assuming they respond) begins to construct the relationship you share, even if your only communication with them is in that moment.

For example, consider the different ways that individual might respond. They might say, "Yeah! I'm from Dallas and have been a Cowboys fan all my life!" or "No, not from Dallas. I just wear it because my partner likes the Cowboys. I actually hate football." How might your relationship change? You might have more or less in common with them depending on your interests and which response you get. Regardless, that interaction and the communication you share begins constructing your relationship in some way.

Now let's turn to **Idea #2** and talk about how our communication about "tensions" we experience shapes how we come to understand our relationships. But first, let's take a minute to define "tensions". RDT uses the concept of **tensions** to describe competing needs or desires (i.e., dialectics) that we often experience within relationships. In other words, these tensions are like an ever-shifting game of "tug of war" between various needs or desires that we have.

For example, maybe you've wanted reassurance, comfort, and support from your parents during a difficult time. But you've also likely desired independence at some point (i.e., the ability to make your own decisions rather than be told what to do). This would

be an example of competing desires of connection and autonomy: at times, we want to be close to our parents, but other times we want to be independent or more distant.

RDT proposes that we experience three primary tensions (i.e., competing needs or desires) within our interpersonal relationships: connection vs. autonomy, certainty vs. uncertainty, and openness vs. closedness. Figure 7 describes these tensions further.

Connection vs. Separation	
The desire for…	*Can be described as…*
Connection	The need to feel close, connected, together
Autonomy	The need to feel independent, self-sufficient, separate

Certainty vs. Uncertainty	
The desire for…	*Can be described as…*
Certainty	The need for stability, predictability, consistency
Uncertainty	The need for spontaneity, novelty, excitement

Openness vs. Closedness	
The desire for…	*Can be described as…*
Openness	The need for full disclosure, honesty, mutual information sharing
Closedness	The need for selective disclosure, privacy, individual information ownership

Figure 10.3.1: Description of Dialectical Tensions

Now that we understand these relationship tensions, let's think about how we might see evidence of these tensions in our relationship talk. Fox et al. (2014) provide a great example in their study exploring the role of Facebook in adult romantic relationships. Although their study examined many aspects of Facebook, one specific focus was on the idea of making a relationship "Facebook official." Fox et al. (2014) provide the following quote from a research participant:

"*When we first started dating, we had to have that conversation of, "Okay, are we ready to make it Facebook official?" Because we had both come out of, like, rough relationships before. Like, do we want those people to know that we're in a relationship? Like, do we feel comfortable with essentially the rest of [xxx] knowing that we're in a relationship? We were exclusively dating each other, but we weren't ready to make it public online*" (p. 530).

If we were to use RDT to make sense of this quote, what stands out to you? Hopefully you can see some relationship tensions emerging. Using an RDT perspective allows us to better understand this individual's relationship experiences by examining how they communicate about their relationship, as well how their communication highlights the tensions that they experience.

For example, hopefully you can see how the "Openness vs. Closedness" tension is present, particularly in the relationship between the couple and their social network (i.e., should we be open about our relationship on Facebook or not?). You may also sense a possible "Connection vs. Separation" tension, especially when it comes to tensions in whether we communicate our Facebook identities as being separate ("Single") or connected ("In a Relationship").

Now that we understand the tensions on which RDT often focuses, it is worth noting that RDT is often misinterpreted and limited as being a theory that simply explains the types of tensions we experience in relationships. Rather, RDT is concerned with how studying these tensions allows us to better understand how individuals make sense of their relationships.

Most specifically, RDT "is a theory of the meaning-making between relationship parties that emerges from the interplay of competing discourses [i.e., tensions]" (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008; p. 349). It is through resolving and managing the tensions that emerge in our communication with others that we get a better understanding about who we are and how we relate to others.

For an example of how this might happen, consider the following quote from Simmons et al.'s (2013) study about African-American students' experiences in higher education:

"***Student 1*** *(female): As a group, we do not need the university to recognize us. We can make it on our own.*

Student 2 *(male): No, we don't need them, but still, if we want an education, if we want financial aid, we can't piss 'em off. We have to extend the hand.*

Student 1 *(female): But is it worth selling ourselves out in order to be a part of this university? We should be able to achieve it on our own.*

Student 3 *(female): Saying we should do it on our own is like you think everybody who belongs to a group or ethnicity shouldn't give or receive help from anyone else. That's the problem with our culture. We don't know when to stand up and fight and when to join hands in unity.*

Student 2 *(male): It's just hard to know when to "play the game" and when to assert yourselves.*

Student 3 *(female): It's not about getting help, it is about being a part of the university, this community. Do we want to be or not?*

Student 1 *(female): Sure, we want to be recognized, to be a part. But how? Life is just easier when I'm just with my [African-American peers]"* (p. 386).

First, we see the tension of "Connection vs. Autonomy" emerge in the students' struggle in determining their desired connection with the university and their desired autonomy or separation from the university. Second, for the students, these quotes also demonstrate how communicating about these tensions illuminates an understanding of who they are and how they relate to others (i.e., autonomous African-American students connected to the dominant White culture of the university).

In summary, RDT provides a unique way of explaining how communication affects our relationships, but also how our communication reflects the various tensions that we experience within our relationships. And as we mentioned before, the process of managing these tensions helps us get a better understanding about who we are and how we relate to others.

Doesn't managing these tensions get difficult at times though? Yes, at times, that can be a challenging "tug of war" within our relationships. But whether we face managing relationship tensions or other relationship challenges, it may be useful to consider how seeking advice, support, or assistance from others might be beneficial for us amidst such challenges.

Therefore, to help us explore this idea of obtaining this type of support for ourselves or giving it to others, let's turn to our second theory in this module: the dual-process theory of supportive communication.

Dual-Process Theory of supportive communication

The Dual-Process Theory of Supportive Communication (DPTSC; Burleson, 2009) broadly explains 1) how supportive communication works and 2) why some supportive communication interactions produce positive results while others do not. But what exactly do we mean by "supportive communication"? As in many cases, definitions will vary. However, most researchers define **supportive communication** as "verbal and nonverbal behavior produced with the intention of providing assistance to others perceived as needing that aid" (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002, p. 374).

So in short, we could say that supportive communication happens when we attempt to help others in some way. For example, if you've ever given a friend advice about a problem, offered condolences to a coworker for a lost loved one, or provided a family member encouragement when they were facing a major life challenge, then you've engaged in supportive communication. But is supportive communication always helpful or effective?

DPTSC says that not all supportive communication is helpful. But to determine what leads to supportive communication *actually* being helpful, DPTSC explains that there are three important characteristics that predict effective and helpful supportive communication interactions:

Characteristic #1: The listener is highly motivated to pay attention and process the message.

Examples of what often influences motivation include the severity of the problem, message timing, and how much control the listener feels like they have in solving the problem.

For instance, listeners would likely have much higher motivation to carefully process supportive messages after realizing they failed a class than after they simply lost 50 Instagram followers (i.e., significant differences in severity of problem and control over solving the problem).

Characteristic #2: The listener is able to effectively process and understand the message.

The ability to process and understand a supportive message can depend on simple factors like distractions and age, as well as more complex factors like cognitive complexity (i.e., the ability to understand more complex ideas and messages).

For example, if you gave the same supportive message to an 8-year old and a 23-year old, their cognitive complexity and ability to process the message would vary greatly. So you would likely need to adapt your message depending on who you are talking with.

Characteristic #3: The message is high-quality.

The quality of supportive messages is often influenced by clearly communicating an intention to be helpful and adhering to politeness norms, as well as acknowledging, affirming, and supporting the perspectives and feelings of the listener (i.e., **verbal person centeredness**).

For example, if your friend was devastated by being unexpectedly dumped by their long-time boyfriend, a low-quality (and likely offensive) message might be, "You'll get over it. He was a jerk anyway." (i.e., the message contains no communication of a helpful intent and a dreadful lack of verbal person-centeredness).

In contrast, a higher-quality message might be, "I'm so sorry (*effort at social politeness after a loss*). I certainly understand why you feel so hurt and how losing such an important part of your life is so devastating right now (*acknowledging and affirming listener's feelings).* I want to support and help you get through this however I can (*communication of helpful intent).*

So what does this mean for you? First, recognize that you have a significant amount of control in shaping the supportive communication you share with others.

Although we may not be able to control a listener's motivation (Characteristic #1), you do control how you can adapt your message based on what you know about your listener, such as their age and the context (Characteristic #2). Furthermore, you also control the content (i.e., what you say) and delivery (i.e., how you say it) of the supportive communication messages you share with others (Characteristic #3).

Second, because of this, you contain the profound ability to have a positive impact on others by providing effective supportive communication during times of need. But remember that not all attempts at providing supportive communication are helpful. The quality of the communication matters. Thankfully, DPTSC provides some useful explanations that help us identify factors 1) that predict the helpfulness of supportive communication and 2) that we can control to make our supportive communication as helpful as possible.

If we consider *when* we might need to provide support to other people, the possibilities are endless. However, one situation where people often need a lot of support is during what is called relationship dissolution (i.e., break ups, divorce, etc.). But as with any communication situation, our ability to provide support during these times would likely benefit from better understanding what people are actually experiencing in the relationship dissolution process.

So to help provide some understanding of this process, let's turn to our third theory in this module: the model of relationship dissolution.

A model of relational dissolution

Earlier in this unit, we presented Altman and Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory (SPT) delineating how self-disclosure facilitates relationship development. As you might also remember, the authors of SPT also proposed a model of relational depenetration as a reverse process of relational development. During relational depenetration, the width and depth of disclosure decrease, and the perceived intimacy lessens. The relational depenetration process conceptually corresponds with the process of relational dissolution (Rollie & Duck, 2006).

Scholars have been coming up with ways to describe and explain the process of relational dissolution; one example is Duck's (1982) Model of Relational Dissolution. Duck proposed that relational dissolution generally involves four distinct phases: **intrapsychic phase**, **dyadic phase, social phase**, and the **grave-dressing phase**.

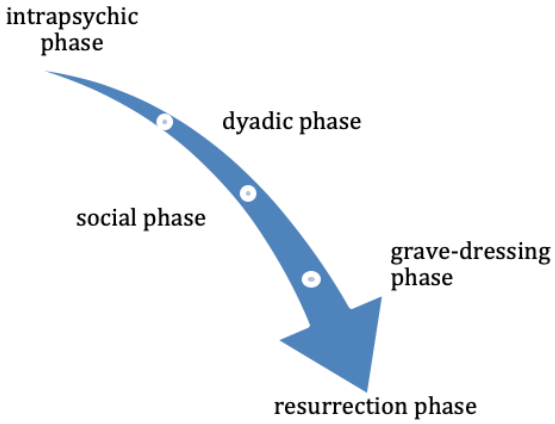

Figure 10.3.2: Relational Dissolution Model

In the intrapsychic phase, individuals brood over issues that bother them in their relationships, such as whether they are compatible with each other and where the future of the relationship is. They then are likely to make an internal decision about whether to continue the relationship or not.

In the dyadic phase, individuals communicate with their romantic partners regarding their thoughts and feelings about the current and future states of their relationships. At this point, both partners may make a decision about the possibility of repairing the amended relationship, postponing changing the current status of the relationship, or terminating their relationship. When one partner insists on breakup or when both partners agree with the decision of relational dissolution, they will enter into the next phase: the social phase.

In the social phase, one or both partners will inform their social networks about the relational dissolution. According to Duck (1982), relational dissolution does not happen in vacuum, but affect and are affected by individuals' relationships with their social networks. Think of the time when you see your friend changed their Facebook status from "in a relationship" to "single". You can see it as an official announcement of relational termination to a social network.

Last, in the grave-dressing phase, individuals come up with narratives to explain their relational dissolution to others. You probably have heard many different kinds of narratives from people you know of about why they broke up, such as "While, I am not the right person for her. She deserves someone better" or "We have different working schedules and it was hard to maintain a relationship when you only saw each other twice a week. We simply grew apart."

Duck (2005) later modified the original model by emphasizing the role everyday communication plays during the process of relational dissolution. For example, Duck (2005) identified a new phase following the grave-dressing phase, which is labeled as the **resurrection phase**.

In this phase, individuals reflect on the ceased relationships, regain self-identity, and achieve growth, which altogether prepares themselves for a fresh start to future relationships. You might better recognize this phase as the moment a person stops following their ex-partner's Facebook and Instagram accounts, does activities they used to enjoy before the relationship, and meet new people.

Current research has applied Duck's relational dissolution model to individuals' Facebook behaviors during relational dissolution (LeFebvre, Blackburn, & Brody, 2015). These researchers identified specific online behaviors in each phase. For example, individuals engaged in relational cleansing (e.g., change relationship status on Facebook) during the social phase, account modification in the grave dressing phase, and impression management in the resurrection phase.

It should be noted that relational dissolution does not equate to the end of communication between ex-partners; nor does it *permanently* terminate a dissolved romantic relationship. In fact, researchers have examined how communication often continues between ex-partners in the post-dissolution phase (e.g., Koenig Kellas et al., 2008) and may affect the potential renewals of dissolved relationships (i.e., on-again/off-again relationships; Dailey et al., 2012).

Based on this research, it is important to understand relational dissolution as a nonlinear (i.e., not straightforward), idiosyncratic (i.e., complex), and communicative process that is influenced by individual, relational, and contextual factors.

As we close our discussion of the theory, let's reflect on what we have learned in this module as a whole. We have examined three important theories that help explain how communication plays an important role in navigating, managing, and facilitating various relationship challenges.

Our discussion has taken us from the tensions of relational dialectics theory, to the keys of supportive communication suggested by the dual process theory of supportive communication, and into the understanding of how communication changes when relationships dissolve, as explained in the relationship dissolution model.

Through this, hopefully you have achieved a better understanding of the relationship between our communication and the relationship challenges we face.

Conclusion

Our discussion in this unit has taken you through a diverse set of theories highlighting important areas of interpersonal communication. We began by defining a **theory** as an evidence-based principle or idea that explains a given phenomenon. In other words, a theory generally attempts to explain questions of how or why something happens.

From there, we examined nine important theories that explained questions about the role of communication in relationship development, relationship interactions, and relationship challenges.

As you leave this unit, we hope this has helped you develop a more advanced understanding of 1) fundamental theories in interpersonal communication and 2) how these theories can help us explain how communication affects relationships, as well as how relationships affect communication.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Identifying Dialectical Tensions: Think – Pair – Share

1. On a sheet of paper, students should write down the three dialectical tensions described within the Relational Dialectics Theory section.
2. Ask students to identify how they see these tensions happening in two different types of relationships (think of as many examples as possible):
3. Students should then get in pairs and discuss their findings together.

- What similarities do they share?
- What tensions seem most prominent?
- How do they try to navigate these tensions?

4. Discuss findings together as a class. Along with reviewing the "pair" findings, explore other areas of discussion:

- Do we share any common strategies for how we navigate the tensions in our relationships?
- Do you ever talk about these tensions with your friends and families? If yes, why? Is it helpful? If no, why not?

5. Consider possible connections with communication privacy management theory

Activity 2: Discussing Connections Between Social Support and Health

1. Watch Chandra Story's TEDx talk on social support and wellness. Source: https://youtu.be/PQBin3EL67M
2. The talk will provide a very general link between social support and health. However, it sets the stage for important discussions about our supportive communication might be incredibly influential in helping others achieve better health.
3. Generate discussion using the prompts below either 1) as a class or 2) start in pairs and move to larger class discussion later ("Think – Pair – Share" process)

- In what way(s) do you think supportive communication could help others achieve their health goals?
- Can you think of any examples where someone has given you supportive communication and it made a positive difference, whether health-related or not?

4. Practice creating high-quality supportive communication message in response to the statements below. Feel free to "role play" with your partner. (Refer to the characteristics of high-quality supportive communication [Characteristic #3] as a reminder of how we should craft these messages.)

- "I really want to lose weight, but I just can't do it by myself."
- "I feel so depressed, but I'm not sure what to do."

- “Why should I do a routine medical check-up? I haven’t done one in years and I’ve been fine.”
- “I’m so stressed because I don’t feel like I can manage my job, school, and my family stuff.”

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GLOSSARY

Dyadic phase: The phase of the relational dissolution model in which individuals talk about the viability of breakup with their romantic partners

Grave-dressing phase: The phase of the relational dissolution model in which individuals develops accounts to explain their breakups to others

Intrapsychic phase: The phase of the relational dissolution model in which individuals think about the possibility of break up

Resurrection phase: The phase of the relational dissolution model in which regain identity and achieve personal growth following breakup

Social phase: The phase of the relational dissolution model in which individuals inform their social networks about their breakup

Supportive communication: Verbal and nonverbal behavior produced with the intention of providing assistance to others perceived as needing that aid

Tensions (dialectical): Competing needs or desires (i.e., dialectics) that we often experience within relationships

Verbal person centeredness: Acknowledging, affirming, and supporting the perspectives and feelings of someone else

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: Issues in Relationships

Learning Objectives

- Define the concept of family and describe different types of families.
- Describe family roles, rituals and stories and explain how they may vary depending on the type of family.
- Describe dimensions of family based on conversation and conformity orientations.
- Define consensual, pluralistic, protective and laissez-faire families.
- Define the concept of friendship and discuss characteristics that are common to many friendships.
- Describe the basic phases of friendship.
- Explain how Knapp's relationship model can be used to describe different stages of friendship.
- Discuss potential communication issues that may occur in friendships.
- Define romantic relationships and discuss how this definition has changed over time.
- Describe different couple-types and explain the characteristics of each.
- Describe different ways to select a romantic partner.
- Discuss factors that influence the formation and maintenance of a romantic relationship.
- Describe the reasons why communication is important in the workplace.
- Explain different types of communication in the workplace including, written, verbal and online.
- Describe the basic dynamics of different workplace relationships and types of communication typically employed.
- Discuss communication issues that may occur in the workplace.

11.1: Family Relationships

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Define the concept of family and describe different types of families.
- Describe family roles, rituals and stories and explain how they may vary depending on the type of family.
- Describe dimensions of family based on conversation and conformity orientations.
- Define consensual, pluralistic, protective and laissez-faire families.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

What is a family? The U.S. Census Bureau (2019) defines family as "a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage or adoption and residing together."

This definition can be broken down into three parts: people, relationships and location. First, *people* in a family are described in terms of numbers (i.e., two or more people) with one person as the householder. Second, three types of *relationships* are used in this definition (i.e., birth, marriage or adoption). Lastly, the *location* is defined as people who reside together.

Does this definition fit with our conception of family? Some of us may consider people who are related to us by blood as family such as parents, siblings or children. But for others, this may not be true (i.e., in the case of adoption, stepchildren/parents or because we are estranged from our blood relatives). Some people might include a partner or spouse as a member of their family. Others may say that aunts, uncles, in-laws, etc. are members of their family.

The number and types of relationships we might include in our own definition of family can also vary greatly. Some of us may include committed relationships, while others may define familial relationships based on legal definitions.

Do we have to live with family for us to recognize them as family members? When a young adult leaves their parents' or guardians' home, are they no longer apart of the family? What about when circumstances (i.e., divorce, job relocation, etc.) occur, do people who have previously lived together cease to be family because they don't live in the same home?

The concept of family is difficult to define. In many ways, our understanding is shaped by our upbringing and socialization. As we mature, our definition may shift as we develop our self-concept and engage in social relationships that may alter the ways we define family.

"Family Portrait Photographs," by Crossroadsphototeam, 2014, *WikiMedia Commons*, (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Family_Photos_May_2014-0060_(14166276546).jpg). Licensed under CC-BY.

Defining Family

Some scholars attempt to define family based on origin and orientation. A **family of origin** refers to people who are related by blood or legal bonds and may include parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews (Segrin & Flora, 2019). A **family of orientation** refers to people who share the same home and are connected to each other by blood, legal bond or commitment (Segrin & Flora, 2019).

