Small Group Communication & Presentation

OER Textbook

Aggregated & Authored by James Grant at West Hills College Coalinga, 1st Ed

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1. OER (1 of 4): An Introduction to Group Communication V2.0 Published by University System of New Hampshire
   - https://pressbooks.usnh.edu/introductiontogroupcommunicationv2/
2. OER (2 of 4): Chapter 14: Oral Presentations LibreTextHumanities "Oral Presentations" is a derivative of "ENGL210: Technical Writing - Tips for Creating an Effective Presentation" , "Oral Presentations" by David McMurrey and Cassandra Race - Open Technical Communication, Authored by: Excelsior Online Reading Lab, Presentations and Other Visual Aids. Authored by: Nina Burokas. Provided by: Lumen Learning, and VARK Illustration. Provided by: Lumen Learning. "Oral Presentations" is licensed under CC BY 4.0 by Lise-Pauline Barnett.
   - https://human.libretexts.org/Courses/Harrisburg_Area_Community_College/Technical_Writing%3A_An_Open_Educational_Resource/01%3A_Chapters/14%3A_Oral_Presentations
3. OER (3 of 4): Leadership and Small Group Communication. By LibreText Social Sciences
   - https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Communication/Introduction_to_Communication/Communication_in_the_Real_World_-_An_Introduction_to_Communication_Studies/14%3A_Leadership_Roles_and_Problem_Solving_in_Groups/14.01%3A_Leadership_and_Small_Group_Communication
4. OER (4 of 4): Introduction to Communication LibreText Social Sciences by Paynton & Hahn chapter 10.5 Group Roles
   - https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Communication/Introduction_to_Communication/Introduction_to_Communication_(Paynton_and_Hahn)/10%3A_Group_Communication/10.05%3A_Groups_Roles
5. OER (5 of 5): Interpersonal Communication: Power and Influence by Wrench, Punyanunt-Carter & Thweatt
   - https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Communication/Interpersonal_Communication/Interpersonal_Communication_-_A_Mindful_Approach_to_Relationships_(Wrench_et_al.)/09%3A_Conflict_in_Relationships/9.03%3A_Power_and_Influence

Chapter 1: Planning Organizing & Presenging Small Group Oral Presentations

Introduction

Group dynamics is more prominent in the San Joaquin Valley than you would think. The San Joaquin Valley is Central California. The Central Valley is 450 miles of flat land that dominates the interior of California. It's agricultural country where you have a large Hispanic population. Group decisions are made daily by field workers, truck drivers, supervisors, managers, and presidents. Ceasar Chavez established the first farm worker labor union in the United States in

California. Cesar turned down a job from President Kennedy to be the head of the Peace Corps, where he would have been making a salary more significant than he had ever seen before; a big house and his children would have had all the advantages, but he said no to live a life of self-imposed poverty.

What's so fantastic about group dynamics is that even though we are from different ethnic backgrounds, learning how to communicate and working in groups is a life skill that will help you in your life [professional, social, or personal]. Let's take professionalism first; how many of you can say if you had to work in a group, you would be capable of working with other individuals in your department that you didn't know? And you could help the group or team reach their goal. You are committed and dedicated to the group during the meetings, giving specific responsibilities and performing at a level to make the group succeed. One day, you will be working in a group, and everyone has to make some sacrifices; you will have had that learning experience, which will be a plus for you and could lead to a promotion.

Socially, another area that causes us frustration is that we don't want to be around specific individual [s], and it's keeping us from attending events or family gatherings. Even though each ethnic group is different, the social issue regarding individual and social events continues.

Personal: What's more important than your mental health and physical well-being? You only have one life. Communicating in friendships and relationships is one of the keys to life. Studies and research state that not having

friendships or relationships where you are meeting in groups for chatting or other functions shortens your life expectancy by two to five years.

Among the many things this course will provide you with, learning how to work with others in groups is a monster. Working with other individuals from diverse backgrounds can and will be very helpful. Understanding the steps in solving problems is a game changer; you can use this tool to your advantage.

I saved our biggest concern or problem for last; I know you are thinking, what can that be—Hello Conflict. So many of us have been told or taught to stay away from Conflict. I'm sorry, but whether the Conflict is minor or significant, we must learn to work through it. Many say it will disappear if I don't deal with the problem or situation. But does it go away? Most of the time, it reappears at a later date, and sometimes not, it's bigger than ever.

We can't do anything about the past, so we start with a clean slate. Let's read the chapters, do the theory, and then put the theory into practice. Each of us is different, but after finishing the course, you will be more knowledgeable and feel better about Conflict and the problem-solving techniques you have reviewed.