These definitions provided a broader picture of what might be considered a family, but they are also limited in some ways. Listed below in Table 1 are several addition definitions found in research on family (Segrin & Flora, 2019)

Type of Family	Definition
Nuclear Family	A heterosexual married couple with one or more children.
Binuclear Family	A nuclear family that has split into two separate households (i.e. because of divorce or separation). Note: The mother heads one household and the father heads another. The original children live with one parent at certain points and the other parent at different points.
Stepfamily	A heterosexual couple that resides together with children from a previous relationship(s).
Single-Parent Family	One parent (either a mother or father) with one or more children. Note: The parent may or may not have been previously married.
Cohabitating Family	A heterosexual couple in a committed relationship that reside together but don't have a legal bond. Note: This type of family may or may not have children
Gay or Lesbian Family	A same-gender couple in a committed relationship that reside together and may or may not have a legal bond. Note: This type of family may or may not have children.

Table 11.1.1: Family types and definitions

Family Roles, Rituals and Stories

Family can also be defined by their practices as a family. This section will explore how family roles, rituals and stories provide a framework for our understanding of family.

Family Roles

Each family decides which members are leaders and which members are followers. In some families, there is a clear hierarchy where one (or more) people are leaders and other members are followers. In other cases, a family may decide to distribute power more equally among its members. Based on the power dynamics within the family unit, members will be given certain rights and privileges and assigned specific obligations and roles.

The roles within a family depend on the people involved and their culture. As a member of a family, our role shapes how we interact with other members of the family unit. Listed below are several roles that may exist within a family (Innerchange, n.d.):

- *Hero* is a high achiever who can be goal-oriented and self-disciplined. This person is a point of pride in the family, and as a result, may lack the ability to relax or follow others.
- *Rescuer* takes care of other family members' needs (i.e., emotionally or as a problem-solver). This person struggles with conflict and may find it difficult to focus on him/herself.
- *Mediator* attempts to keep peace in the family. This person may act as a buffer between members of the family and may use this role to serve his/her own needs.
- *Scapegoat* needs the most help (or at least other members of the family thinks so). This person may have a good sense of humor, share feelings openly and be honest at times. At other times, this person may express his/herself inappropriately.
- *Power broker* works to maintain the family hierarchy with him/herself on top. Controlling the environment is essential for this person.
- *Lost child* is obedient and passive. This person may lack direction or be fearful of making decisions.
- *Clown* uses humor in response to family conflict. While this person has the ability to lighten the moment, he/she often hides his/her true feelings from the family.
- *Cheerleader* encourages other members of the family. This person tries to have a positive influence on others, but balances the energy exerted on others with his/her own needs.
- *Thinker* provides logical focus to the family but may find it difficult to connect with others emotionally.
- *Truthteller* reflects the family dynamic as it is. Some members of the family may appreciate this person, while others may be offended when they don't like what they hear.

We may find that some members of our family don't fit exactly into one role, and instead they form a hybrid of two or more roles. Our self-concept and the ways we might be most comfortable communicating within our family unit are shaped by the role(s) ascribed to us.

Family Rituals

Familial relationships are built on routines and rituals to create and maintain the social/cultural aspects of the family unit. A family ritual can be any activity the family does together on a regular or semi-regular basis. Wolin and Bennett (1984) described relationship rituals in terms of patterned family interactions, family traditions and family celebrations.

Patterned family interactions are frequent rituals that are not as formal as family traditions or celebrations. Examples of patterned family interactions may include eating dinner together, bedtime rituals and leisure activities (i.e., going bowling or to the movies, playing video games or watching television together, attending sporting events, etc.)

Family traditions are the ways family values, history or culture are shared between members of a family. Traditions within a family tend to be more formal and less frequent than patterned family interactions. Examples of family traditions may include attending a religious service, family reunions, family vacations, going to a specific event each year, etc.

"Thanksgiving meal," by cogdogblog, 2014, *WikiMedia Commons* (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thanksgiving_Meal_(15870533626).jpg). Licensed under CC-BY

Family celebrations are occasions a family observes together. Celebrations within a family tend to be more formal and standardized and may include cultural aspects (i.e., rites of passage, holiday celebrations, graduations, weddings, etc.).

Family Stories

Family stories are important discursive vehicles that influence members of a family as they are told and retold (Wolff, 1993). Storytelling helps us to transmit important aspects of our family from one person to the next. We use stories to build and maintain relationships with members of our family and to shape our identities (Kellas, 2014).

Stories provide a frame or context by which members of the family make meaning of the message. These stories can also inspire us to pursue an ambition or characteristic exemplified in the story or to cope with the challenges we face. Family stories also help us to connect with other members of our family (both present and past).

See a sample family story below in Figure 1. How would a story like this inspire her attitudes toward work and prosperity?

Emma's family originates in Mexico. From an early age, she has been told stories about her ancestors' experiences in Mexico before emigrating to the United States. One of the more significant narratives involves her great-grandparents struggles during the Depression era, when her great grandfather worked in a coal mine in central Mexico.

The story of Emma's great grandparents' centers around hard work, perseverance and an undying commitment of family support. Her great grandmother, Maria recalls, traveled long distances by a horse drawn wagon to visit her great-grandfather Guillermo as

he toiled in the coal mine to build a comfortable life for their family. Through diligent work, struggle and perseverance, Maria and Guillermo paved a path for their family's future prosperity.

This future prosperity would extend to Emma's grandparents who grew to be prominent business owners. Emma and her siblings have also heard stories about their diligence and steadfast commitment in building a comfortable life for the family. The prevailing values of hard work, family and community involvement extend to multiple generations of Emma's family.

Figure 11.1.1: Emma's family story

Dimensions of Family Communication

Family roles, rituals, traditions and stories both shape and are shaped by our interpersonal interactions. The amount, type, range and depth of conversation between family members varies greatly. Some families may encourage self-expression, while others may expect members of the family to express themselves in a more controlled and limited manner.

Conversation and Conformity Orientations

Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2006) described these familial communication differences in terms of two dimensions: conversation and conformity orientation. Each family may rank higher or lower in each dimension. The family type can be determined based on where the family lands on both dimensions.

Conversation orientation is defined as "the degree to which families create a climate in which all family members are encouraged to participate in unrestrained interactions about a wide range of topics" (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006, p. 54). Families on the high end of this dimension communicate frequently and without many limitations. Conversely, families on the low end of this dimension interact less frequently and in more restrained ways (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002).

Conformity orientation is defined as "the degree to which family communication stresses a climate of homogeneity of attitudes, values and beliefs" (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006, p. 55). Families on the high end of this dimension emphasize uniformity in beliefs and attitudes. On the contrary, families on the low end of this dimension focuses on individuality and independence from the family unit (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002).

Familial Types

A family's orientation toward conversation and conformity result in different family types: consensual, pluralistic, protective and laissez-faire.

A **consensual family** is high in both conversation and conformity (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). Children are encouraged to express themselves, but parents maintain their authority in making important decisions. A **pluralistic family** is high in conversation and low in conformity (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). In a pluralistic family, children are encouraged to speak and there are less strict guidelines about behavior and decision-making.

A **protective family** is low in conversation and high in conformity (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). In a protective family, children are to be seen and not heard, and parents dictate rules in an authoritative manner (i.e., "It's my way or the highway."). A **laissez-faire family** is low in both conversation and conformity (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). Parents do not invest in their children's decision-making *and* children are given great latitude to make their own decisions. In Figure 3 below, you can see how a family can vary according to each type of dimension.

	Low Conversation	**High Conversation**
Low Conformity	Laissez-faire Families	Pluralistic Families
High Conformity	Protective Families	Consensual Families

Figure 11.1.2: Family Orientation Types

Conclusion

What is a family? As we discovered in this module, the concept of family is difficult to define. It can mean many things to different people. Our family of origin shapes our relationships and interaction patterns during our early years. As we mature, we begin to shape our identities and view of family in potentially different ways. Whether we view our family as traditional or more modern, the members of our family and the relationships we have with them are important aspects of who we are and how we spend our time.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Family Roles

Ask students to form groups of (3-5). Give each student in a group a different family role. Ask the students to develop a skit (3-5 minutes) that reflects the different roles within a specific context.

Give the groups 20-30 minutes to work together. Select groups randomly (or ask for volunteers) to present their skit. Debrief the activity after all groups have finished.

2. Rituals and Stories

Ask students to think about their favorite family ritual. After a few minutes, have the students develop a story to exemplify the family ritual. Then ask for volunteers to share their story with the class. After all students have presented their story, ask them:

· Do you think family rituals and stories are important? Why or why not?

· How will you decide what family stories are important?

· What are some of the ways you might preserve those stories?

3. Conversation and Conformity Orientation

Ask student to consider their family of origin in terms of conversation and conformity. What type is their family?

Then ask students to form groups (3-5 students) and discuss how they decided where to place their family of origin in terms of conversation and conformity. After several minutes, ask the groups to discuss what type of family would develop for their family of orientation.

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GLOSSARY

Conversation orientation is the degree to which families create a climate in which all family members are encouraged to participate in unrestrained interactions about a wide array of topics.

Conformity orientation is the degree to which family communication stresses a climate of homogeneity of attitudes, values and beliefs.

Consensual families are high in both conversation and conformity.

Family is a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage or adoption and residing together.

Family of origin refers to people who are related by blood or legal bonds and may include parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews.

Family of orientation refers to people who share the same home and are connected to each other by blood, legal bond or commitment.

Laissez-faire families are low in both conversation and conformity.

Pluralistic families are high in conversation and low in conformity.

Protective families are low in conversation and high in conformity.

MEDIA ATTRIBUTIONS

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11.2: Friendships

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Define the concept of friendship and discuss characteristics that are common to many friendships.
- Describe the basic phases of friendship.
- Explain how Knapp's relationship model can be used to describe different stages of friendship.
- Discuss potential communication issues that may occur in friendships.

FRIENDSHIPS

Scholars have studied friendship for a very long time. One of the earliest writings on friendship dates back to almost 2,400 years ago. During this time, a Greek philosopher named Aristotle describes friendship as an important type of interpersonal relationship that provides value to our lives. His identified three kinds of friendship: friendships of utility, pleasure and virtue (*Nichomachean Ethics*, Book VIII).

Nowadays, interpersonal communication scholars have studied various aspects of friendships and how they funtion. How important are friends? Why do some people come into our lives for a relatively short period of time, while others seem to last a lifetime? In this module, we will explore the concept of friendship, different phases a friendship may go through and relational issues that may emerge in a friendship.

Defining friendship

What is a friend? Our definition of friendship and the qualities we look for in a friend may differ. Some of us may say a friend is someone we talk to or do activities with on a regular basis. Others may say a friend is someone we can trust or who helps us when we need it. Friendships are personal and dependent on many factors. In this section, we'll consider different ways a friendship may defined and several common characteristics.

A **friendship** is a voluntary interpersonal relationship between two people characterized by mutual affection and influence (Rawlins, 2017). Although friendships may vary from person to person, research suggests there are three types of friendship commonly found in adulthood: reciprocal, associative and receptive (VanLear, C.A. et al., 2006).

Reciprocal friendships occur when two people (who are peers) develop a friendship that is based on mutual loyalty and commitment. These friendships develop over time and adapt well to external changes (i.e., geographic separation, a job change, a change in a romantic relationship or family life, etc.).

Associative friendships occur when two people (usually acquaintances) develop a friendship based on mutual pleasure. These friendships develop out of convenience and lack the commitment reciprocal friends share.

Receptive friendships occur when two people (who are not equals) develop a friendship (i.e., a supervisor and subordinate). In some cases, this type of friendship can be mutually beneficial, but it can also become caustic if the person with more power tries to dominate the relationship.

Characteristics of Friendship

Friendships are sometimes described as vulnerable relationships because they are voluntary in nature and based on the availability and mutual interests of others. Research suggests that five characteristics defined friendship: voluntary, mutual, personal, affectionate and equality (Rawlins, 2017). You can see each characteristic of friendship summarized in Figure 1 below.

Characteristics	Description
Friendships are **voluntary**.	We choose our friends and they choose us. The same sentiment is true for ending friendships.
Friendships are **mutual**.	We have the ability to influence our friends and they have the ability to influence us.
Friendships are **personal**.	We know and trust our friends and they know and trust us.
Friendships are **affectionate**.	We care about our friends and they care about us.
Friendships are **equal**	We balance our needs with the needs of our friends. While friends may not be equal in everything, power is evenly distributed.

Figure 11.2.1: Characteristics of Friendships

Phases of friendship

Like other types of relationships, friendships move through several phases from formation and maintenance to deterioration and dissolution. The evolution of a friendship can be difficult to define. Each friend may view the friendship a little differently (and may even progress through the phases of friendship at different rates).

Some friendships may last a long time, others may dissolve more quickly. Some friends will be close, while others may be more distant. Many friendships will fluctuate between close and distant at different points the friendship (Johnson et al., 2003). In this section, we will examine basic phases of friendship.

Formation

A friendship forms when two people move from strangers/acquaintances to potential friends through interpersonal interactions (Bleizer & Adams, 1992). Many factors may influence this process (Fehr, 2000):

- *Environmental factors*: We are more likely to become friends with people we are around (i.e., live near or work with).
- *Situational factors*: We are more likely to become friends with people who are available (i.e., we have a mutual interest in being friends).
- *Interactional factors*: We are more likely to become friends with people we think are physically attractive, socially appropriate and receptive to our needs.
- *Additional factors*: We are more likely to become friends with people who are similar. These factors could range from demographic characteristics to conflict management styles or levels of self-disclosure.

Maintenance

When a friendship is established, there are several processes it may go through to maintain the relationship. These processes will vary depending on the people involved and level of commitment each person has to the friendship. Some friendships will require more interactions and emotional support than others.

Deterioration/Dissolution

When we fail to maintain our friendship, the relationship may move toward deterioration and possible dissolution. There are many reasons why a friendship may move into these phases, common causes include (Bleiszner & Adams, 1992):

- *Voluntary*: We had a huge fight with our friend and the conflict remains unresolved.
- *Involuntary*: Our friend dies, so our friendship cannot continue.
- *External*: Our commitments change, and we no longer have time to maintain our friendship.
- *Internal*: We don't trust our friend and aren't sure we can continue to be friends.

In this section, we examined the basic phases of friendship. Now we're going to expand this framework by exploring in more detail the processes a relationship goes through and how those processes relate to friendships.

Applying Knapp's Relational Development Model

Knapp (1978) developed a model to describe the different stages a relationship moves through. He categorized these stages into two phases: escalation and termination. Taken together, this model is a useful tool that may help us to understand the cycle of friendship (Knapp, Vangelisti & Caughlin, 2014).

Phase	Stage	Definition
Escalation (Coming Together)	Initiating	Occurs when people meet and interact for the first time.
	Experimenting	Occurs when people learn more about each other through conversation
	Intensifying	Occurs when people move from being acquaintances to friends.
	Integrating	Occurs when partners form a strong commitment to the relationship
	Bonding	Occurs when partners announce their commitment to each other publicly.

Termination (Coming Apart)	Differentiating	Occurs when partners begin to see their differences as undesirable
	Circumscribing	Occurs the quality/quantity of communication between partners decreases.
	Stagnating	Occurs when partners are not communicating with each other as frequently.
	Avoiding	Occurs when partners create a physical and emotional separation from each other.
	Terminating	Occurs when the relationship is official over.

Figure 11.2.2 Knapp's Relational Development Model

Let's look at an example to see how this theory relates to friendship.

Escalation Phase

Riley and Avery are in college. They met each other as freshmen in a Psychology class. Riley noticed that Avery was a good student who always seemed to be taking notes. She appeared to be well dressed, and Riley really liked her bag. When Riley approached Avery after class, they seemed to click. This initial favorable impression is called the *initiation stage*.

The next week after class, Avery asked Riley if she was interested in attending a lecture series with her on Thursday. She was excited to find out Riley was already planning to attend the event. They decided to meet a few minutes before so they could sit together. This is the *experimentation stage*, when common interests are explored and both people get to know each other better.

A few weeks later, it seems like Riley and Avery are good friends. They seemed to know a lot about one another. They laughed often and seemed to have a lot in common. Riley and Avery have moved into the *intensifying stage* where they reveal more personal information about themselves and interact in less formal ways.

As intimacy in the friendship increases, Riley and Avery move into the *integration stage*. At this point they seem to share a lot with each other. When Riley ended a high school romantic relationship, Avery was there to cheer her up. When Avery wanted to go to a party, she knew she had a friend who would go with her.

By the end of their freshman year, everyone (who didn't know them before) thought they were childhood friends. Riley and Avery are now in the *bonding stage* of their friendship.

While some friendships may stay in one stage or another of the escalation phase, some friendships may wander to the termination phase. This doesn't mean the friendship is necessarily doomed (yet).

Termination Phase

When Riley and Avery come back to college for their sophomore year, a few things have changed. Riley has a new significant other who lives nearby. Avery accepted a prestigious internship on campus and is spending most of her free time there.

When Riley decides she wants to go to the home football game on Saturday, her first thought (or second thought) isn't to invite Avery. Instead she decides to go with her boyfriend and his fraternity brothers. When the friendship starts to fade and people begin to think more individually, they are in the *differentiation stage*.

A few weeks later, Riley and Avery barely noticed that they haven't talked to each other in several weeks. Avery is still upset about the last time they saw each other. When Riley made a comment she didn't appreciate, the relationship had become strained. She was just fine with a little space between them.

Riley, on the other hand, could not believe how touchy Avery seemed to be and wanted her space, too. They are now in the *circumscribing stage* where friends limit their conversation and set communication boundaries.

At some point, Riley and Avery talk, but they are both busy doing other things. Their friendship isn't the priority it once was. As communication becomes more limited, they move into the *stagnation stage*.

Several weeks go by and they don't see each other at all. They don't seem to care much for each other anymore. One day, they happen to be in the cafeteria at the same time. They both see each other, but intentionally avoid making eye contact. At this point, Riley and Avery have moved into the *avoidance stage*.

Eventually, they move on with their lives. They no longer view themselves as friends. When Riley and Avery get to this point, their friendship reaches the *termination stage*.

In this example, Riley and Avery moved through each stage in the relational model (from initiation to termination). This may not be true for all friendships. Some may never cross over into the termination phase. Others may move into the termination phase but return to an earlier stage instead of moving toward an ending. It really depends on the people and situations involved.

Communication Issues in Friendships

As the example in the last section described, there are many ways a friendship can move toward termination. It usually doesn't happen overnight. Many of the issues that emerge in friendships have a communication component. This section will focus on common communication issues in friendships.

Expectations

Each person comes into a friendship with certain expectations. Sometimes those expectations align and sometimes there are differences. Differing expectations can be problematic if they are not discussed and agreed upon. Expectations may also change over time. What was acceptable in high school may not be acceptable in college or as an adult. When expectations change a friendship will need to adapt or move toward the termination phase described above.

Gender differences

Men and women communicate differently. Male friendships tend to focus more on shared activities, such as golfing after work on Fridays. Female friendships are generally characterized by shared conversation. Two female friends may prefer to sit on the patio, drink a glass of wine, and talk about their week on Friday evening. When a male is friends with a female, differing expectations may be more challenging to the friendship. At the same time, it may also be viewed as a benefit (the female may enjoy doing activities and/or the male may like that he has someone to talk to about his day).

Power Dynamics

If there is an unequal power distribution in the friendship, many issues may emerge. For a friendship to thrive both people need to feel like they have some power in the relationship. When one person attempts to be in charge or control things by tell the other person (through words and deeds) that they are constantly wrong. Even with the most patient person, this will eventually become a problem.

Social media

Friends on social media platforms can be a great way to stay connected with people you no longer live near. But it can also present some challenges. Is a friend on social media that you never talk to otherwise really your friend? It depends on how you want to define a friend. There have also been many things written on the effects of social media that can range from a person being upset when friends don't "like" a post to harassment and cyber bullying. Balancing the benefits of using social media to maintain friendships against the challenges is something we each need to do for ourselves.

Summary

Friendships are important interpersonal relationships. They may be more important to us because they are voluntary and personal (we choose our friends and they choose us). Friends can shape our lives in many ways and help us to define our priorities. They cheer us on and celebrate our successes or support us when we face challenges. We do the same for our friends. Aristotle (1906) best summarizes the value of friendship when he wrote:

We need friends when we are young to keep us from error, when we get old to tend upon us and to carry out those plans which we have not the strength to execute ourselves, and in the prime of life to help us in noble deeds – 'two together' [as Homer says]; for thus we are more efficient both in thought and in action (p. 251).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Good Friends

In small groups, create a guidebook on friendship. Your group should create a list of ten attributes that a good friend exhibits and describe how to assess whether a potential friend has these attributes. Mark each attribute as "must have," "nice to have" or "optional."

Then create a list of five challenges to maintaining a friendship and describe how to avoid each challenge (or determine when each challenge cannot be overcome).

Be prepared to share your guidebook with the class and explain how your group made decisions about what would go into your guidebook.

Activity 2: TV Friendships

Discuss your favorite television show. (*Friends*, *Big Bang Theory* are good examples). What type of communication issues do you notice in the friendships on the show? Describe how Knapp's relational model relates to the characters.

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GLOSSARY

Friendship is a voluntary interpersonal relationship between two people characterized by mutual affection and influence.

11.3: Romantic Relationships

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Define romantic relationships and discuss how this definition has changed over time.
- Describe different couple-types and explain the characteristics of each.
- Describe different ways to select a romantic partner,
- Discuss factors that influence the formation and maintenance of a romantic relationship.

ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Romance is everywhere in Western culture. We see it depicted in movies, television shows and advertisements. We hear it in music. We read about it in literature, fortune cookies and astrology. We even see romance in sports, when one partner proposes to another on the big screen.

These messages remind us of our basic emotional needs and desires for close interpersonal relationships. Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggest that the need to belong, and develop significant, positive interpersonal relationships is a fundamental human motivation. They further argue that the satisfaction we receive from romantic relationships cannot be obtained through nonromantic relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

The images and words we are bombarded with in media serve a purpose. To better understand this purpose, let's begin by exploring the changing definition of a romantic relationship.

Defining romantic relationships

Traditionally a specific event (i.e., a wedding) determined the status of a romantic relationship. Couples were referred to as premarital (if they weren't married) or marital (if they were). This distinction also described well-defined social norms that dictated acceptable behaviors and interactions for each type of couple. In recent years (and for many reasons), the lines regarding romantic relationships has blurred.

A **romantic relationship** is defined as mutual, ongoing and voluntary interactions between two partners that is characterized by specific expressions of affection and intimacy (Collins, et al., 2009). This definition reflects contemporary ideas about romantic relationships. For example, marital status and partner gender is ambiguous. Instead this definition focuses on *interactions* (i.e., mutual, ongoing and voluntary) and *expressions* (i.e., affection and intimacy).

Types of couples

Fitzpatrick (1988) argued that gender differences played a role in defining a variety of couple-types. Each couple-type's attitudes and beliefs about their partner and relationship influences communication patterns, responses to conflict and level of relational satisfaction. Let's take a closer look at four types of couples: traditional, independent, separate and mixed.

Traditional couples are highly interdependent and display relatively conventional ideological values. These couples view gender in a traditional way and often split duties based on gender roles. When conflict arises, they openly engage the issue(s), but avoid

using negative communication (Fitzpatrick, 1988).

Independent couples value connection and personal autonomy. They display relatively unconventional values about relational and family life. Gender roles are more fluid. Independent couples are more likely to engage in conflict on both major and minor issues. Each partner operates independently and makes contributions to the relationship based on their personal preferences more so than tradition (Fitzpatrick, 1988).

Separate couples are ambivalent about their values concerning relational and family life. They typically have a conventional orientation toward marriage, but an unconventional orientation toward individual freedom. When conflict arises, they tend to withdraw, however, when they decide to engage in conflict, an argument can turn hostile quickly. In a separate couple, each partner functions autonomously (they do want they want and stay out of each other's way) (Fitzpatrick, 1988).

Mixed couples occur when each partner has a different definition of the relationship (i.e., one partner is traditional, and the other partner is independent). Mixed couples are more ambiguous in their roles and expectations. Many factors can influence when and how we initiate a romantic relationship. In the next section, we'll look at some of these factors.

Initiating romantic relationships

When seeking a potential romantic partner, how do we decide who's the right fit? Researchers believe that two characteristics greatly influence our decision-making: physical attraction and similarity.

We make initial decisions about approaching a potential partner largely based on how physically attractive we perceive that person to be. The *matching hypothesis* suggests that we generally prefer to date people we view as highly attractive. But we often pair with partners who share a similar level of attractiveness (Walster et al, 1966).

We also tend to select partners who are similar to us (Surra, Gray, Boettcher, Cottle, & West, 2006). These similarities may be based in leisure activities and hobbies. For example, if we enjoy bowling (or another activity), we will likely be more compatible with a partner that also likes bowling (or another activity we like).

This idea also rings true for more significant aspects of self (i.e., how we see the world). If we believe that partners should share in household responsibilities and our partner balks at the idea of vacuuming, we have a problem. What are our options?

We can discuss and negotiate who's responsible for what (maybe our partner hates vacuuming but has no problem cleaning the bathroom). Or we may find out that our partner views gender roles in a traditional way and doesn't plan on helping with household chores. In this case, we may need to reconsider our compatibility.

Some researchers believe that we choose one partner over another based largely by chance (Lykken & Tellegren, 1993). Others suggest that attraction is the result of biochemical reactions in the body (Fisher, 1992). Yet others argue that partner selection is an attempt to maximize reproductive value (Buss, 1994).

Selection by chance

When two people meet and begin to develop a romance, the stars must align. The decision to walk into a specific coffee shop on a specific day and begin a conversation with an attractive person about pet food is a matter of luck. This is the basic premise of researchers who believe we choose a romantic partner based on chance.

What if you decided to save your money that day and drink coffee at home? What if you go through the drive thru? From this perspective, timing is everything.

Selection based on biochemistry

No matter what your brain says, your body will not betray how you really feel. When you meet an attractive person, you may experience a sudden shift in your physiology (i.e., your heart may flutter or you may feel like you have butterflies in your stomach). In a different situation, you may be attracted to another person physically, but when you get closer you realize they don't smell very good and decide to walk away.

Researchers from this perspective argue that we feel specific sensations when we meet potential partners. These physical sensations are biochemical reactions to pheromones. The outcome depends on how we interpret these feelings.

Selection based on maximal reproductive value

One person buys a sports car to exhibit a sense of status. Another person buys expensive clothes and wears makeup to present a certain image. A third person gets a haircut and uses a particular type of cologne or perfume. In each case, the person makes

choices about their appearance to attract attention from potential partners. Are these choices simply about displays of attractiveness and status?

Some researchers believe that these choices are made because of biology. Our genes want to be replicated so we search for the fittest partner to carry on our genetics through procreation. Whether we actually want to have children or not is of little importance to our genes. From this perspective, our genes drive our behavior.

Factors influencing relationship formation success

Many factors influence the ways we form romantic relationships and the reasons behind these formations. Segrin and Flora (2019) point to factors such as upbringing, values, attractiveness and interaction patterns, in this section, we'll take a closer look at each.

A common saying that you might hear is, "If you want to know how your husband/wife will treat you, look at how he/she treats his/her mother/father."This statement points to the role early familial relationships and upbringing play in selecting a partner. *Attachment theory* suggests that we enter the world programmed to form attachments. Because our earliest bonds are formed with our primary caregivers, those relationships greatly influence us throughout our lives (Bowlby, 2008).

Many scholars agree that the information we gather through early interactions with a potential partner help us to determine whether to initiate a romantic relationship. This phenomenon is explained by *social penetration theory*. This theory suggests that trust and intimacy develop as a relationship deepens through self-disclosure (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

When we begin interactions with a romantic partner, we share many (less personal) facts about ourselves through small talk. As the relationship intensifies, our rate of self-disclosure slows but the facts we share become more intimate and personal in nature. This process of self-disclosure is essential to relational development (i.e., whether or not we decided to continue in the relationship). Overall, the formation of a relationship can depend on several factors.

Expectations

When two people decide to pursue a romantic relationship with each other, many things can happen. The success (or failure) of the relationship is often based on the expectations of each person and the influence others may have on the relationship. Consider the example scenarios below:

Scenario 1:

You: My date last night was great! He/She was funny and kind, and even paid for dinner. I think he/she could be the one.

Friend: Wow, that's amazing. I can't wait to hear about your next date.

....[One week later]…

You: He/She hasn't called since our date last week.

Friend: Maybe something came up, you should call him/her.

You: But, that's his/her job!

Scenario 2:

Taylor and Kelly (who are both Catholic) decide to get married. A year later, Taylor decides s/he wants to join the Church of Scientology. Kelly can't understand why and wonders if s/he married the right person.

Scenario 3:

Sloan and Jaylen have dated for years. But Sloan is keeping a secret. He/She is embarrassed to admit to Jaylen that he/she wants to pursue a career as a circus performer. This has been a dream of Sloan's since childhood, but when he/she shares this dream with his/her parents, he/she was shamed and disciplined into becoming an accountant.Jaylen likes that Sloan is an accountant. It's a sensible profession and represents their shared values. One day, Sloan arrives at a restaurant a few minutes late for dinner with Jaylen. Sloan is wearing a clown costume. Halloween is months away…an explanation is necessary.

Our expectations shape how we view and interpret the world around us. Our upbringing, interactions with others and value system help us to develop our expectations in both conscious and unconscious ways. In moments of internal discord, we have to decide what is acceptable (or not) and communicate our needs. If we don't express our feelings on the subject and try to ignore them, resentment can be sown into the shadows of our experience.

Social exchange theory suggests that we interact with others through an exchange process that includes a cost-benefit analysis (Homan, 1958). We weigh the costs and benefits of social relationships and attempt to maximize benefits and minimize costs. If the costs outweigh the benefits, we terminate the relationship.

When our expectations are violated, we may consciously or subconsciously perform a cost-benefit analysis. We may decide that the benefits of the relationship outweigh the costs of an uncomfortable conversation. In this situation, our couple-type will be an important factor in how we resolve the conflict.

Romantic relationships and social networks

Social networks influence all of our relationships including romantic ones. Does your family like your partner? Do you and your partner have friends in common? Research suggests that shared social networks is a strong predictor of the success of long-term romantic relationships (Crozier, 2006).

Network overlap is a term used to describe the number of shared associations a couple has (Milardo & Helms-Erickson, 2000). Researchers believe that network overlap creates many structural and interpersonal elements that positively affect relational outcomes in romantic relationships. Mutual friends are more likely to celebrate the couple's successes, grant favors, provide emotional support and help the couple to manage common stressors (Milardo & Helms-Erickson, 2000).

Research also suggests that romantic partners that frequently communicate with each other and associate (i.e., friends and family) tend to experience less stress and uncertainty in their relationship (McCornack & Morrison, 2019).

Summary

Romantic relationships can be challenging but also rewarding. For many people, romantic relationship fulfills our need for human connection both physically and emotionally.

Health experts claim that participating in a romantic relationship can have many benefits including (Northwestern Medicine, 2020):

- Decrease our stress level,
- Give us a greater sense of well-being and purpose,
- Promote healthier behaviors and
- Improve longevity.

Romantic relationships can also benefit us emotionally by validating our self-concept and improving our self-esteem (Lancer, 2018).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Relationship Desirability

Ask students to answer the following questions:

(1) What qualities are desired in a romantic partner? Write a list of ten traits or qualities that you think make a quality romantic partner.

(2) Do you exhibit the same traits on your list? Write a list of ten traits or qualities that make you a quality romantic partner.

Activity 2: Online Dating – "Catching Catfish"

Ask students to answer the following questions:

(1) Is online dating a desirable option for you? Make two columns (pro and con) for the advantages and disadvantages of online dating.

(2) One of the reasons people are apprehensive about online dating is because of people posting misleading profiles on dating sites ("catfishing"). How can you tell just by looking at a profile that it may be questionable? Make a list of things that may signal "red flags" when examining an online dating profile.

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GLOSSARY

Independent couples: Display relatively unconventional values about relational and family life, but value connection and personal autonomy.

Mixed couples: Each partner has a different definition of the relationship.

Network overlap: Describes the number of shared associations a couple has.

Romantic relationship: Defined as mutual, ongoing and voluntary interactions between two partners that is characterized by specific expressions of affection and intimacy.

Separate couples: Display a conventional approach to marriage, but each partner operates autonomously.

Traditional couples: Highly interdependent couples that display relatively conventional ideological values.

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11.4: Workplace Relationships

Learning Objectives

- Describe the reasons why communication is important in the workplace.
- Explain different types of communication in the workplace including, written, verbal and online.
- Describe the basic dynamics of different workplace relationships and types of communication typically employed.
- Discuss communication issues that may occur in the workplace.

WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

Communication skills are wanted in the workplace! Each year the National Association of College and Employers (NACE) releases a Job Outlook that provides hiring projections and attributes most desired by prospective employers. Communication skills are always placed near the top of the list. In 2020, NACE's Job Outlook listed oral and written communication at number four (p. 15)

A quick internet search of "skills employers look for" reveals soft skills like teamwork, listening and communication are always mentioned by prospective employers regardless of the position. Check out these links to see for yourself:

- https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2019/01/17/survey-employers-want-soft-skills-graduates
- https://www.thebalancecareers.com/top-skills-employers-want-2062481
- https://www.inc.com/kaleigh-moore/study-73-of-employers-want-candidates-with-this-skill.html
- https://www.foxbusiness.com/features/10-job-skills-every-employer-wants
- https://www.rasmussen.edu/student-experience/college-life/skills-employers-look-for/

Importance of communication skills in the workplace

Why are communication skills so important in the workplace? There are several reasons, let's look at the most significant.

Good communication increases employee engagement (Bosworth, 2016). Organizations invest in resources to achieve both short- and long-term goals. The most significant investment organizations make is in their workforce (i.e., salary, benefits, training, etc.) (Srivastava, 2016). It is important for organizations to recognize the role employee engagement plays to maximize this investment and create a positive work environment.

When employees have positive relationships with co-workers, supervisors and leaders, they will be more engaged in the workplace and more likely to communicate their needs and goals. In turn, supervisors and leaders will better understand the factors that motivate each employee and respond to those needs in a mutually beneficial way.

Employee Engagement Take Away

When employee engagement is high…

- The talents and skills of each employee are cultivated.
- Organizational goals are more easily achieved.
- The work environment is both productive and satisfying for everyone.

Good communication improves client relationships (Bosworth, 2016). Most businesses will not exist without clients. The more successful you are at forming and maintaining relationships with clients, the more successful the business will be.

Many people have studied client relationships. Some of the best practices for strengthening client relationships include (Gregory, 2019):

- Anticipate your client's needs
- Get to know your client
- Do exemplary work
- Communicate regularly with your clients
- Ask for feedback from your client
- Make recommendations based on your expertise
- Cultivate partnerships

Strong communication skills directly relate to building and maintaining client-business relationships. Effectively trained employees have the necessary communication and listening skills to ensure client needs are met. This may include being responsive to client emails and calls, scheduling regular meetings, sharing relevant business news and interacting with clients on social media platforms. When collaborative partnerships are cultivated, everyone benefits.

Client Relationships Take Away

When client relationships are strong…

- The relationship between a client and business is mutually beneficial.
- The client's needs/expectations are met or exceeded.
- An issue becomes an opportunity to resolve a problem and build a stronger relationship with the client.

Good communication enhances team effectiveness (Bosworth, 2016). The driving thought behind team-based projects in the workplace is: we can accomplish more together than apart. Each individual brings their knowledge, experience and skills to the team. When these attributes are brought together, the team benefits from the unique talents of each individual, more tasks can be accomplished in a shorter period of time and innovation and creative thinking are promoted.

Communicating within a workplace context is more than conveying information or giving orders to subordinates. It directly relates to the ways we build and maintain relationships with members of our team. The bottom line is an employee without the necessary communication skills is a liability to the organization.

Team Effectiveness Take Away

When team effectiveness is enhanced…

- There will be less misunderstandings due to poor communication.
- Team members will feel more empowered and confident in their tasks.
- Productivity and accountability will increase.
- Company culture will improve.

Types of workplace communication

All activities in the workplace rely on effective communication. When there is a breakdown in communication or an individual lacks the skills needed, the effects can be felt in a variety of ways. This section focuses on written, verbal, and online communication.

Written communication

Business letters, memos, reports, summaries, and emails are just a few examples of written communication in the workplace. As with all writing, the writer should carefully consider:

1. *Purpose*: Express the purpose clearly and succinctly
2. *Audience*: Use appropriate language for the intended audience(s)
3. *Content*: Articulate information in an accurate and professional manner
4. *Structure*: Conform to standard business practices

Verbal communication

Effective verbal communication is more than just talking. It includes *what you say*, *how you say it*, and *how it is received by others*. Generally, verbal communication in the workplace is heavily reliant on the context and rapport of those involved. Some common examples include conversations between colleagues, group meetings, presentations, performance reviews, sales pitches and training/consulting engagements.

When we communicate verbally, we should:

- Convey the message(s) concisely,
- Encourage input from others (and receive feedback without becoming defensive),
- Pay attention to tone,
- Refrain from speaking too often or interrupting others and
- Ask for clarification (when needed).

Online communication

Online and/or electronic tools (i.e., email, instant messenger, video conferencing software, etc.) are often employed in the workplace. These tools are used because they increase efficiency and promote collaboration particularly when participants are not located in the same place.

While there are many benefits to these tools, there are also some challenges. When using email or instant messenger, *tone* can sometimes get lost in the message. Another person may interpret your message differently than you intended. This may create a miscommunication that has to be fixed.

Online messages can also be retained by the recipient. This feature of online communication can be positive when we need to refer back to what was said. But it can also be negative if we are not careful communicators.

Video conferencing software can be a great way to more directly communicate with co-workers and clients that are located in a different place than you are. At the same time, issues with internet connectivity and audio can become a communication barrier. If you are hosting a video conference, these issues should be taken into consideration ahead of time.

Additional communication skills

Additional communication skills needed in the workplace will vary depending on the position and organization. They may include listening, negotiation, problem-solving, and decision-making skills as well as assertiveness (Communication Theory, n.d.). To illustrate how these skills may affect workplace communication, let's look at an example.

Peyton is a graphic designer for a large training organization. This is her/his first job after college. S/He works directly with project managers, instructional designers and technical writers. Peyton manages her/his own workload, but s/he reports to the project managers and is accountable for meeting project deadlines. Consider the relevant communication skills:

- *Listening skills*: Peyton is not a good listener. When meeting with project managers, s/he often doesn't take notes. Later when s/he's working on a project, s/he often doesn't remember exactly what s/he's supposed to do (so s/he guesses) and sometimes, s/he forgets to do something important. This often leads to frustration (both for Peyton and the project managers).
- *Negotiation skills*: Peyton lacks effective negotiation skills. When talking with colleagues, s/he often expresses irritation about the amount of work s/he has and the way they deliver work to her/him. S/He doesn't prioritize her/his project tasks and misses important project deadlines.
- *Problem-solving skills*: Peyton has difficulty solving her/his own problems. When asked by project managers what needs to happen to make her/his work more efficient, Peyton rarely has any ideas. When s/he does, it's usually about other people doing more work for her/him.
- *Decision-making skills*: Peyton also struggles to make decisions. S/He doesn't have a system to track her/his progress or deadlines for projects. When a decision needs to be made, s/he avoids it (hoping it will go away….unfortunately it usually doesn't).
- *Assertiveness*: Because Peyton lacks assertiveness, s/he is often non-responsive in group settings. S/He also refrains from suggesting new ideas or pointing out challenges when communicating with her/his colleagues.