Presenting a Speech and Group Discussion is Similar

Giving a speech is a tool you will have in your back pocket, and it will be like riding a bike. Once you learn, you never forget. I hadn't been on a bike for thirty years; after remembering how to balance my weight, I was off and riding down the streets. Yes, this is a required class for your degree. Also, you will be learning

techniques and skills that will help you through school, parenting, life adventures, and professionally.

In preparing for a speech, there are six basic steps. Organizing a speech is ninety percent the same as writing an English essay; the **speech is in outline form**. The introduction and Body of the speech is the same. The conclusion is different. In giving a speech, you want it short and sweet ninety percent of the time unless you share a story, poem, reading, etc.

1.1 Six Steps for Outlining a Speech

Step 1 Picking A Subject Through Consideration

1. Worth talking about –As the speaker, you must pick a topic that hs substance and provides valuable information.
2. Subject appropriate to listener—Remember you want to pick a subject they want to hear.
3. Speaker competent to discuss the topic---You are the expert on the subject, you have background knowledge, written a book or have experiences, etc; this is why your audience is coming.

Why is Picking A Subject Through Consideration Important? You are getting paid for speaking, or someone has asked you to say, and you must pick a topic they want to hear about. In most cases they will ask you to speak on a certain topic, because they know that is your area of expertise

.

Step 2 Narrowing of Topic

1	**General:**	Meat	Water	Hurricane
2	**Narrow:**	Beef	Bottle Water	Hurricane Katrina
3	**Specific:**	Hamburger	Arrowhead Water	Hurricane Katrina Largest 3rd Fastest

Why is Narrowing the Topic Important? I want you to think about high school or college classrooms, and the instructor wanted you to write a term paper or a project, and they gave you a general topic. You were stuck or saying this topic is too broad. Now, you have a tool to help you solve or eliminate that concern from now on.

On your **outline form,** your specific topic has to be a sentence:

Example: Let's say this is a speech to inform. I will do Arrowhead Water

Specific: **I will inform you why you should drink Arrowhead water**. This also is your thesis.

Step 3 Introduction

1. Hook [English Teachers] or Get the attention of the audience
2. Thesis or Purpose
3. Three Main Points or Topics

Why is the introduction Important? The introduction is the key to if your audience will listen to your speech. If you are excitable and full of energy and cover the three things above, you will have them eating out of your hands.

Step 4 Body

1. Main Point
2. Evidence
3. Research

Why is the Body Important? This is where you go into **depth** about each of your points from your introduction, so your audience understands what you have shared about your three topics.

Step 5 Conclusion

1. Clincher—Last thing you are going to say—It should be something that will take their breathe away
2. Leave your audience with something to remember you and your speech by

Why is the Conclusion Important? This is the last thing your audience will hear and, in many cases, will remember about your speech. You want your conclusion to be slow, soft, and sweet unless you share a story. You want it to be a clincher. Something that they will remember for a while.

Example of a Clincher—School Play. The last act and the play were over, and the audience stood up and started clapping for actors and actresses to come back out on stage for a curtain call and bow again. The audience wanted to show their appreciation for a job well done. The performer will remember the name of the play and how the audience responded

Step 6 Transitions

1. Forms a bridge between two ideas

2. Uniting Ideas Joining Ideas

3. It shows where the speech has been and where it is going

Why is the Transitions Important? Think about a blind man listening to your speech or anyone and being able to follow from one paragraph to the next. When using the proper transitions, it flows so smoothly.

Ways to start Introduction and end Conclusion—You can use any of the following:

1. Statement

2. Question

3. Poem

4. Skit

5. Story

6. Quote

Why are transitions critical?

Transitions are words or phrases that allow you to move smoothly from one section of your speech to another so that your speech flows smoothly and you do not confuse your audience.

Transitions are used to ensure your audience knows you are leaving one part of your speech and going to the next. Without transitions, your audience could be confused and didn't know or understand when you were leaving one point and going to another:

1. Starting with
2. Beginning with
3. Next
4. Moving on
5. First—Second—Third—Any time you say first, a sequence of ideas is coming, so you must say Second for your point B and Third for your point C.
6. Last
7. Furthermore
8. In addition
9. Now Let's Consider or On the contrary.
10. To get started

1.2 Speech Outlining

Introduction

Attention Getter in Yellow—Let me explain this a step further—You must first get the audience's attention, and you can't do that by going **right into your topic.** It has to be something that will make your audience think. Example: If my speech was on Losing Weight. Attention Getter—I would start with a question—**When was the last time you looked at your high school senior picture?**—This is to get them thinking.

Thesis Today, I will **inform** you how to remove those inches before your class reunion 2027.