As this example shows communication skills are essential when working on collaborative teams in the workplace. When we lack the necessary skills, our job becomes more difficult. To improve our efficiency and overall job satisfaction, we should consider the ways we can improve our communication skills and seek additional training (if needed). In the next section, we will focus on the dynamics of workplace relationships,

Dynamics of workplace relationships

In the workplace, almost everyone will need to interact with others in some way. We may need to develop working relationships with co-workers, superiors, subordinates, and/or clients. Your organization may have policies regarding appropriate workplace relationships and methods of communication. The foundation of these policies is to guide communication behaviors and create a respectful workplace environment.

Workplace relationships can sometimes be more challenging than other types of relationships such as friendships, romantic relationships or family relationships. For example, workplace relationships may be required (not voluntary) and we may have more difficulty controlling the situation. In this section, we will focus on three types of relationships in the workplace: co-workers, superiors/subordinates, and clients (Floyd, 2017).

Relationships with Co-workers

In the workplace, we may develop relationships with our co-workers. Co-workers are usually peers who have similar levels of power and responsibility. We also share common experiences with co-workers such as working for the same department and supervisor. As a result, we may spend significant time with our co-workers.

When we communicate with co-workers, we are engaged in lateral communication, which is less formal in nature. **Lateral communication** is defined as messages sent and received by people at the same level in an organization (Floyd, 2017).

Because communication is on a level playing field, co-worker relationships may lead to friendships. However, this can be tricky, since the goals of the friendship (social-orientation) may interfere with the goals of the job (task-orientation). Finding a careful balance may be necessary.

Relationships with Superiors and Subordinates

Relationships between superiors and subordinates can be complicated. Superiors typically have more power and responsibility than subordinates. When subordinates communicate with a superior, they engage in *upward communication*, which is generally more formal in nature. **Upward communication** is defined as messages sent by people at lower levels in an organization to people at higher levels (Floyd, 2017).

By comparison, when a superior communicates with a subordinate, he or she engages in *downward communication*. This type of communication tends to be more prescriptive (task-oriented). **Downward communication** is defined as messages sent by people at higher levels in an organization to people at lower levels (Floyd, 2017).

As with co-workers, many supervisors and subordinates become friends. While the difference in power and responsibility can introduce some challenges to these relationships, these types of friendships generally add to job satisfaction.

Relationships with clients

Many people will also interact with clients as part of their job responsibilities. Developing and maintaining strong relationships with clients may be significant to your organization's business goals. Professional and ethical guidelines provided by your organization should follow.

Client relationships may also lead to friendships. Similar to co-worker friendships, friendships with clients can be complicated. It may be important for us to draw a distinction between our personal and professional interactions.

Communication issues in the workplace

Interpersonal relationships in the workplace and differences in communication style can lead to many issues. In this section, we will look at a few examples that related to the workplace: expectations, misunderstandings, cultural differences, generational differences and negative communication.

Expectations

Sometimes one individual can be focused on the social-orientation of their relationship while another may be focused on the task-orientation. This can lead to conflict, particularly in a superior/subordinate relationship. In this situation, we should pay close attention to the communication context. It may guide us toward a resolution.

Lane is the manager of a shoe store, responsible for the daily operations and driving sales. Robin is one of Lane's employees that has significant responsibilities in the store. Lane and Robin found out quickly after working together that they share common interests. At first, Lane found it refreshing to have someone in the workplace to bond with. Lately, however Lane is in the throes of a dilemma.

The problem is, Robin now wants to socialize and talk about non-work related subjects when things need to be accomplished. At work, Lane wants to stay focused on tasks rather than socializing. This situation has developed a rift in their personal and professional relationship because of different expectations. Robin thinks Lane is taking the job too serious and Lane thinks Robin doesn't take the job serious enough.

Misunderstandings

Communication is a complex process in general. This does not change when the context is the workplace. It is important to acknowledge misunderstandings and correct them as soon as possible. For example, a concept known as **groupthink**, describes an occurrence in groups where consensus becomes more important than carefully considering all options (Communication Theory, n.d.). This way of thinking can lead to misunderstandings or drastically bad results. A classic example of groupthink is the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster in 1986. A more recent example is the Astros sign stealing scandal.

Cultural differences

Global diversity is reflected in many organizations both directly and indirectly. Cultural differences in communication may include differences in acceptable verbal and nonverbal practices, communication styles, attitudes towards authority, gender, etc., norms for decision-making just to name a few. When communicating with others, consider not only *what* but *how* you communicate.

Jack is a 38-year old bartender in a popular restaurant with 15-years of experience. Recently, Sage the restaurant manager hired a new server, Blanca who is transgender. Jack is used to telling off-color jokes with other staff members and patrons of the restaurant. Blanca finds many of these jokes offensive and has complained to Sage.

Jack was not pleased when Sage told him to refrain from his locker room humor. Jack thinks it's unfair because of his tenure. "This is how I've always been, why change now?", Jack said. Sage reminded Jack to be culturally sensitive. Jack refuses to refer to Blanca as she or her. This situation may result in Sage having to let Jack go if continues to be disrespectful.

Generational differences

Diversity in the workplace may also include working with people from different generations. Differences in knowledge and experience can create misunderstandings. Cross-training within organizations can be an important step to communicating more effectively in the workplace.

Perry is a Gen X-er who supervises a local gym. In recent months, Perry has become increasing frustrated with the young staff because of generational differences. Most of Perry's staff are Millenials and Generation Z. Often, Perry has to drastically alter messages due to dated references that the staff does not understand. Many of these dated references result in snickers and eye-rolls from the crew.

In addition to a lack of understanding of references, Perry feels like there is a lack of attentiveness on the floor due to smartphone dependence. The young staff insist that they are doing their job just fine, but Perry thinks otherwise. One day, Perry lectured them about interpersonal skills and said, "we need to know how to talk to real people in person rather than texting on the screen". One of the staff members, Skylar remarked, "Ok, Boomer" and Perry lost patience and sent Skylar home for the day.

Negative communication

Sexual harassment, discrimination and hostile work environment are a few examples of negative communication that may occur in the workplace.

Madison is having a difficult time working at a retail clothing store. On a daily basis Madison has to hear sexually explicit comments from co-workers about their relationships. Kennedy and Max are the worst offenders as they discuss subjects not meant for the workplace.

Madison is often teased about being uptight and refusing to answer questions about her/his sex life. In addition, Kennedy and Max gossip about Madison to their employees and even customers. Madison wants to quit or file a complaint but is reluctant because she/he needs to continue to stay current on bills and school expenses.

While many organizations provide their employees with training on these topics, there are also many resources available online such as:

- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: https://www.eeoc.gov
- U.S. Department of Labor: https://www.dol.gov

Summary

Communication skills are essential to building strong relationships, fostering greater collaboration and meeting organizational goals. This module described different types of communication skills needed in the workplace, the dynamics of workplace relationships and a variety of issues that may occur in a work environment. In the workplace, as with other communication contexts, it is important to be aware of other perspectives and adapt to the situation in a professional manner.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Dream Job

Think about your dream job. What skills are necessary to be valuable to the company or organization? With these skills in mind, pair up with a partner and discuss traits and skills desired to acquire the position.

2. Customer Relationships

Is the customer, always right? Ask students to discuss in groups whether (or not) they think the customer is always right. Have them list potential scenarios/issues a customer could face and bring to the attention of a business or organization. Then ask the groups to come up with solutions to those issues and be prepared to defend their answers.

3. Bridging the Gap

Assign students in the class a context based on cultural background, generation, gender, etc. (this should be an attribute that is different than their own background). Ask students to form groups (3-5 students) and construct a story using those contexts to describe a situation where miscommunication may occur in the workplace. The story should describe the situation and provide a resolution. Groups may choose whether the resolution is positive or negative.

Ask each group to present/role pay their story. When each group is done, they should share with the class how they made decisions about how they told their story and why they chose to write it that ways.

After all groups have presented, the instructor should discuss with students some of the broader topics related to working with people from different backgrounds.

4. Workplace Communication

In this activity, the instructor will need to prepare the classroom in advance by moving the desks or chairs into three distinct groups (in different parts of the room). The desks or chairs within a group should be organized in three rows:

· The first row should have one chair,

· The second row should have two chairs and

· The third row should have three chairs.

Repeat this organization for all three groups. If the class is larger, the instructor can add a fourth group or readjust the numbers in each row (keeping in mind, row three should be the biggest, followed by row 2 and row 1 should be the smallest).

Using index cards, write the letter A, B, or C on each card. Note: ‘A’ corresponds with the first row. “B’ corresponds with the second row. “C’ corresponds with the third row. Make sure that you have enough index cards with the appropriate letter to fit with the number of desks or chairs in each row (for all groups).

When students enter the room, hand them one index card and ask them to find a group and sit in an appropriate chair. For example, if a student has a ‘B’ on her/his card, s/he should find a seat in row 2 of one of the groups.

Ask all the A’s to come to a part of the room that is away from the rest of the class and provide them with a business context.

Example:

Your organization just received a huge order for widgets that needs to be filled by the end of next week. You agreed to rush the order because this is an important client. But it will be stressful and difficult to fill this order on time. There may be other clients who are unhappy that their order is being delayed. Your job, as the leaders of the organization, is to accurately communicate what needs to happen with the managers (those sitting in the second row of their group).

Tell them (that much like a CEO of a company), *they can only communicate with their managers*. They *cannot* communicate with the employees directly, even if they see them doing something wrong. Ask them to return to their groups and wait for the signal to begin.

Then, ask all the B’s to join you. Tell them some variation of what you told the A’s, leaving out some of the details. Example:

Someone in the business office make a mistake and your team is behind on several orders. Your job is to listen to your leaders (the A’s) and communicate information to your team members (the C’s) as needed.

Tell them, they can only *listen to their leaders*, but they *speak and listen to their team member*. Ask them to return to their groups and wait for the signal to begin.

Now the instructor is ready to start the activity (the instructor does not need to speak to the C’s). Begin by asking the leaders to speak with their managers about an important business situation.

As the activity goes, the instructor should move around the room to observe each group. If needed, the instructor can add an inject into the activity (such as an angry client threats to…). Note: Once the activity has started, the instructor should only provide injects to the A’s (it will be their job to share information with the B’s and so on).

The goal of this activity is to learn about workplace communication and some of the difficulties that can emerge as a result of the business structure.

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GLOSSARY

Downward communication are messages sent by people at higher levels in an organization to people at lower levels.

Groupthink describes an occurrence in groups where consensus becomes more important than carefully considering all options.

Lateral communication are messages sent and received by people at the same level in an organization.

Upward communication are messages sent by people at lower levels in an organization to people at higher levels.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

12: Conflict

Learning Objectives

- Define interpersonal conflict.
- Recall the components of interpersonal conflict and identify them.
- Distinguish different characteristics of conflict.
- Recall the elements of a communication climate.
- Identify common sources of conflict.
- Identify the various variables in conflict
- Distinguish between sex and gender.
- Apply Face Negotiation Theory in conflict situations.
- Identify and distinguish the five different conflict styles.
- Apply the steps of collaborative conflict.
- Recognize relationship violence.

12.1: What is Conflict?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Define interpersonal conflict.
- Identify components of interpersonal conflict.

WHAT IS CONFLICT?

Stop and think, are you in a conflict currently? If not, what was the last conflict you had? Take it one step further and note the many conflicts that you have experienced in your lifetime. Chances are they differ in circumstances and relationships. However, what you should recognize is that conflict exists, and will continue to take place in your life.

Conflict can take many forms: a very loud argument between friends, the silent treatment a partner may give the other, or a physical altercation. Conflict if utilized correctly can deepen and strengthen a relationship. Folger et al. (2018) define **conflict** as the interaction of interdependent parties who perceive incompatibility and the possibility of interference from others as a result of this incompatibility (p. 28). In order to fully grasp what conflict is, let's break this definition into its various parts.

Components of conflict

Interaction

In order to qualify as conflict there must be an interaction between individuals. Hocker and Wilmot (1985) state for a conflict to exist it must be expressed. The interaction can either be expressed through verbal communication or nonverbal communication. Many may only associate conflict with screaming matches or harsh words. However, conflict can also be expressed through nonverbal communication. For example, if your roommate repeatedly leaves dirty dishes in the sink you could express your unhappiness by declaring to your roommate, "This is so gross, I am tired of seeing your dirty dishes!" Conversely, you could roll your eyes, sigh loudly when you see them, or avoid the situation by continually cleaning the dishes. All of these serve as a way of expressing your unhappiness, thus providing interaction between the two parties. Conflict exists when both parties are aware of it. If one party is simply upset but has not expressed this then conflict does not exist.

Interdependent Parties

Interdependent parties are individuals who are connected in some fashion. Donohue and Kolt (1992) stress the more you enter conflict with someone the more you admit you depend on each other. In the scenario from above if the two roommates do not resolve the dirty dishes then the living situation could continue to downward spiral providing an unhappy living situation for both individuals. In many instances if conflict goes unresolved then the relationship satisfaction will decrease. Even if you find a roommate, neighbor, or co-worker frustrating, you will need to find a way to work through the conflict together or risk continued unhappiness.

Perceived Incompatibility

According to Cupach et. al (2010) "Interpersonal conflict involves two people who strive to achieve goals that may appear incompatible" (p. 4). In our roommate situation if you want a clean sink, then it appears your roommate will lose by having to clean their dishes immediately.

However, in reality a myriad of solutions may exist. Consider these possible solutions: dishes need to be cleaned by a certain time, a rotating chore chart, or using paper products. If any of these solutions solve the conflict then the perceived incompatibility disappears, thus ending the conflict.

Unfortunately, many are unable to see that the incompatibility between the two parties are in fact a perceived incompatibility. If both parties work at the conflict the frame of mind that you are in it together, then solutions may arise, ending the perceived incompatibility.

Scarce Resources or Rewards

Conflict can also exist because you believe there is not enough of something to go around. Scare resources can be both material or social (Van de Vliert, 1997). For example, time is a resource and can often lead to many conflicts. As a student you have many obligations. You have to decide what warrants your time, if you choose one activity over another you can see how this can result in conflict with another area.

Conflict exists. It will take place in all your relationships. The first step in understanding conflict is recognizing its various components. Learning how to navigate conflict is crucial to managing relationships.

Summary

In this Module, we defined conflict and looked at its various components individually. Conflict exists when it is expressed, or an interaction takes place between the interdependent parties. Interdependent parties rely on each other in some way and because of this interdependence there is a perceived incompatibility usually over a scarce resource or reward. A scarce resource or reward is when there is not enough of something and only one party can obtain it. Conflict when done correctly can enhance and grow a relationship.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. What's missing?

Create scenarios missing elements of interpersonal conflict. Have students explain why it is does not meet the definition of interpersonal conflict.

Example: Susie is upset with how loud her upstairs neighbors are. However, she has not said or expressed to them how irritated she is, why is this not interpersonal conflict?

2. Perceived Incompatibility

Create scenarios with perceived incompatibility, and have students rewrite the scenarios to have compatibility including multiple solutions. Bonus: have students act out the scenarios.

3. Scarce Resources or Rewards: Discussion Questions

Consider you must choose between studying for your Communication course or attend your friend's birthday party, which do you choose? What is the scarce resource? If you choose to study, how will that impact the friendship? If possible, how can you accomplish both studying and attending the party?

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GLOSSARY

Interdependent: parties who rely on each other in some fashion.

Interpersonal conflict: the interaction of interdependent parties who perceive incompatibility and the possibility of interference from others as a result of this incompatibility

MEDIA

1. **Grey's Anatomy Conflict clip**

Watch the Grey's Anatomy clip and discuss the conflict. Note the various parts of conflict exhibited in the clip. You can find the link here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=geDcACgdWtk

2. **TedTalk: How Understanding Conflict Can Help Improve Our Lives**

Discuss this clip and the various parts of the conflict example presented. Have students pay particular attention to scarce resources and perceived incompatibly. Bonus: have students share when a conflict has helped them grow in a relationship either with partners, a group or with the class. The link is here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdDQSHyyUic

3. **Interdependence Conflict**

Watch The Big Bang Theory Authorship Conflict. Utilize the clip to discuss interdependence in conflict. You can view the link here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FtIDDo6Brk

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12.2: Conflict in Interpersonal Relationships

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Distinguish different characteristics of conflict.
- Recall the elements of a communication climate.
- Identify common sources of conflict.

CONFLICT IN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Conflict exists and will take place across all your relationships. There are key characteristics to conflict that warrant discussion. First, conflict is inevitable and natural. It can be destructive or constructive and take place directly or indirectly. We will examine how the communication climate can affect conflict, and how to construct a positive communication climate. Relational spirals and power can influence how conflict is enacted and finally we will explore some common sources of conflict.

Conflict is inevitable and natural

In the vast relationships you encounter, conflict will arise. Some conflicts will have higher stakes due to the nature of the relationship. Think about your family and the amount of conflict you experience in this aspect. The types of conflict can range from who is responsible for what chores, navigating a work life balance or how to interact with extended family members.

Conflict, if used correctly, can enhance interpersonal relationships. It allows the parties involved in the relationship to grow deeper and gain an understanding of another's perspective or position. In some instances, we focus much on our positions, such as I want this and the other person wants that. We frame the conflict as parties unable to achieve a mutually agreed solution. However, if we are able to view the conflict from the other party's perspective this can help predict the other person's behavior, and help to find a mutually acceptable solution (Castro, 2016). Therefore, it is necessary to learn how to navigate conflict in a healthy fashion. Being able to see conflict in a new perspective will give you the ability to fully immerse yourself into a conflict without the fear of damaging your relationship.

Conflict is destructive or constructive

In both healthy and unhealthy relationships conflict will take place. However, it is how the conflict is managed that determines the long-lasting effects of the experienced conflict. In romantic unhappy relationships couples engage in more evaluative behaviors: use of "You" language or defensive behaviors. Whereas, healthy romantic couples utilized a collaborative approach to conflict to break down the issue and work together to solve the problem (Greef and De Bruyne, 2000).

Destructive behaviors focus on the other party in the relationship and not the relationship as a whole. If you are involved in an argument with a parent regarding a missed curfew, and scream "You're so ridiculous, why don't you trust me? No one else has to be home by midnight!" The emphasis is on your parents' reaction to your action, and not the issue at hand. Place yourself in your parents' frame of mind. First, why would they impose a midnight curfew? It may not mean they do not trust you, but simply a safety issue. They placed a curfew to help keep you safe. Additionally, you may encourage your parents to see the situation from your point of view. Do they remember wanting to stay out longer than they were permitted? Working together and through the conflict can leave both parties more satisfied with the outcome and the relationship.

Conflict is direct or indirect

Remind yourself the last time a friend was upset with you. How did you know? Did they angrily tell you that you messed up? Or did they say, "You hurt my feelings." Or, perhaps they did not address their hurt feelings, but when you ask how their day was you were met with a short and quick, "Fine." You then tried to engage in further conversation only to be answered with minimal answers, or no answers at all. This scenario causes you to utilize your perception checking skills and ask your friend if they are indeed upset with you.

Conflict can take place both directly and indirectly. **Direct conflict** is the verbalization of the conflict occurring. Looking at the previous example it is the direct "You hurt my feelings." **Indirect conflict** is conflict through more nonverbal communication. It can manifest in stiff body posture, indirect body orientation, crossed arms, harsh tones, rolling of eyes, silences/pauses or any combination of these communication behaviors. Let's face it when someone is upset with us, even if they have not blatantly told us, we know it. We are able to decipher their unhappiness through their nonverbal cues.

Communication climate

A communication climate is the overall tone of the relationship. It is how the two parties interact with another. Different relationships have different communication climates, and they can either be a positive or negative climate. A communication climate can aid in managing or hindering the conflict. Therefore, it is important to understand the components of a communication climate.