Three Main points---[A] Water [B] Exercising [C] Eating Right

Other items

You can practice now on the introduction – Go to **MIRROR** and watch yourself as you practice. See, are you smiling and opening your mouth? The audience should be able to see your **teeth**.

Get ahead of the game.

Mr. Grant

Speech Outline Form

Name:_____

Date:_____

Type:_____

General _____

Narrow _____

Specific _____

1._____ B. _____ C._____

I Introduction

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Transition _____

II Body

1. _____

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

Transition _____

2. _____

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

Transition _____

3. _____

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

Transition _____

III Conclusion

_____

_____

_____

_____

References:

    1.

    2.

Example:

Name: Mr. Grant

Date: 00-00-27

Type: Self-Introduction

General: Man

Narrow: Mr. Grant

Specific: Mr. Grant being successful in life.   Yellow–Attention Getter

Specific: Must be a sentence   Light Green–Thesis

A. High School Days B. College C. Job Opportunities   Light Blue–Three Main

Points

I. Introduction

Everyone wants to be successful in life. You are in college because you have goals and want to be successful. Well, this afternoon I want to share with you a few things about **Mr. Grant your instructor, being successful in life,** [A] High School Days, [B] College and [C] Job Opportunities.

Transition: Start with

II. Body

    A. High School Days

    1. Loved H.S/Cut Classes

    2. Average Student/People Helped

Transition: Next

    B. College

    1. Basketball/ Men/ Education

    2. 4 yr/ Help

Transition: Last

    C. Job Opportunities

    1. College classmates/Instructors

    2. Networking

Transition: In Closing

III. Conclusion

> Like the Arm slogan says, "Be The Best **YOU** Can Be" and you will reach
>
> your goal in life.

> Thank You

No color and you will be minus 6 Points

1.3 Delivery

Delivery or how will get you the job or pass the interview. Remember, I'm not
taking you through every phase of delivery—If you were in COM 1 Public
Speaking, I would do that. I want you to know how to write a basic outline and
use your abilities to care for the HOW. Speech is not math, where there is one
standard answer. Each speaker is different and unique, and you have your
strengths or style. For many of you, it might be a challenge, but coming out of the
world of technology into the world of communication is much easier than doing
chemistry or calculus. The key to delivery is practicing in front of a Mirror.

When you are delivering a speech, you want to be natural. To me, you must
practice in front of the mirror and watch your facial expressions and gestures. I
never ask a student to make gestures or facial expressions. It is something we
must work on. Have you ever watched the meteorologists?

What is more boring than the weather? Do they make it exciting? Ninety percent of them do make the weather exciting. This is your job as a speaker to make the audience want to listen to you.

You can do two things now to help yourself with delivery: smile and let the audience see your teeth, and speak louder if you are a soft speaker. Speaking softly at job interviews is a sign you are not a strong individual in most cases.

The delivery of your speech is so essential, like the message. Think of the movies, actors, or actresses you watch. Why do you manage them because they perform or keep you entertained?

It's all about HOW you said it, along with the message.

There is also a non-verbal part of your speech that you must develop. All the following things deliver a message to your audience—Eye Contact- vocal, Body, and facial expressions enhance your message to the audience.

Extemporaneous Speaking—A planned speech using notecards or outline and rehearsed—which allows you to maintain eye contact with the audience. You can see how well the audience understands your message. You can still gauge if the audience is listening and interested when online. It also makes the audience think you are knowledgeable and keeps them more engaged.

What is Good Delivery—The process of presenting a clear-coherent message interestingly [excitable or with energy]

Eye Contact—You must be able to have eye contact with the audience. Making eye contact with the audience is one of the most essential tools toward effective delivery—Eye Contact is a powerful tool—signs of confidence and well-prepared

Facial Expressions—Convey so much information—You want to AVOID NO FACIAL EXPRESSION

Example: I want you to think about this for a couple of minutes: When has someone shared with you that they were going or going to take you to Disneyland and didn't show excitement? It's probably hard to remember when someone spoke about Disneyland and wasn't excited about it. So, as a speaker, you want to be excited about your speech.

If you are speaking about death, sadness, or loneliness, then you are speaking with a low, soft voice with a facial expression, letting your audience see you are also in this place.

1.4 Oral Presentations

Section Objectives

- Create oral presentation materials that reflect standards of effective presentations.
- Apply the standards of effective presentation to Technical Writing.
- Demonstrate formatting and designing of presentations.
- Evaluate presentations for effectiveness.

A common assignment in technical writing courses—not to mention in the workplace—is to prepare and deliver an oral presentation, a task most of us would be happy to avoid. However, while employers look for coursework and experience in preparing written documents, they also look for experience in oral presentations as well.