Confirming and disconfirming messages

Confirming messages are messages that validate the other person. These messages make the other person feel valued and that they matter. They also provide the most effective support for the other person because they are said to be person-centered. **Person-centered messages** accept the legitimacy of the other person's feelings (Burleson, 1987). Person-centered messages are constructed in a way that expresses the other person is important and that the other person's perspective is legitimate and may even encourage the other person to voice those feelings (Burleson, 1994). Confirming messages may appear as any of the following types of messages: endorsement, acknowledgement or recognition.

Endorsement is a message that completely endorses what the other person is saying. For example you can tell your romantic partner, "I can understand why that was frustrating." This message validates their feelings and provides information that you have listened to them. Endorsing a message does not necessarily mean that you completely agree with what they are saying, but rather can find something they are saying to endorse.

Acknowledgement is responding to your speaking partner. This can be done both through verbal and nonverbal communication. However, you may acknowledge your friend mainly through your nonverbal communication. For example, if your friend is having a bad day and you want to acknowledge what they are saying; what do you look like? What are you doing? You may notice that you are turned toward them, looking at their face, and giving them your undivided attention. You are acknowledging them, and thus providing a positive communication climate.

Finally, you may provide a confirming message by using **recognition.** This may seem a bit silly, but how many times have you been distracted by your cell phone, while someone is speaking with you? You may be failing to recognize the other person, and therefore not providing validation for your partner. As we will explore later in the unit, when our partners perceive that we are ignoring them, we are disconfirming them and devaluing their attempts at communication with us.

Unfortunately, disconfirming messages may be present in the communication interaction. **Disconfirming messages** are messages that leave your communication partner feeling invalidated or disrespected and, ultimately not listened to. Impervious responses, interrupting responses, irrelevant responses, tangential responses, impersonal responses, or ambiguous responses are all types of disconfirming messages (Sillars, Coletti, Parry, & Rogers, 1982).

An **impervious response** is a response that fails to recognize your communication partner. An example of an impervious response is reading a text message from your mom but failing to respond to it. She might say, "You need to get milk at the store" and then you reply, "I didn't get my oil changed." You have not recognized your mom's message and have not responded with the correct topic in this scenario.

Interrupting responses are responses that interrupts the speaker. These messages do not allow for the speaker to finish with their speaking turn. How many times have you interrupted someone because you just had to say what you wanted? Your interrupting response gives the perception that what you have to say is more important than your partner's message.

Irrelevant responses are responses that do not coordinate with the speaker's previous message. These messages indicate that you have not listened to your partner and therefore do not value what they have said. Think back to a time when you were with a friend and they were going on and on about something important to them, however you unknowingly checked out of the conversation, but then you realized your friend expected a response from you. So, you respond with "Yeah, that sounds great." However, your friend's look on their face made you realize that your response was not an accurate response. You have failed to acknowledge your friend's message.

Tangential responses are responses used to steer the conversation in a new direction. You do acknowledge what your speaking partner has said, however your response guides the conversation to a different topic or direction. For example, if you and your employer are discussing the current work project, but you are curious about who will be promoted next month; you may utilize the current conversation to get clarity regarding the promotion. "So, since this project is going so smoothly. You think it will impact the promotion being offered?"

Impersonal responses remove the personal aspects of the relationship. It is where one party responds to the message in an impersonal fashion, either by offering a monologue or using overgeneralized statements. These types of messages do not recognize

the validity of the unique relationship between the two parties.

Lastly, an **ambiguous response** is a response that does not provide proper feedback to the message. These messages typically have multiple meanings and are hard to interrupt. Perhaps your dad asks who was at the party last weekend, in order to avoid saying your romantic interest attended, you respond with "Oh you know, just some people." Your response acknowledges the question, but does not provide any real feedback.

In order to foster a supportive communication environment, it is imperative to construct confirming messages. These messages leave your partner feeling validated and listened to, whereas disconfirming messages invalidate your partner. See Table 1 below for strategies to create positive communicate climates. Now let's explore defensive and supportive communication environments next.

Utilize confirming messages	Validate your communication partner by endorsing what they are saying or feeling. Be present in the communication process.
Utilize the six behaviors that promote supportive communication	• Descriptive messages • Focus on inquiry/problem orientation • Spontaneity • Empathetic messages • Equality between the parties • Provisional messages
Utilize reinforcing positive relational spirals	Match your partners confirming messages with confirming messages to create a positive relational spiral.

Table 12.2.1: How to Create Positive Communication Climates

Defensive and Supportive Communication

Dr. Jack Gibb (1961) states that there are six behaviors that fall into a defensive communication climate and six behaviors that fall into a supportive climate. Each of these behaviors will enhance or dismantle the communication climate. A defensive climate contains evaluative messages, control, strategy, neutrality, superiority, and certainty, whereas a supportive climate is made up of descriptive messages, focus on inquiry/problem orientation, spontaneity, empathy, equality, and provisional messages.

Evaluative messages judge the other person. They carry judgments of good or bad, right or wrong, and display nonverbal cues of evaluation. If your romantic partner has on an mismatched outfit you could say "Are you seriously going to wear that," while stressing the word seriously and wrinkling your nose in disdain. You have evaluated the other person. In reality evaluative messages can be much more hurtful than a comment over an outfit, as we will soon see, when a partner calls their partner crazy or thoughtless it can have a long-lasting impact on the relationship.

Descriptive messages are messages with clear descriptive language without loaded words or judgmental cues. Instead of evaluating your friend's drinking behavior, you could describe what you are seeing from your perspective. Describing another person's behaviors from your perspective, allows you to check your perspective with your friend. "I am noticing that last Thursday, instead of going to class, you stayed in the apartment and drank. Is that what happened?" The friend will be less likely to respond defensively and can also slow down the pace of the argument. Slowing down leaves room for your friend to provide their side of the story. This type of exchange can be less upsetting than starting your comments with an evaluative statement. "You are drinking way too much!" Think about it, if someone evaluates you, do you want to continue in that conversation intelligently?

Control attempts to impose one's position on others, sometimes through coercion or manipulation. However, inquiry or problem orientation focuses on working together to understand issues or solve problems. This is a way to cooperatively work together to solve the problem. For example, if you only have access to one working vehicle, but both you and your partner need the vehicle to get to work you could respond by saying "It's really my car. I pay for it, so I'm taking it to work. Maybe take an Uber." or you could approach the situation by working together. "What time do you go in? Okay I go in an hour later, so maybe I can drop you off and I can get you a little late from work. Maybe you could take a book to read, or do something while you wait, or maybe see if you can find a ride from a co-worker? What do you think?" The second option leaves room for the problem to be discussed and alternatives to help solve the one car dilemma.

Strategic messages suggest the speaker is trying to direct others and are not open to different ideas. When a speaker is **spontaneous** their messages are unplanned and are constructed without much thought to hidden motives. Some people seem to think of every conversation as a chess match. If you are not one of these people, you are most likely pretty spontaneous in your messages. This allows the speaker to be open to others' messages. Let's say that you are about to move into a new apartment, a

strategic message would sound like, “Hey, remember how I helped you move last month. I am moving on Friday, and now you owe me a favor.” How would you feel if you were approached with this message? You might think, “Oh no, here comes that friend who always traps me into owing them a favor. They always seem to want something from me”

Neutral versus empathetic messages can impact the communication climate. **Neutral messages** demonstrate a lack of interest, or indifference. However, **empathetic messages** convey interest and understanding. These messages are responsive to others’ feelings and thoughts. A classmates’ pet has just died and you could respond with a casual “That sucks.” or “I remember when I had to put my dog to sleep. That was really hard. How are you feeling?” The first comment could be very off hand and not interested in nor sympathetic to the situation. The second message offers support and understanding in that it acknowledges what the other person is feeling and doesn’t tell them what to feel.

When a message is constructed in a superior manner, the message suggests the speaker is **superior** and others are inadequate or have little to offer. Messages that are based around **equality** signal that all parties are worthy of equal contribution and have valid viewpoints or ideas. If you are in a work meeting and your team lead monopolizes the conversation with only their ideas, they are suggesting their ideas are superior to others’. Hopefully, you have worked with someone who values your input and seeks it out. What would a message sound like from a team lead who values their employees’ ideas? In your experience, what have you heard?

Finally, messages can either be constructed with certainty or provisionally. Messages that do not offer alternatives or are very black and white are **certainty messages**. For example, “The right thing to do is obvious.” However, a **provisional message** invites others’ points of view. Instead you could say, “I know what I would do in that situation, but what do you think you would do?” The second message allows for the viewpoint of the other party.

As you can see how a message is constructed can lead to either a conversation where parties seek out solutions together or they can create a hostile communication climate. The more defensive messages are used, the more likely your conflict will escalate and potentially damage your relationship. Instead, you want to use supportive communication displayed in Table 2 below. In our next section, we will see how defensive messages can create escalatory relational spirals.

Descriptive messages	Use descriptive statements and avoid evaluative language. Use language that is free of judgement
Focus on Inquiry/Problem Orientation	Focus on solving the problem, not on the other person’s character
Spontaneity	Messages are unplanned and free of hidden motives
Empathetic messages	Construct messages that are empathetic and supportive in nature
Equality between the parties	Present yourself as an equal in the communication process
Provisional messages	Create messages the invite opinions and points of view from the other party

Table 12.2.2 What does supportive communication look like?

Relational Spirals

As messages are constructed, they can lead to relational spirals developing. These spirals can be reinforcing, escalating, or avoiding. A relational spiral is where the communication pattern is reinforced by the parties in the relationship. The spirals have the potential to be reinforcing, escalating or avoiding. Also note that not all of these spirals lead to conflict in relationships.

In a **positive reinforcing spiral,** partners communicate positive behaviors such as confirming messages. If you remember earlier in this unit, these positive messages are seen as person-centered. Positive reinforcing spirals will be unlikely to lead to conflict because both partners agree in the conversation.

Escalating spirals consist of partners reinforcing disconfirming messages with disconfirming messages. For example, partners may start to **cross-complain** or trade complaints rather than addressing the first person’s complaint (Gottman, Markman, and Notarius, 1977). Felson (1984) researched what sequence of communicative behaviors most strongly predicted violence. When one person violated a rule, the other would order the person to stop. When what followed was an exchange of insults, the partners were most likely to engage in escalating violence.

A third type of spiral is an **avoiding spiral** is where partners actively avoid conflict or discussion. As both partners avoid conflict, they experience less arguments but also increased expectations to withhold complaints that may lead to arguments.

Relational spirals develop based on the messages used in the communication climate. These spirals can be reinforcing, escalating or avoiding spirals. In a positive reinforcing spiral conflict will likely not result in conflict as both parties agree or reinforce the messages presented in the communication climate. However, in escalating or avoiding spirals conflict can emerge as a result of the messages present in the interactions.

Power and conflict

Power exists in all relationships. Perhaps a better way to describe power is with the word influence. We are constantly trying to influence one another, or exert our power over our communication partner. Power can play a very specific role in conflict. If we focus on our power within our relationship and not the other party, we may try to yield it to our advantage.

You can see how this may take place in a workplace environment. In most organizations there is a hierarchy and with higher positions comes power. If you are debating the next step in the work project, a manager may try to yield their power by stating, "Well, as your manager I believe we should…" This type of message is trying to influence you to agree with what they have to say by focusing on their position.

However, how does power look in friendships or romantic relationships? Think about the last time you tried to influence your friend or romantic partner to do what you wanted. This is you exerting your power in the relationship. You are trying to influence them to do what you wanted!

Sources of conflict

As we have established conflict is a common occurrence. It is going to happen, whether you like it or not. There are areas where conflict is more likely to arise. These include personal criticism, families, finances, household chores, and when the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are present. Let's explore each of these in detail.

Personal criticism

We discussed how we phrase our communication message can impact how others will receive it. If we are engaging in conflict but fail to attack the problem, and instead attack our communication partner then the likelihood of the conflict finding resolution is minimal.

If you are working on a project due for class, and the research is just not coming together you can respond a couple of ways: I can't believe you don't know how to do research! All of this time and you have nothing worth adding, jeeze how can you be so incompetent?! If you were presented with this message, how would you respond? Probably not great. This type of message attacks the intelligence of a person, and does not help to solve the task at hand.

In times more often than not we may resort to personal attacks. In romantic relationships if you judge your partners' character in a demeaning way the conflict may go left unresolved or escalate the issue.

How many times have you compared how stressed out you are to someone else? You may believe that they could not possibly be as stressed as you are and in turn express this to them. However, you have now diminished your communication partner's feelings by minimizing their feelings of stress.

No one likes to feel judged; we want to feel valued and appreciated, especially in our interpersonal relationships. If we use personal attacks in our communication patterns, this is not going to deepen our relationships, if anything it may only lead to relationships dissolving all around us. This is not to say that you cannot have an opinion, you definitely can! However, how can you present it without offending your partner and allowing the relationship to grow by working through the issue?

Families

Our families prove a great source for conflict. There are numerous ways family can lead to conflict. As a child it could have been as simple as your parents telling you could not do something, usually because it was deemed unsafe from a parenting point of view. However, jumping off the couch was so much fun, how dare they tell you to stop doing that?! Or, how about when you ran errands with your parents, and they told you that the toy you wanted was not going to be bought?

More and more families are blended families. Merging two families to create a new one can lead to many conflicts. Family members will need to negotiate their place in the new family, and step-parents will need to understand their place with their stepchild. Mothers who brought their own children into the relationship often protected their child from the stepfather, if they perceived the stepfather was misjudging or giving unequal treatment (Weaver & Coleman, 2010) In order to protect the child from the stepparent this can result in conflict between partners, or even stepparent and stepchild.

Additionally, the demand-withdraw pattern in blended families negatively affected the moods of the partners when husbands engaged in the demand-withdraw pattern. Their use of demand-withdraw pattern impacted how the husband and wife both felt; however, when the wife demanded and the husband withdrew it only affected the wife's mood (King & DeLongis, 2013).

If you decide to enter a long-term romantic relationship, you will have to negotiate with your partner how to navigate in-laws. How involved will they be in your relationship? Some cultures in-laws are a vital component of the relationship. Parents who help to find a partner for their child may be very involved in their child's dating life, to ensure the future son or daughter in-law contain desired qualities, such as family oriented or kind (Apostolou, 2014). Now, imagine you are dating someone your parents deem unworthy, this can lead to conflict between you and your parents, and even your partner and your parents.

Finances

Think about how much money you have right now. Now think about how much debt you have. Do you share this information with your partner? How in depth do you discuss your finances with your partner? Do you combine bank accounts? Do you purchase property before getting married? These are all types of reasons you and your partner may engage in conflict.

In a household, partners might openly discuss finances and debt. How money is spent and how much money is spent can also lead to conflict. If partners are not dependent on each other financially, or have not combined bank accounts, in reality they could go out and buy anything they wanted, as long as they cover the necessary household bills. However, some partners find it is part of effective communication to have discussions about what is okay to spend money and what is considered excessive. If one partner wants to make a large purchase, they discuss with the other person if that is okay or if they feel that purchase could put them into a financial bind. For example, If one partner attends three shows or concerts a month, it might be excessive. The partners could discuss this and decide together if repeatedly purchasing concert tickets is okay or if it is excessive.

Another point of contention that may arise due to spending is how often you go out to eat. Eating out can become very costly and if partners do not agree on how often or how much of your finances is going toward food can cause conflict. If one partner prefers to spend money towards groceries and meal prepping; however, the other partner feels that going out to eat "isn't that big of deal" the trips out can quickly add up, couple this with wasted food and conflict can ensue.

If partners do not discuss their finances or come to an agreement on how to spend their money this can lead to marital dissatisfaction. If a partner lacks confidence in their partner's handling of finances or consistent arguing over finances occurs, this can have a negative impact on marital satisfaction (Duba et al., 2012). Finances can be a tricky topic, and partners will need to learn how to discuss them in a way that promotes conversation or risk constant conflict.

Household chores

Whether you live with a roommate or with your significant other there will be conflict over who is responsible for what chores. Do you and your roommate alternate between who cleans the kitchen? Who cooks? Who buys the groceries? Who cleans the bathroom? Laundry? These are all chores that need to be accomplished in a household but determining who is responsible for them can lead to conflict.

If you live with a roommate conflict can rise over shared spaces. What is a satisfactory state of the living area and kitchen? If you have a higher need to have a clean presentable area than your roommate conflict will likely occur.

Living with a significant other and dividing household responsibilities can cause conflict between partners. In traditionally masculine heterosexual romantic relationships, it was found that women completed more than double the amount of household responsibilities of their male partners (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018). Additionally, in the same study it was found that women were typically involved in more feminine chores, such as childcare or shopping, whereas men were more involved in masculine chores (home repairs and family management). You will need to identify what will be acceptable in your own household.

Gottman's four Horsemen of the apocalypse

Gottman and Levenson (2000) argued that there are four communication behaviors that are the highly corrosive to relationship satisfaction of marital partners: criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling. In their research they were able to predict the timing of the end of a marital relationship. These behaviors are known as the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Let's explore these behaviors more in depth.

Criticism, is just that-criticizing your partner. It attacks who they are as a person. The message does not show that you value them as a person, and instead attacks their character. For example, "I can't believe you didn't think how you staying out late would impact my plans. You are so selfish!" According to the Gottman Institute (Lisitsa, 2013) the importance is to be able to distinguish

between a complaint and criticism. You can voice a complaint without criticizing your partner, “I mentioned I had those plans scheduled, so when you didn’t text or call that you were running late I got worried I thought something had happened to you.”

The appearance of criticism does not automatically mean a relationship will end. However, if it becomes a habitual communication behavior in the relationship, it allows for other negative behaviors to become part of your relationship.

Contempt. This communication behavior is the deadliest of the communication behaviors and is the “single greatest predictor of divorce” (Lisitsa, 2013, para 7). Contempt is where you treat your partner as if they are on a lower plane or lesser worthy of respect than you. You may mock or ridicule them. Additionally, you may demonstrate your contempt toward your partner through your nonverbal communication, such as eye rolling or sarcastic tones. These messages show a lack of empathy and respect toward your partner.

Defensiveness. This behavior is usually used when a pattern of criticism is used. We have all been on the defensive at some point in our lives; however, if this becomes the go-to response then it may be a sign that your relationship is not in the best place. A defensive message tends to provide excuses and may in turn reverse the blame on their partner (Lisitsa, 2013). For example, a defensive message may sound like, “I don’t know why you expected me to go to the grocery store after work. You know I travel all day and the last thing I want to do is be responsible for what we eat, and it not be up to your standards. Why didn’t you just go?”

Stonewalling. Stonewalling is shutting down from your partner. One partner withdraws from the other and stops interactions completely. The partner does not respond and can use other behaviors to seem busy to avoid their partner. For example, if one partner wants to discuss a conflict the other partner may engage in stonewalling, by blatantly ignoring their partner or finding something else to do to appear busy (Lisitsa, 2013). Often this stonewalling involves burying one’s face in the nearest smart phone instead of listening to your partner or “**phubbing**”. Have you stared at your phone intentionally to ignore your partner? Did your partner want to discuss something with you at the time?

If these four communication behaviors start to show in your relationship, it is in your best interest to deter them by utilizing good conflict management. Once these Horsemen take up residence in your relationship and if nothing is done to counteract them then it is likely the relationship will terminate because one or both partners will perceive the relationship as dissatisfying.

Conflict exists and will take place across all your relationships. Key characteristics to conflict include conflict is inevitable and natural. It can be destructive or constructive and take place directly or indirectly. The communication climate can affect conflict, and how we construct messages can create an overall positive communication climate. Relational spirals and power can influence how conflict is enacted and finally common sources of conflict will lend their selves to conflict occurrence.

Summary

Conflict is inevitable and can take place directly or indirectly. Conflict will occur across all your relationships and how you express yourself can be constructive or destructive to your relationship. The messages constructed between yourself and your communication partner can create a supportive or defensive communication climate. Based on the message construction a reinforcing, escalating, or avoiding relational spiral may take shape in the communication climate. Your view of power dynamics in your relationships will impact how you engage in conflict. We looked at common sources of conflict which include personal criticism, families, finances, household chores, and Gottman’s Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Discussion question: What do you think about the saying, “the person with the most power has the ability to leave”?

2. Scenario Creation: Have students create scenarios containing characteristics of conflict. Preplanning: have students type out conflict scenarios, including the conversation. Have students label the characteristics of conflict in their scenario. Act out scenes for class.

3. Role Play: Have student read and take turns role playing the following scene in dyads. The first time that they perform it, they should follow the script. Then, have them try to identify the characteristics of conflict that are discussed in the unit. Lastly, have students try to re-write the script to allow for a more supportive climate during this conflict. Have students share with the rest of the class.

A defensive climate contains evaluative messages, control, strategy, neutrality, superiority, and certainty, whereas a supportive climate is made up of descriptive messages, focus on inquiry/problem orientation, spontaneity, empathy, equality, and provisional messages.

Script: Conflict

SCENE: These partners want to go on a bicycle ride. They are standing with their bikes near Partner 2's garage. They have been trying to decide where to go have a picnic and haven't been able to agree.

Partner 2: So, the next thing you would have to do is pump up your tires… If we go near the highway it could be dangerous but it is a longer route to go near the school… hmm.

Partner 1: Are we ready yet? You're driving me crazy! Why can't you decide where you want to bike? It isn't a life and death decision. Just pick already!

Partner 2: I'm a good bicyclist but you aren't. I know what I'm doing. But we should bike on a safer road than right by the highway. I know cyclists who have gotten hit by cars there.

Partner 1: That is ridiculous! I am just as good at bicycling as you!

Partner 2: Well, I am just trying to keep you safe. Sure, we can go on that busy death trap of a road--You are so reckless! You won't always be so lucky you know!

Partner 1: [Rolls eyes and leaves on their bicycle. Partner two is left in the hot garage alone.]

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GLOSSARY

Ambiguous response: A response that does not provide proper feedback to the message.

Avoiding spiral: Partners actively avoid conflict or discussion.

Certainty messages: Messages that do not offer alternatives.

Confirming messages: Messages that validate the other person.

Contempt: Treating your partner as if they are inferior to you. You may mock, or ridicule them.

Criticism: Messages that do not show that you value your communication partner as a person, and instead attacks their character.

Defensiveness: Messages that tend to provide excuses and may in turn reverse the blame on their partner.

Descriptive messages: Messages with clear descriptive language without loaded words or judgmental cues.

Disconfirming messages: Messages that leave your communication partner feeling invalidated or disrespected and, ultimately not listened to.

Empathetic messages: Messages that convey interest and understanding.

Equality messages: Messages that signal that all parties are worthy of equal contribution and have valid viewpoints or ideas.

Escalating spiral: Partners reinforce disconfirming messages with disconfirming messages.

Evaluative messages: Messages that evaluate the other person.

Impersonal response: A response which removes the personal aspects of the relationship.

Impervious response: A response that fails to recognize your communication partner.

Interrupting response: A response that interrupts the speaker.

Irrelevant responses: A response that does not coordinate with the speaker's previous message.

Neutral messages: Messages that demonstrate a lack of interest, or indifference.

Phubbing: Snubbing or ignoring a conversational partner by looking at your phone instead of responding.

Power: The ability to influence others.

Provisional messages: Messages that invite others' points of view.

Reinforcing spiral: When either positive or negative behaviors are reinforced by the other partner.

Spontaneous messages: Messages that are unplanned and free of hidden motives.

Stonewalling: Shutting down from your partner. One partner withdraws from the other and stops interactions completely.

Strategic messages: The speaker is trying to direct others and are not open to different ideas.

Superior messages: The message suggests the speaker is superior and others are inadequate or have little to offer.

Tangential responses: A response used to steer the conversation in a new direction.

MEDIA

1. **Friends and Escalatory Spirals:** How do the following clips from Friends, demonstrate escalatory spirals? What could they say in order to manage the conflict? What advice would you give to this couple in order to avoid the Four Horseman of the Apocalypse?.

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWwgLKPTLT0 Ross and Rachel take a break
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZkArA-WSus Ross and Rachel, "But we were on a break"

2. **Whose Afraid of Virginia Woolf and Defensive Climates?** Watch the following clip from Whose Afraid of Virginia Woolf? How does George contribute to the defensive climate in this scene? How does Martha contribute? What are examples of Four Horseman of the Apocalypse? How does the time of night and use of alcohol further impact George and Martha's responses? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ca77z9dsEM

12.3: Variables in Conflict

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Identify the various variables in conflict.
- Explain how sex and gender influence conflict.
- Apply Face Negotiation Theory in conflict situations.

VARIABLES IN CONFLICT

There are many aspects that influence conflict. Culture impacts how we engage in conflict, as well as sex and gender. Your personality and expectations will determine how you react in conflict. And, with our growing use of technology in interpersonal relationships, technology impacts how we participate in conflict.

Culture and Conflict

Write down the cultures you identify with. For a quick refresher review Unit 4, as you can see you probably identify with many different cultures. Your culture will impact how you respond to conflict.

Think of how you view yourself and how you would define your self-concept. Cross (2011) states that you will define yourself either independently or interdependently. Westerners were thought to have an **independent self-construal** meaning they placed emphasis on their traits, preferences, wishes, and goals over the group. Conversely, East Asians were thought to have an **interdependent self-construal**. This places more meaning of a connectedness with others within the group, placing the group goals over their own goals. Depending on whether you identify as independent self-construal or interdependent self-construal will impact how you interact with conflict.

Does your culture reflect a high context or low context value? In high context cultures if a conflict is recognized an indirect approach may be utilized, whereas low context cultures use more of a direct approach.

One theoretical approach to conflict is **Face Negotiation Theory** (Ting-Toomey, 1998) and the use of facework. Facework is the "communicative strategies you use to enact self-face and to uphold, support, or challenge another person's face" (Oetzel et al., 2000, p. 398).

Face Negotiation Theory states:

1. People in all cultures will try to maintain face in all communication scenarios;
2. Saving face is more important in emotionally vulnerable situations; such as situations that could be potentially embarrassing or conflict inducing situations;
3. Dependent on whether the culture is dominantly individualistic or collectivistic will determine the amount of facework that goes into the communication situation.

In high context collectivistic cultures, the conflict will be viewed from the perspective of both parties. Therefore, in an effort to maintain faces for all parties, an indirect approach to conflict may be used. In a study conducted by Croucher et al. (2012) they noted that individuals who identified with either India or Thailand cultures, they utilized more non-confrontational strategies. These strategies included avoidance or obliging behaviors.

In low context individualistic cultures, a more dominating approach to conflict may be used. In the same study individuals who identified with the American or Irish culture tended to use a more dominating approach to conflict (Croucher, et al., 2012). These individuals may try to control the conflict over solving the situation.

High context cultures utilized a more solution-oriented styles more than low context cultures (Croucher et al., 2012). These styles work to solve the problem together rather than control the other party. When it comes to facework, if you work with your communication partner to solve the problem then you are potentially saving their ego, opposed to trying to control them.

Sex, gender, and conflict

Your sex and gender can influence your approach to conflict. If you recall, sex is a person's biology, whereas your gender is a "complex, culturally-constructed and psychologically-based perception of oneself as feminine, masculine, or androgynous" (Beebe et al., 2019, p. 119). Therefore, a biological female can be masculine or a biological male can be feminine. Some individuals identify as androgynous, meaning they blend traits from both masculine and feminine perspectives.

As our society grows and becomes more open, we are now encountering more individuals who identify as transgender. **Transgender** individuals are individuals whose "gender identity is different than the sex assigned at birth" (Human Rights Campaign, 2020, para. 2).

Each of these components, sex and gender, will influence how we approach conflict. Feminine women found avoidance strategies to conflict more dissatisfying than men (Afifi et al., 2012). This could be that feminine women are more socialized to discuss the nature of a relationship and thus less satisfied when their partner avoided a conflict. If a conflict can be used to grow a relationship and the partner is avoiding, then the potential to become deeper and more intimate in the relationship is lost.

Furthermore, research has indicated that in married couples women will demand in the relationship only to be followed by a withdrawal pattern from their partner. This type of demand/withdraw pattern can lead to marital dissatisfaction (Christensen & Heavey, 1990). In reference to conflict, if a woman demands something of their husband, for example being more involved with their dog parenting, but is met with the husband withdrawing or avoiding the topic, then this pattern can negatively impact the wife's marital satisfaction.

Transgendered persons may experience conflict when transitioning in a romantic relationship. This relationship is further compounded when a child or children are present. The decision to transition can have internal conflict, but to verbalize the transition to the romantic partner can result in the following scenarios: intimate joint, rational separation or emotional dissolution (Dierckx et al., 2019).

In the intimate joint result the transgendered's romantic partner responds with understanding. The partners renegotiate their relationship and intimacy through the transition process. Rational separation results in the transgendered's romantic partner reacting with disbelief regarding the transition, but ultimately wants to be part of the process. The romantic partner tends to feel insecure in the relationship and the protector of the children. Ultimately, the couple navigates the relationship together and if they choose to dissolve the relationship, it is done mutually. Finally, in emotional dissolution the **cis partner** (the partner whose sex matches their gender) reacts with hostility toward their transitioning partner and will unilaterally dissolve the relationship (Dierckx et al., 2019).

Navigating the transition process can be difficult, however if a romantic partner is involved this can exacerbate the transition process. Dependent on how the romantic partner responds to the transition process will impact how relational partners respond to each other and interact with each other.

Dependent on your sex and gender will influence how you react to conflict. Feminine women find avoiding strategies to be more dissatisfying than masculine men in relationships. Demand withdrawal pattern can lower marital satisfaction in heterosexual relationships. Transgendered persons must navigate romantic relationships and determine how to interact with their partners throughout the process. Each of these components impact how conflict is approached.

Verbal aggression and conflict

Verbal aggression is a set of communication behaviors used to attack another person. These behaviors can negatively impact the relationship. Our first ways on how to communicate is through our family structure, this includes how you react to conflict. Think about it; how did your family respond to conflict? Do you mimic these behaviors or did you change how you interact because you did not want to repeat those behaviors?

In some families the use of verbal aggression is common, and in turn when we enter romantic relationships the use of verbal aggression may be seen as appropriate and acceptable communication behaviors. Because verbal aggression attacks the other person it can lead to the perception of the destructive nature of conflict. Additionally, the use of verbal aggression is endorsed as a strategy when the partner is trying to achieve a non-relational goal. This perception can lead to the use of more aggressive conflict behaviors (Aloia, 2018).

If verbal aggression is being used in a romantic relationship, how does that impact the relationship? If the partner's goal is to win the conflict then verbal aggression may be utilized to achieve this goal. However, if your goal is to work through the conflict then verbal aggression should be avoided as verbal aggression only aides in dismantling the other person's character. If someone attacks you as a person, do you want to work through conflict with them? Probably not.

Technology and conflict

We live in a world where we are connected all the time. Stop right now, and think how many ways you are connected. Do you have your phone next to you? Are you reading this on your phone, but have multiple apps open and available to alert you of any notifications? Are you reading this on a computer? How many tabs do you have open? We are constantly connected, but being connected is very different than being interpersonally connected. This notion of having to be connected at all times to the outside world can be a great catalyst for conflict.

Cell phones

Since, cell phones are a norm in our society it becomes more of the question how do we utilize them in our relationships? What is acceptable and what is not? How do you negotiate cell phones usage in your romantic relationship? Do partners need to be available at all times? Are partners expected to respond immediately?

These questions surround the dialectical tension of autonomy versus connection. If you expect that your partner is readily available and respond immediately then you have a high connected need; however, what if your partner operates under the idea that it is okay to leave their phone for a few hours or disconnects? Their need for autonomy is high, and therefore conflict may arise due to the acceptable behaviors over cell phone use.

How couples negotiate the rules regarding cell phone usage can lead to conflict. Rules may be implicit. For example, it may be understood that you call your partner immediately back, but not explicitly stated in the relationship. If the rule is violated, conflict will often arise within the romantic relationship (Duran et al., 2011).

Additionally, when is it appropriate to be on your cell phone when you are with someone? How many times have you hung out with a friend or romantic partner and had your cell phone close by? Is it okay to check the stats on that game or check your social media? These behaviors will need to be negotiated within your relationships, and if they do not correspond then conflict ensues.

Because cell phones are such a staple in our society it is assumed that they will be present in our relationships. When is it acceptable for your partner to look at their phone and disengage from the current interaction? Dependent on the context of the cell phone use can impact the relationship satisfaction. Responding to a text is deemed acceptable as long as it is not overly excessive; however, if a partner is using the phone for entertainment (social media, playing a game, etc) when they should be spending quality time together is viewed unfavorably (Kelly et al. 2017; McDaniel & Coyne, 2016).

Since technology is only growing in our society, it is best to negotiate in our relationships what is acceptable. Is it okay to go to a restaurant and have your phones out during your meals? Do you expect there to be a time where both of you disconnect and focus on one another? These are all questions that need to be addressed. If parties have different views on technology then more than likely conflict will arise, especially if one party feels neglected. The next time you go out to eat, I challenge you to look around. How many people do you see out together, but are immersed in their phones instead? It may almost seem like two strangers are sitting together instead of friends or partners because no interaction is taking place between the parties.

Social media

You have just had the greatest day of your life or the worst day of your life, and you want to share the news with everyone. What do you do? You post about it on social media and watch the comments, likes, etc. roll in. We have become more dependent on social media to help define ourselves. It can also be the source of the conflict. Jealousy may stem from the amount of time being

spent on a social platform. Are you engaging online, and ignoring the partner in front of you? It can also result from what people place on your wall. Have you ever heard: well why did they put that? Why did they post that on your wall? These potential questions can lead to conflict (Muise, et al., 2009)

Additionally, conflict can be carried out over social media. How many times have you seen the drama between parties take place in the public domain? Do you grab the popcorn and see what unfolds? All joking aside, we have become accustomed to air out our dirty laundry for all to see.

In a study, teenage girls aired their grievances regarding a friend on Facebook, but when hurtful comments were displayed they were either ignored or deleted. They were less likely to label the attack as cyberbullying and thus less likely to confront the aggressor. It could be because they do not want to risk friendships or the pressure to be popular (Ging & Norman, 2016). If we continue to avoid openly discussing the hurtful comments being posted, we are neglecting our ability to work through conflict intelligently and mindfully.

Social media is a form of communication, and at times even a way for us to remain connected to other people. However, social media is also an outlet for conflict to occur. How you view posted comments will impact how or if you engage in conflict with the person who posted them. Additionally, the amount of time a romantic partner spends on social media can create jealous feelings within a relationship.

Your culture impacts how you engage in conflict. Do you value a more direct approach, or do you approach conflict more indirectly? Sex and gender also influence how you interact during conflict. Technology is extremely prevalent in our society and a factor in creating conflict. The amount of time and how we use social media can aide in creating conflict in our relationships.

Summary

Variables exist in conflict. Our cultures impact how we engage in conflict, along with our sex and gender. Face Negation Theory argues that we engage in saving face strategies in emotionally vulnerable situations. Verbal aggression when used in conflict can be used to achieve a goal but will also dismantle the relationship if used frequently. Finally, technology is becoming a large variable in conflict. Technology can create conflict if it is not discussed what is appropriate use of technology within the relationship. It can also serve as variable of jealousy in romantic relationships. Culture, sex and gender and technology are all variables in conflict

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Discussion questions

In your own life how has technology played a role in conflict? Have cell phones or social media impacted your relationship? What about your culture, sex or gender?

2. High Context and Low Context

Let's imagine the following conflict scenario: rent is due and you have your portion, but your roommate does not have their half. How could this situation look if the parties were from a high context culture? A low context culture? And, finally one from a high context culture and the other from a low context culture?

3. Technology:

Have students refer to their social media and reflect on comments that be conflict inducing. Have them explain why they believe that comment can create conflict. Additionally, have students discuss if that conflict will take place face to face, over Social Media, a combination of both or not at all. Why or why not do they feel this way?

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GLOSSARY

Cis partner: The partner whose sex matches their gender.

Face Negotiation Theory: All cultures work on preserving face, however dependent on one's culture, the amount of facework will vary.

Independent self-construal: Emphasis is on individual traits, preferences, wishes, and goals over the group.

Interdependent self-construal: emphasis is placed on connectedness with others within the group, placing group goals over their own goals.

Transgender: One's gender identity is different that the sex assigned at birth

Verbal Aggression: Communication behaviors used to attack the communication partner

MEDIA

1. Crazy Rich Asians:

Watch the two clips below. Relate the clips to Culture and Conflict. How does culture play into the conflict between Rachel and Eleanor?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_JkBmeMCf4c

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wh_oOd5JGpU

2. The Break Up:

Review the clip and discuss the use of verbal aggression and how sex and gender impacted the conflict between Gary and Brooke. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nn3I6-DBLJM

MEDIA ATTRIBUTIONS

"Two Dinner Plates on Square Brown Wooden Bar Table" licensed by Helena Lopes is in the Public Domain, CC0.

12.4: Conflict Management Strategies

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Identify and distinguish the five different conflict styles.
- Apply the steps of collaborative conflict.
- Recognize relationship violence.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Approaches to Conflict

We all have a way of how we react to conflict. Do you face it head on or do you avoid conflict? Do you approach the conflict as something to be won? According to Thomas & Kilmann (1976) individuals choose from five different approaches to conflict. These approaches vary along two dimensions called **assertiveness** and **cooperation**. Assertiveness is the extent to which you want your own needs to be met and cooperation is the extent to which you want the needs of the other to be met. We will look at these five styles in this module including avoidance, accommodation, competing, compromising, and collaborating.

Avoidance is one way to approach conflict. Some of us may avoid conflict at all costs, and think if we do not discuss it then everything will remain a-okay in our relationships. However, this is not the case, by avoiding conflict you also deny the relationship the potential to get closer or deeper. This is known as a lose-lose conflict style, since the parties are not able to gain from the conflict. In some instances, avoidance is the best option, for example if the topic is trivial or there is not enough time to adequately address the issue.

Accommodation is where the parties address the issue; however, after the topic is brought up one party gives into what the other party wants. It is a step above avoidance because at least the issue is discussed, but once the discussion begins one party will let go of any personal wants and allow the other party their want. This type of conflict style is a lose-win perspective. The person accommodating loses and the other person wins. At times it is appropriate to utilize an accommodating conflict style: if the issue is of little importance to you then it would be okay to give in to the other person.

Competition is viewing the conflict as something to be won. This win-lose perspective does not allow for the conflict to be discussed and worked through. Instead it approaches it as a prize to be won, you may react to conflict this way if your belief is that "I am right! And, this isn't over until they too see that I am right!" This type of attitude negates constructive communication and focuses on "winning." A competing conflict style can be appropriately used if there is in fact only one of something to go around, for example a job. If two friends apply for a job, but there is only one position, this can lead to conflict. Don't be so quick to assume that this type of conflict cannot be worked out using a more collaborative conflict style, which we will review in just a moment.

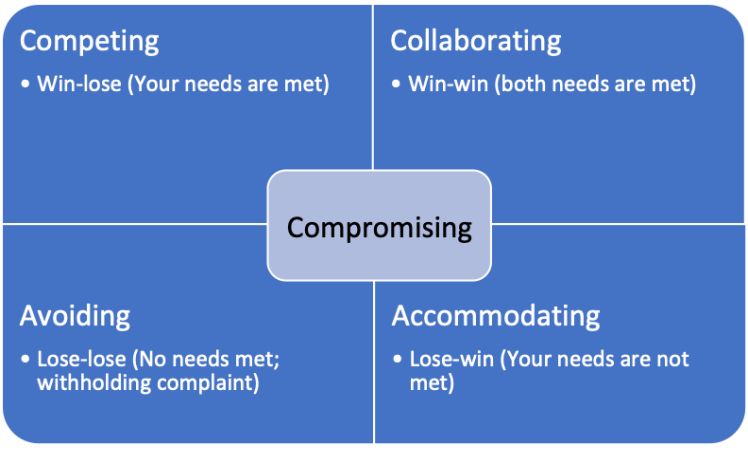

Figure 12.4.1: Five Approaches to Conflict Resolution

Compromising is something we all do. In fact, we may have it instilled with us that compromising is something we should strive for. However, when we compromise both parties lose something they may want. This is a good alternative to collaborative conflict management if both parties sacrifice some of their wants, we just have to be careful that we don't sacrifice something we cannot live without. This style of conflict management is useful when both parties are willing to lose something and be cooperative in

nature. A compromise may be the best option if you are negotiating your curfew. You would like to extend curfew until midnight from 10 pm on school nights, but your parents think this is too late. You may compromise to an 11pm curfew.

Our final conflict style is a **collaborative** approach to conflict, this is a win-win perspective. This means both parties win in the conflict. In this conflict style both parties strive to reach a solution that satisfies the needs of both parties. Both parties are cooperative in nature and work together to find a resolution. A collaborative approach to conflict requires both parties to be open to discussion, address the issue with honesty, remembering to address the issue and not attack the other person, and both parties will need to be creative in finding a solution. Although, a collaborative approach is desired it does require the most time to achieve.

TIPS ON USING CONFLICT STRATEGIES

Avoiding

- The topic is trivial
- There is not adequate time to discuss the topic

Accommodation

- The topic is of little importance to you and of more importance to your partner
- The relationship means more than the topic

Competition

- When the topic is of importance to you and your partner does not want to compromise or work collaboratively

Compromise

- There is not enough time to work collaboratively
- When your partner does not want to seek a collaborative approach

Collaborative

- When you have adequate time to work through the issue
- Both parties are willing to work together to solve the issue
- The topic is too important to consider alternative styles

Application of a collaborative approach

A collaborative approach to conflict resolution is the best conflict style where both parties can achieve satisfaction. However, it is the one that requires the most skill and time. Below you will learn a way on how to begin this process (Adapted by Beebe & Mottett, n.d.).

***Step 1*: Schedule a time to discuss the issue.** You are ready to discuss what is bothering you, and that's great! However, your communication partner must also be in the right mindset to discuss the issue. If possible, schedule a time to talk about the issue. "Hey honey I was wondering if tonight when you get home we discuss something that has been bothering me? If that is not a good time, when would a good time be?" This question shows that you are taking their feelings into consideration instead of bombarding them with what could be an intense conversation.

***Step 2*: Describe the problem.** It is important to describe what the issue is. Describe the issue as something to be solved. Figure out what needs of the partner are not currently being met. Unmet needs may be causing the issue. Some conflicts stem from feelings of neglect or disrespect; is this what is causing the problem? Be sure to use your skills of describing behaviors and actions. Refrain from attacking the other person. You might say something like, "When we got home from the restaurant yesterday, and I was telling you about my day, I noticed that you were just on your phone. You were not paying attention to me."

***Step 3*: Create understanding.** After the problem has been described, be sure both parties understand the issue. It is imperative that both parties understand the problem.

If no understanding is met then you cannot move on to solving the problem. The partner could say, "oh, I guess that wasn't a good time to catch up online. Sorry, I know that you had a bad day yesterday and I should have put my phone away so I wouldn't be distracted by it."

***Step 4*: Set goals.** As a couple, set the goals that need to be achieved in order for the conflict to be resolved. "Maybe we can try to keep both our phones off the table when we are talking so that we can both concentrate on each other?"

***Step 5*: Generate solutions and select the best one**. Generate as many solutions as possible. Be creative in your solutions. You should strive to have as many options as possible, but if this is a new skill, try to have at least three solutions. Two is not nearly enough, and chances are you and your communication partner already have one to offer, so finding at least a third alternative will get your creative juices flowing. After you have exhausted all possible solutions, remove any that do not align with your goals, and select the best solution.

***Step 6*: Implement the solution**. After the solution has been selected, implement it. Be sure both parties agree to the solution. If both parties agree to the solution, then you are more likely going to implement it. Set a time to circle back and check in with each other. At check in evaluate if the solution is working.

A collaborative approach will allow you to navigate the conflict with a win-win perspective. It takes the needs of both parties into account and sees the conflict as something to solved and worked through together. It emphasizes the relationship and views the conflict as something to be accomplished as a unit.

The darkside of communication: Relationship violence

Being able to navigate conflict and reach resolutions is a skill. Unfortunately, some individuals fail to utilize this skill. This can lead to very dangerous situations. We will briefly touch on relationship violence.

Relationship violence is "a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship" (National Domestic Hotline, n.d., para. 1). These types of behaviors aim to control their partner. This can take place through emotional, verbal, physical, social or financial abuse. One type of relationship violence is **Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)** in which one partner attempts to control the other through financial, sexual, social, psychological, or physical abuse (Hess, 2018).

Emotional and verbal abuse strives to communicate in a manner that makes the other party feel worthless and manipulates them to do as the other party wishes. Examples of these behaviors include verbal attacks such as name calling, threatening physical danger to the party or the party's loved ones, threats of going public with private information or making up rumors, threatening of suicide if the party leaves, **gaslighting**, or minimizing the abuse. The partner demand/self-withdraw pattern of communication is associated with IPV. This is where the partner demands change or compliance to certain rules and the victim withdraws to avoid interaction with that partner (Pickover, et al., 2017). The impact of IPV on the victim is long reaching and can result in General Anxiety Disorder as well as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Physical abuse is where one party physically hurts the other party. This type of abuse consists of not only being physically hit/touched, but intimidation techniques. This includes sexual abuse or threat of sexual abuse. These could be restraining movements or blocking of doorways/pathways.

Social abuse is isolating the partner from their family and friends. Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) surveyed had stated that the abuse was under a broader context of "coercive control" (Hess, 2018). This coercive control was an attempt to limit agency, social support by isolating the survivor from family and friends, denying transportation (sometimes by flattening car tires, or hiding the car keys) and "microregulating" their life (Stark, 2007). The abuser may keep strict tabs on where the other party is at all times. They will further monitor cell phone usage and messages, and control who the partner can speak with (Hess, 2018). Additionally, the abuser may call incessantly and become upset if the call is not picked up or returned immediately. This form of IPV dominance-isolation is strongly correlated with the victim having Generalized Anxiety Disorder (Pickover, et al., 2017). They may also show up unannounced under the guise they missed their partner, but in reality it is to maintain control over the victim.

Finally, financial abuse aims to control the partner through financial means. The partner may make it difficult for the other partner to maintain a job, unable to attend work consistently, and may even harass the partner at work. Those who experienced this type of abuse have reported that they have missed out on a promotion or lost other work opportunities and the financial benefits of advancement in their jobs (Hess, 2018). If one party controls all monetary means and does not allow the other party to freely access their money this is abuse. A partner may also deem what the other party may buy and request receipts for all purchases. Gifts following an episode are means to manipulate the abused party.

Often these relationships start out without any violence, and then little behaviors start to show. More times than not we look past these or dismiss as "look how loving they are, they're really worried about me," until it is not small transgressions and this type of violence and coercive control is now the norm. Abused partners can find themselves socially isolated from friends and family and under the control of their partner. It is often financial factors that prove the biggest obstacle to leaving the relationship. For example, in a survey of IPV survivors, the Institute for Women's Policy Research found that survivors didn't have another place to live, said they would be unable to support themselves or their children with their own income, didn't have a job, wouldn't be able

to afford child care, wouldn't have transportation, or their credit was negatively impacted and they couldn't get the resources or loans that they needed to leave (Hess, 2018). If you feel you are or someone you know is in a dangerous situation of IVP, you may seek help through the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

Summary

In this unit we discussed the various approaches to conflict: avoidance, accommodation, competition, compromising, and collaborative. Avoidance is when avoid conflict, also seen as a lose-lose approach to conflict. Accommodation a lose-win perspective is where the parties address the issue; however, after the topic is brought up one party gives into what the other party wants. Competition a win-lose perspective is viewing the conflict as something to be won. Compromising is a good alternative when a collaborative approach is unable to attain. In a compromise both parties lose something in the solution. In a collaborative approach, a win-win perspective, both parties reach a solution that satisfies their needs. A six-step collaborative approach was discussed and explained. We ended the unit with a brief view on relationship violence discussing behaviors that exemplify this concept.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Let's work it out!

Come to class with a bucket or bag. Have students anonymously write down a conflict they are currently experiencing or one that is fresh in their mind. Collect conflicts and place into your bucket or bag. Divide students into groups of 3 or 4. Have students draw a conflict from the bag. Advise students that they will need to act out the conflict in two ways. The first way of doing all the bad things we do in conflict (scream, yell, avoid, etc) and the second way collaboratively.

2. Discussion questions

Why is collaborative solution so difficult? Why don't we strive for more collaborative approaches to conflict? How do you see yourself using this in the future?

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GLOSSARY

Accommodation: A lose win perspective, the topic is discussed, however one party gives into the other party

Assertiveness: Extent to which you focus on your needs and wants during a conflict

Avoidance: A lose-lose perspective, conflict is avoided at all costs

Collaborative: A win-win perspective, parties work together collaboratively to solve the issue and find resolution. This style requires parties to have adequate time to discuss the issue at length

Competition: A win-lose perspective; conflict is something to be won

Compromising: Both parties give up something to reach a solution

Cooperation: Extent to which you focus on the other person's needs and the relationship with that person during a conflict

Gaslighting: Words are twisted against you causing to question yourself and your reality

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV): One partner attempts to control the other through financial, sexual, social, psychological, or physical abuse

Relationship Violence: A pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship

MEDIA

1. Watch https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o97fVGTjE4w and relate the TedTalk to the five conflict styles discussed in the unit.

2. Watch this TedTalk on Gaslighting and then answer the following questions.

- What is the mom's perception of her daughter's childhood? What are the daughter's perceptions of her own childhood? How does this difference in perception relate to gaslighting?
- You can find the link here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v4P2Qwh1QCU: Gaslighting

3. Watch the clip from Girl on a Train. What types of abuse are present? See the link here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2zzhcU9f9U

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

13: New Media and Interpersonal Communication

Learning Objectives

- Relay pertinent key terms that help explain the emergence of masspersonal communication.
- Distinguish between mass media and new media.
- Bridge the conceptual gap between the theories presented earlier in the book, and those presented in the next module by providing some context on what a new media environment means for interpersonal communication.
- Understand the evolution of academic thought regarding interpersonal communication in the new media environment.
- Understand the concept of masspersonal communication.
- Appreciate key ways that masspersonal communication has altered our interpersonal communication practices.
- Achieve fluency with key terms related to masspersonal communication.
- Master their own uses of masspersonal communication.

13.1: CMC, New Media, and Masspersonal Communication

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Relay pertinent key terms that help explain the emergence of masspersonal communication.
- Distinguish between mass media and new media
- Bridge the conceptual gap between the theories presented earlier in the book, and those presented in the next module by providing some context on what a new media environment means for interpersonal communication.

CMC, NEW MEDIA, AND MASSPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Early research on computer-mediated interpersonal communication

It may be surprising, but the rise of the internet did not happen all at once, the way it is sometimes depicted. Relatively speaking, the adoption of internet-based technologies was quick, but it still happened in stages.

In the mid-nineties, most people in the United States were not using the internet at home, and it was not until the late nineties that personal email accounts became common (Manovitch, 2001). A few years later, the internet became a sharing platform where media content was being uploaded and downloaded, often illegally (Jones & Lenhart, 2004). In 2007, the first iPhone was released for sale only a few months after a website called Facebook opened its membership to everyone, setting off a whole new trend in how people use the internet (Jones et al., 2009). By the early 2010s, the use of video streaming technologies featuring original user-generated content had gained popularity. It birthed a new generation of self-made celebrities who attracted fans and enabled fandom to be expressed in newer and more elaborate ways in online forums and fan-generated sites (Marwick, 2015).

Each of these new stages in the function and functionality of the internet created questions for communication scholars interested in studying the ways that our social interactions online compared to the social interactions we have offline. Those scholars who had mainly focused on interpersonal communication in the last decades of the twentieth century engaged in the study of what was then known as **computer-mediated communication.** It refers to the interactions that take place between people who are using computers to communicate. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) regularly occurs today. However, at the turn of the twenty-first century, it was only just emerging as a natural form of interaction between people outside of the workplace. What interested these scholars about CMC was whether it afforded the same kind of interpersonal experience that people have when they communicate face-to-face (Daft & Lengel, 1984; 1986; Walther, 1996; 2012).

Their research developed many theories, but one key concept underlined most of them, which was **media richness**. Media richness refers to how closely a specific media channel can replicate the interaction of an in-person face to face encounter. Rich media afford us as much sensory data as possible (Manovitch, 2001). On Skype, for example, I can not only hear someone but also see them. Skype is much richer than a medium like text messaging, where I can neither see nor hear the recipient, but only text-based messages that they send.

Overall, the theories surrounding CMC and interpersonal communication found that media richness was itself hard to define because the technologies being studied changed so much during that period. In some ways, digital technologies limit our abilities to establish intimacy, interpret non-verbal cues, and establish competency. In other ways, the studies found that digital technologies had created new modalities for interpersonal exchange that required new research (Short, et al., 1976; Daft & Lengel, 1984; 1986; Fulk, et al., 1987; Carlson & Zmud, 1994; Walther, 1996; 2012).

New Media

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, these theories were put forth prior to the emergence of what is today known as new media. **New media** is the evolution of media from the form we used to know as **mass media** to a more dynamic model.

Before the internet connected our digital devices through a giant network that spans the globe, media production was limited to only those who had access to the physical equipment needed to make and distribute messages to an audience of more than just a few people. This distribution model was the era of mass media, a time when a small group of media producers delivered content to a broad mass audience of people through the television networks, radio stations, and publishing companies that controlled what content was made public.

Thanks to the internet, we are now living in the era of new media, a time when a person can communicate to either a small group or a large audience of people just by posting something online using their cell phone (Marwick, 2015; Campbell, et al., 2018). The

mass media of television, radio, print, and film still exist today, but they now have to compete with the new media that are produced and consumed online (O'Sullivan & Carr, 2018).

YouTubers, who now sometimes command audiences of tens of millions while broadcasting from their bedrooms (Marwick, 2015), are a perfect example of the difference between new media and mass media**.** In the mass media, the only way to reach an audience of a million people was to have the message vetted by a series of gatekeepers who controlled the television networks, newspapers, magazines, radio stations, or book publications that delivered content on a mass scale to the public at large. During this time, media producers strictly controlled and censored content in order to ensure the broadest possible appeal (Manovitch, 2001).

Masspersonal Communication

As O' Sullivan and Carr (2018) note, this new media dynamic is of particular interest to the study of interpersonal communication because it allows users to realize their communication potential in new ways. Primarily, it blends the practices of interpersonal communication with practices that were formerly thought of as being presentational. The dynamic affordances of new media defy the distinctions that used to be made between mediated and interpersonal communication.

Because of this shift, O'Sullivan and Carr (2018) call the communication that takes place through new media outlets, **masspersonal communication** to reflect the meshing practices of traditional mass media with the practices of interpersonal communication.

In the next module, we'll explore some of the ways that masspersonal communication manifests itself into common communication practices today.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Device Check

Partner the students in groups of three and instruct them to list out loud all of the different networked digital devices that each one owns including phones, tablets, computers, mp3 players, etc. Once they have done this, they must each walk back through their day and remember each interaction they have had that day so far that did not involve the use of one of those devices in any way.

Once they have done this they should then do the opposite and count each separate communication (every text is a distinct interaction) that they have had using their devices that day. Once the groups have shared in discussion, open the floor to a larger group discussion on what the students learned.

Activity 2: Eiza AI Interaction

Using Eiza, the digital interface developed by MIT, and that some argue is the first AI, try out the Turing Test for your students, and explain to them how the very concept of AI depends on a computer's ability to competently perform interpersonal communication with a person.

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GLOSSARY

Computer-Mediated Communication: Communication that takes place using computers.

New Media: Internet-based media that is produced and consumed by online users.

Mass Media: Media that is controlled by producers and distributed to a mass audience.

Masspersonal Communication: Communication that bridges the dynamics of interpersonal communication and mass media communication using new media technologies.

MEDIA

1. **The Today Show Discussion**

Flashback to the early days of the internet- the mid-nineties- with this video showing the first ever discussion of the web on the Today Show. See it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=95-yZ-31j9A

2. **Old School Internet Instruction**

This is a demonstration video from 1995 teaching us how to use the internet via Prodigy. See it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L1tr5LjhfqQ

3. **Internet Log-in Session (Mid 90s)**

If you're really interested in showing what the early internet was like, you can follow this video prompt showing what it was like to log on to the internet in 1996, and to browse web content. The video is annotated with commentary: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojT0gQHeyJQ

13.2: Masspersonal Communication in Practice

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand the concept of masspersonal communication.
- Appreciate key ways that masspersonal communication has altered our interpersonal communication practices.

MASSPERSONAL COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE

To understand the practical implications of masspersonal communication, let us consider how it impacts some of the interpersonal practices and concepts we have already learned about in previous chapters. To do this, we will consider five overall concepts: parasocial relationships, impression management, privacy, communication competence, and verbal and non-verbal communication.

Parasocial Relationships

Parasocial relationships are the relationships that we form with people we see in the media. In the mass media era, these relationships were limited to celebrities that we watched on film or television, or even characters in books that we read. Today, however, the line between social and parasocial relationships is blurred, particularly on social media platforms where we communicate in a mediated environment with people that we also interact with offline.

As established in prior Units, communication is necessary in order to establish meaningful relationships. However, Hartmann (2016) notes that when our relationships with people, even those we know offline, are conducted more through social media than through face-to-face interactions, we begin to treat those relationships as being para-social. We no longer see the other person as a part of our offline reality. Instead, we begin to idealize them in the same way that we would idealize our favorite television or film star. Consequently, these relationships can become toxic by distorting our sense of reality, and warping our self-image.

Research shows that people who use social media, under any circumstance, even in moderation, largely tend to suffer from the experience (Riehm, et al., 2019). This effect reportedly happens because most users of social media purposely misrepresent themselves in the best possible light. Users heighten the sense of envy or shame that others feel when they view posts, and eliminate the vulnerability that relational communication depends on as a means of both soliciting and sharing support with others. If we begin to reduce our complex social relationships with family and friends to a series of parasocial exchanges, then we may be losing our ability to relate to those people as genuine human beings.

Impression Management

Overall, some of the behaviors described in the development and maintenance of self-concept have taken on new forms in the era of masspersonal communication. Uses of new media to promote personal brands, lifestyle blogs, and other content focused on health and beauty have exacerbated the reach, and use of professional editing technologies that were previously reserved only for mass media (McLean et al., 2015). Airbrushing, a process through which images are digitally edited after being captured, used to be reserved only for magazines and billboards.

Today, this type of editing can be done by anyone, leading impressionable people to compare themselves negatively to what they think are genuine images of other people similar to them (Lincoln & Robards, 2017).

Image editing is not the only way that people are able to manage others' impressions of them using social media. Many people now engage in adaptive forms of impression management behaviors even when first deciding what content they post to their social media, in effect acting as arbiters of what information about their lives they want people to see, and when. Some people do this by annotating their media content with captions, images, or tags to shape the audience's perceptions of what they post or by omitting any information that is not consistent with the brand identity they have created for themselves (Lincoln & Robards, 2017).

On the other hand, masspersonal communication also presents new challenges to impression management. A key difference in the affordances of the tightly controlled mass media of old, and the new media used today for masspersonal communication is that on social media, interpersonal messages meant for one person could be unintentionally broadcasted to a large audience of recipients. This mistake can happen simply by clicking the wrong button. Perhaps, you or someone you know may have hit "reply all" to a message meant for only one person, or have posted a message in a public feed composed for only one intended recipient.

The examples above illustrate one of the challenges for masspersonal communicators. In masspersonal communication, most of our interactions are documentable, and therefore they have more permanence. **Permanence** refers to how permanent a message is when it is shared online. A hurtful exchange that takes place between two people arguing offline exists afterward only in the memory of those present. When two people argue with each other via email, text, social media, or even some teleconferencing platforms those

arguments become documented exchanges that can exist forever. They can reside on the platforms' servers, your local disk storage, or potentially in the public view of peers after if you or the interlocutor decide to share the exchange publicly (Pesce & Noto, 2016).

When a single message meant for an individual recipient is relayed via an open channel it is possible, indeed likely, that we may experience what is called **context collapse** (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). Context collapse occurs when different people, who know you in different contexts, receive a message you are sending to a specific intended audience and then misinterpret that message by decoding outside of the context in which it was encoded. For example, imagine the misinterpretation that could occur if a friend posted a picture of you drinking heavily at a college party to your LinkedIn profile on the day of an important job interview, that your prospective employer immediately sees. What may have been intended as a nostalgic message from one friend might look to your prospective employer like a recent photo displaying your present lifestyle.

Hogan (2010) explains that because of the greater potential audience for online exchanges we tend to be more sensitive to what Goffman called facework. **Facework** is the work of maintaining our reputation in front of others. The result of the public/private dynamic of new media is that we are all more inclined to engage in facework, including a tendency to reply to messages that we might otherwise ignore.

The increased work required to maintain our face online may actually make us more inclined to escalating styles of conflict. New studies show that while new media may make conflict easier to avoid, people who communicate through social media are typically more inclined to escalate conflicts than they would face-to-face (Brady et al., 2017). In part, this has to do with the physical distance that removes us from immediate bodily harm in such exchanges, but it is also a product of the meshed public/private arena where even an exchange of text messages could be shared with a broader audience making every interaction online a matter of impression management.

Privacy

One of the major concerns about the popularity of masspersonal communication, especially among young people, has to do with privacy (Vitak, 2012) and the widespread use of mobile technologies. Because we can now take our personal phones with us into public spaces, conversations that are meant for the private arena may be taking place with an unknown and unintended audience present.

More concerning is the access that our smartphones provide to confidential online files or interfaces. Through our applications, we communicate with many people, organizations, governments, and even AI programs. All of these interactions leave traces on our phones that reveal much about our identities. If someone steals your cell phone and bypasses security measures, they could have full access to your private emails, texts, voice messages, recordings, documents, and browser history. They could also gain access to your bank records, tax information, and even how many steps you walk on an average day.

Notice that in modern spy movies, secret agents are breaking into the files of the KGB, they’re downloading cell phone and laptop hard drives in order to uncover a cornucopia of information that in bygone eras were stored physically in a broad array of different places.

The wealth of information that your phone provides reflects the fact that our communication reveals a great deal about who we are. It is for this reason that governments, hackers, corporations, and advertisers are all so interested in the data that accumulates from the masspersonal interactions we have using networked devices.

This process of compiling a nuanced record of user behavior in a profile that sold to others is called *data mining*, and it occurs most readily through social media sites like Facebook who depend on the sale of user data as a prime source of income (Cadwalladr & Graham-Harrison, 2018). Data mining is only possible because of the expanded memory capacity of new media technologies.

All of our interactions online, right down to the keystrokes we choose, are recorded and documented by the companies who provide the hardware, software, websites, and applications that we use every day. Once our data is available to people with the right tools to analyze it, many facets of our identities can be interpreted in order to create what is called a **psychographic profile**. These profiles are used to determine what kinds of messages we are likely to respond to, and in what ways.

Years ago, advertisers focused on the use of **demographics** as a way of grouping together potential customers based on shared factors like age, race, income, marital status, or education. These broad categories were used to help segment a market of consumers into groups in order for advertisers to decide what types of messages might be most appealing to their target customers.

Today, this approach to advertising has been greatly refined because advertisers no longer need to guess at what groups of people may or may not like. Using the psychographic profile of a specific consumer, they can determine exactly what message that

individual consumer is most likely to find appealing, which enables them to tailor their advertisements to meet that person's disposition.

While virtually all interactions online are now part of the public record, concerns over privacy are amplified in the case of social interaction because the data derived from these exchanges is being constantly mined and analyzed by big data analysts. These analysts refine the individual online profiles that exist for each of us, which are used not only by retailers tapping into our psyche as a way of selling products (De Corniero & De Nijs, 2016), but now also by special interest groups, and even foreign governments trying to influence your behavior.

The reason that concerns about data mining are greater for social interactions than just individual online activity is that in an exchange with another person your information is more easily recorded given that it is exposed to data miners monitoring either of the people involved. Though young people frequently express concerns about how their masspersonal communication may impact the security of their private information, very few feel empowered to stop their masspersonal practices (Hargitai & Marwick, 2016).

Communication Competence

Masspersonal communication has greatly complicated the ability to communicate competently in the more dynamic new media era. In Unit 1, you learned about the transmission and transactional models of communication. Think about how masspersonal communication relates to those models.

When we mediate our interpersonal interactions through the use of digital devices, we reduce the richness of our channels, making it easier for us to misinterpret the relational meanings behind the content we are seeing, and making it harder for others to interpret the meaning of our replies Kelly & Miller-Ott, 2018). Masspersonal communication blends the affordances of online and offline channels, giving us more work to do when encoding and decoding messages because it is harder for us to anticipate what types of noise might occur.

How do you enact conversational management, for example, during a group text? Is it rude to be typing when you can see from the little gray bubbles that someone else may be typing too? Are you adequately involved if your reply comes two hours late? On the other hand, you may have other conversations taking place at the same time offline, do they get first priority? These types of questions reflect the complex demands of masspersonal communication.

To begin our discussion of this, let us consider the new questions raised about what constitutes appropriateness when communicating in a masspersonal way. As we learned earlier in the book, appropriateness is a key component of competent communication. However, appropriateness, like other aspects of communication, is highly contextual. We already know that context collapse can affect impression management by exposing our messages to scrutiny from others than our intended audience. There are implications regarding what people consider to be appropriate or ethical acts of communication due to the permanence of our masspersonal interactions.

For example, consider the routine use of Twitter by American President Donald Trump where he fires cabinet members, negotiates trade deals, and even threatens war (Boczkowski & Papacharissi, 2018). Before Twitter made it possible for a President to speak directly to the American people just by typing into a cell phone, these kinds of decisions were typically announced through formal meetings with the invited press, and after much vetting and consideration. Nevertheless, President Trump does not view himself as announcing information. Instead, he is relaying personal news to a wide range of followers, sometimes using hashtags to indicate that he is replying to a specific person. Is it appropriate to relay personal news, even when it has broader implications for everyone else on the planet?

Another example would be Prince Harry's decision in 2020 to announce he was stepping down from the British Royal family via Instagram. This type of announcement used to be conveyed via a formal proclamation issued by the Queen through her own administrators. However, Harry and his wife decided to surprise everyone with the news by simply posting it on their social media pages (Booth & Adam, 2020). This announcement resulted in a raucous public debate about the propriety of using social media to broadcast information. This behavior was suggested to be unorthodox because it was not possible until recently. The question remains, however, whether such behavior will ultimately be accepted as appropriate. What do you think?

Another gray area regarding communication competence in the masspersonal era has to do with how we manage conversations. Prior to mobile networked technologies, it was far easier to segment your conversations. If you were in conversation with someone, you could close doors, ignore a ringing phone, and give your attention to that person. Today, we are receiving more messages in more ways at more times. Not only that, but many of us use alerts and notifications on our devices that are designed to draw our attention (Carr, 2011). Turkle's (2011) extensive research concluded that all these competing bids for our attention have altered our

social expectations. We are more forgiving today of distracted listeners in a face to face conversation, but more demanding of immediate responses from people we communicate with online.

Questions of clarity and intent are also complicated when communicating in a masspersonal way. Prior Units in this publication showed how verbal and nonverbal communication cues help us to interpret messages at either a denotative (content) or connotative (relational) level. These interpretive practices apply to the masspersonal realm. In fact, some text-based icons were intentionally created to bridge the gap between the verbal and non-verbal affordances of new media technologies. The emoticon is the most prominent example of this.

The **emoticons** (or emojis) that we now use frequently in our texts and emails were invented to provide a digital form of a nonverbal cue. They accompany the text of our message in order to help the receiver contextualize what we are saying using our typical nonverbal cues (i.e. kinesics, vocalics, etc.). Before emojis were created, text-based messages were subject to a lot of miscommunication due to the difficulty of reading the connotative (relational) meanings of what was being said. The purpose of the original emojis was to provide a facial cue that would signal to the receiver what tone the sender was intending. Today, emojis have evolved into a language of their own- all of which is, again, based on cultural contexts (Kelly & Miller-Ott, 2018).

Let us look deeper into verbal and nonverbal communication practices, and how they have been affected or adapted in the era of masspersonal communication.

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is increasingly popular today because of new media. Phone calls, meetings, and private catch-up sessions are all possible through text-based modes of communication like email, texting, and social media. This reliance on mediated communication increases the odds of miscommunication at the relational level. It can be equally confusing at the denotative level due to the rapidly changing use of language by young people in the United States (Thurlow, 2017).

Text speak is one of the ways that language is evolving in the masspersonal era. Because people rely more on abbreviated text-based messages sent at random intervals throughout the day as a way of communicating with others, there is also a greater emphasis on brevity in messages. To reduce word and character counts in the messages we send, many of us employ language codes for common phrases we call text speak. Examples of text speak include BRB for ‘be right back’, TTYL for ‘talk to you later’, or the most well known of all: LOL for ‘laughing out loud’ (Dixon, 2011).

This new coding of language, paired with the emojis that often accompany such messages for context, has created new demands for competent communication in the masspersonal era. Many of the youngest people in society find themselves more adept at textspeak than their elders, despite falling behind in their ability to communicate in standard English in their classrooms (Shlowiy, 2014).

Meanwhile, many older people are struggling to manage their feelings of ineptitude when trying to communicate masspersonally, even though they have long considered themselves competent speakers of the English language. As proof of the bridging qualities of masspersonal communication, text speak is no longer just reserved for text-based messages. People have begun using text speak when they talk out loud to others (Head, 2011).

Some studies suggest that today’s college graduates are less literate than they were a decade ago thanks to the rise of text speak and the formatting limitations of many social media sites (Mallow & Lister, 2016; Graff, 2017). For people born before the nineteen nineties, standard education included rigorous schooling on grammar and spelling. Once spell check became popular, the emphasis among students likely lessened. By the mid-nineties, as students everywhere began carrying computers with them to class, research shows a precipitous slide in spelling and grammar skills. Most young people consider spelling and grammar trivial factors in their ability to communicate (Perry et al., 2018). Unfortunately, this view is not shared by everyone.

Thurlow (2017) points out that while young employees might not realize it, co-workers consider proper spelling to be a primary factor in message clarity, even when they can understand the intended meaning. More importantly, older workers are equally inclined to consider literacy skills to be a critical reflection of overall job competence, meaning that textspeak could lead to job termination (Thurlow, 2017).

Other studies find that grammatical and spelling errors can even impact your ability to find a mate, because spelling and grammar can take on greater importance when searching for a date through online sites (Van der Zanden, et al., 2019). Most alarmingly, research also shows that in the healthcare field, people have died as a result of workers misunderstanding one another because of their use of text speak on the job (Head, 2011).

Non-Verbal Communication

Almost all elements of nonverbal communication have been affected in some way by the augmented reality of new media. In this section, we consider some key aspects.

Chronemics

Our concept of chronemics has seen major changes due to masspersonal communication. The same nonverbal codes that were once given priority in western culture (timeliness, promptness, and synchronicity), have been replaced by the affordances of new media that emphasize efficiency, speed, and dexterity (Doring & Poschel, 2017). How often have you panicked because you were running late to meet a friend in a public place, and you're worried they might leave in a huff before you get there? Before cell phones were ordinary, this was a significant concern. Now that most people can relay last-minute messages to each other, even after they have left for their destinations, timeliness is valued differently.

Consider, for example, the question of time as it relates to an interpersonal interaction. In a face-to-face interaction, we are in a **synchronous** dynamic- meaning that everything is happening at the same time. An **asynchronous** dynamic would be something like writing letters, where a sender writes their letter at a different time from when the receiver reads it. These distinctions were straightforward in the past, but in a masspersonal setting, we no longer know for sure whether our communication is synchronous or not. If I send a text message, you might be reading it immediately, or you may not see it until later. We may even be in the middle of sending messages in a seemingly synchronous exchange only for one person to get distracted and disengage without the other person knowing it (Lim, 2017).

As a result of the hybridization of online and offline identities, some researchers say that we now live in what is called an **augmented reality,** where our identities are expressed in equally essential ways online and offline at the same time, all the time (Jurgensen, 2012). Part of this augmented reality means that we are never fully disengaged from online communication. The newly networked society that makes us more connected than ever also means that many employers no longer demand that their employers work the same standardized business hours in the same physical place. We can see that the shifts in chronemics now impact the changing expectations regarding proxemics (Doring & Poschel, 2017).

Proxemics

Are we together or apart? Does distance matter as much today as it used to when it comes to mediated communication? If I can reach you equally quickly via text message, whether you are standing beside me, or climbing K2, what difference does it make? It turns out that we may be inclined to want more physical space in a masspersonal era because we are not as used to having to share space in the same way.

Face-to-face communication is waning in the twenty-first century, especially as we become a more global society with social ties reaching across further distances as a result of people moving for personal or professional reasons. Bridging the geographic gap that used to interrupt interpersonal communication is the popularity of masspersonal communication, which takes place primarily through social media platforms and through networked mobile phone use (Quinn & Papacharissi, 2017).

The trend of people moving more readily in this century is partially driven by the affordances of new media technology which augment our social interactions, so that our relationships with people who live far away are easier to maintain now than they might have been before. Thanks to social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok we can still communicate regularly with people no matter where they live in the world, so long as they have access to the internet. This concept is called **networked connectivity**, which means people today view the internet as more than just a channel through which they communicate, they view it as an essential precondition to their ability to communicate (Papacharissi, 2010).

When someone we know loses access to the internet, we may revert to thinking of them in the same way that people did in the mid-twentieth century when their family members traveled overseas to places where they were inaccessible by phone (Quinn & Papacharissi, 2017).

Much of our modern communication is mediated by our digital devices, and researchers have begun to study the relationships we have with them. Prominent among these researchers is Sherry Turkle (2011), who found in her studies of mobile phone usage that young people in the twenty-first century viewed themselves as tethered to their digital devices. Tethering**,** as Turkle uses it, means that the devices were no longer considered to be just machines like a toaster or a photocopier. Instead, people today view their cell phones as an extension of themselves that is essential to their ability to function in society.

Kinesics

Physical media objects like records, books, magazines, and documents have been replaced by cloud culture, where digital versions of 'things' are now easily acquired and stored. As a result, the design of physical spaces has been re-thought, with the modern

apartment and housing developments making space for home offices and digital interfaces where physical storage of objects might have been (Hauser et al., 2005).

The digitalization of media has also increased consumer demand for electric sockets to keep electronics powered, as well as the demand (and price) of computer and phone accessories like headphones (Shugan, 2018). Consider how much more noise there is today, with every person able to carry their music or movie collections on a device that also functions as a TV, phone, and teleconferencing device. For this reason, spaces are being designed to allow individuals more space to be as Turkle (2011) says, "alone together."

Vocalics

In concert with the ways that our perception of shared space is affected by the affordances of new media, we also have new conceptions of vocalics in the masspersonal era. When we are alone together, as Turkle (2011) describes it, we either gather in public spaces only to ignore those around us so that we can communicate online, or else we gather in a digital 'community' while isolating ourselves physically by remaining in separate locations. The result of this is that the noise we used to expect in large gathering spaces like a park, or even a party is much reduced today, while in other spaces where noise used to be kept at a minimum people are now able to talk, watch movies, or listen to music.

Ask yourself this: is it rude to speak aloud in a library? At one time, it was considered inconsiderate to speak at anything more than a whisper inside a library, but today with everyone sporting earbuds attached to their phones, some people are less concerned about whether their voices are disrupting other people's peace. In their minds, people who want to tune out our conversations can just plug in their earbuds and literally tune up the volume to block out the sound. This type of logic may be useful to some, but what about the now nostalgic concept of shared silence. In a masspersonal era where people have individual control over the sounds they can put in their ears, there seems to be less and less value attached to the ability to hear nothing at all (Smith et al., 2018).

Haptics

People who grew up prior to the advent of new media might never have guessed just how much their ability to communicate would someday depend on their sense of touch. Today we constantly type to send messages to one another through email, text, and touch screen interactions. Our sense of touch was once studied primarily in terms of the touch between living beings. However, haptic scholars have renewed their consideration of the touch between people and things in order to study the ways we use our sense of touch to manipulate networked digital devices (Parisi, 2018).

In the masspersonal context, we should remember that our touch screen technologies demand more from our abilities to touch. People with less nimble control over their fingers may struggle with touchscreen keyboards, or with functions like zoom that require specific motions of the hand. For those with poor hand-eye coordination, the ability to type on mobile devices can result in many spelling errors, sometimes changing the meanings of messages sent. This can also be a hindrance to message receivers.

As young people have become more and more inclined to communicate through images rather than words in masspersonal exchanges, the haptic demands of phone-usage have increased. In order to view images sent via text, users have to pincer their fingers on images, press harder to select them, and manipulate their hands in more complicated ways. Each of these activities requires dexterity that may be limited for some users (Gordon & Zhai, 2019).

Summary

As this unit illustrates, interpersonal communication remains highly relevant online or offline. In the age of new media, we find ourselves adapting all the same principles and techniques we use when we interact interpersonally to our interactions online, making this period a masspersonal era. As you reflect on what you have learned in this chapter, bear in mind that the technologies we discuss here are still developing, and their impact is not yet fully understood. Part of the fun of masspersonal communication is that it is new and adaptive. However, using lessons from the past, we can at least begin to chart some of the methods that we can succeed as communicators despite the new challenges that face us.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Avatar

Using a game demo you can find on YouTube, walk the students through the experience of creating an avatar and have them discuss with you what each decision in crafting that avatar means to them, and how they think it will be interpreted by others. The purpose is to open the door to a broader discussion about the strategic ways that manage our identities online, and whether they mirror identity characteristics we exhibit offline.

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GLOSSARY

Asynchronous: A message exchange that does not happen for all parties at the same time

Augmented Reality: The state of existing online and offline at the same time

Context Collapse: Message failure because some receivers do not understand the context

Data Mining: The collecting of online behavioral information

Emoticons: Digital substitutes for non-verbal cues

Facework: The work of maintaining one's reputation

Networked connectivity: The view held by mediated communication users that mediated platforms are not a luxury, but a necessity for interpersonal communication.

Parasocial Relationships: Relationships we form with those we only know through the media

Permanence: The length a time that a message can stay visible on a mediated platform.

Synchronous: A message exchange that happens for all parties at the same time

Text Speak: The use of abbreviations in text based online communication

MEDIA

Erving Goffman and You: Impression Management

This video titled, 'Erving Goffman and You: Impression Management' demonstrates the theory of facework and impression management through a specific example that makes the concepts easy to understand in practical terms: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpiX6nRDJ_c

TED Talk: Social Media and Mental Health

This TedX video titled, 'Is Social Media Hurting Your Mental Health?' features CEO Bailey Parnell discussing her own struggles with social media anxiety and covers a number of theoretical issues that are relevant to young people coping with the impact of

social media: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Czg_9C7gw0o

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