Oral presentations will be prepared differently face-to-face than in an online environment. You would see many presenters use flip charts, PowerPoint, and other visuals for face-to-face presentations. If you are presenting online, oral reports can be sent in as "scripts," or audio versions can be transmitted live or recorded. You might also use PowerPoint and Prezi presentations as well.

Most people would rather have root canal surgery without Novocaine than stand up in front of a group and speak. It truly is one of the great stressors. But with some help from the resources that follow, you can be a champion presenter. Learning how to have effective presentations can help you close a big deal or explain information to your colleagues at work.

Topics and Situations for the Oral Presentation

For the oral report in a technical writing course, imagine that you are formally handing over your final *written* report to the people with whom you set up the hypothetical contract or agreement. For example, imagine that you had contracted with a software company to write its user guide. Once you have completed it, you have a meeting with the chief officers to formally deliver the

guide. You spend some time orienting them to the guide, showing them how it is organized and written, and discussing some of its highlights. Your goal is to get them acquainted with the guide and to prompt them for any concerns or questions.

The first step is to figure out a topic. It is important to remember what you did in the writing process and the same steps apply here. Start with brainstorming some possibilities on what you want to present:

- **Purpose:** One way to find a topic is to think about the purpose of your talk. Is it to instruct (for example, to explain how to run a text editing program on a computer), to persuade (to vote for or against a certain technically oriented bond issue), or simply to inform (to report on citizen participation in the new recycling program).
- **Informative purpose***:* An oral report can be primarily informative. For example, as a member of a committee involved in a project to relocate the plant, your job might be to give an oral report on the condition of the building and grounds at one of the sites proposed for purchase.
- **Instructional purpose***:* An oral report can be instructional. Your task might be to train new employees to use certain equipment or to perform certain routine tasks.
- **Persuasive purpose***:* An oral report can be persuasive. You might want to convince members of local civic organizations to support a city-wide recycling program.

- **Topics:** You can start by thinking of a technical subject, for example, solar panels, microprocessors, drip irrigation, or laser surgery. For your oral report, think of a subject you would be interested in talking about, but find a reason why an audience would want to hear your oral report.

- **Place or situation:** You can find topics for oral reports or make more detailed plans for them by thinking about the place or the situation in which your oral report might naturally be given: at meetings for your employer? at a city council meeting? at a meeting of the board of directors or high-level executives of a company? Thinking about an oral report this way makes you focus on the audience, their reasons for listening to you, and their interests and background. As in all technical writing situations, identifying and understanding your audience is of the utmost importance.

Contents and Requirements for Oral Presentations

Once you have picked a topic for your oral presentation, it is time to organize your thoughts. The focus for your oral presentation is clear, understandable presentation; well-organized, well-planned, well-timed discussion.

When you give your oral presentation, use the following as a requirements list, as a way of focusing your preparations:

- **Situation:** Plan to explain the situation of your oral report and who you are. Make sure that there is a clean break between this brief explanation and the beginning of your actual oral report.

- **Introduction:** Pay special attention to the introduction to your talk. Here's where you tell your audience what you are going to present.

    - Indicate the *purpose* of your oral report.

    - give an *overview* of its contents.

    - find some way to *interest* the audience.

- **Visuals:** Use at least one visual—preferably slides using presentation software (such as Powerpoint, Keynote, and Prezi). Flip charts and objects for display are good, but avoid scribbling stuff on the chalkboard or whiteboard or relying strictly on handouts. Make sure you discuss key elements of your visuals. Don't just throw them up there and ignore them. Point out things about them; explain them to the audience.

- **Explanation:** Plan to explain any technical aspect of your topic clearly and understandably. Don't race through complex, technical stuff—slow down and explain it carefully so that your audience understands it.

- **Transitions:** Use "verbal headings"—by now, you've gotten used to using headings in your written work. There is a corollary in oral reports. With these, you give your audience a very clear signal you are moving from one topic or part of your talk to the next. Your presentation visual can signal your headings.

- **Planning:** Plan your presentation in advance and practice it so that it is organized. Make sure that your audience knows what you are talking

about and why, which part of the talk you are in, and what is coming next. Overviews and verbal headings greatly contribute to this sense of organization.

- **Closing:** End with a real conclusion. People sometimes forget to plan how to end an oral report and end by just trailing off into a mumble. Remember that in conclusions, you can:
    - *summarize* (go back over high points of what you've discussed).
    - *conclude* (state some logical conclusion based on what you have presented).
    - provide some *last thought* (end with some final interesting point but general enough not to require elaboration).
    - or some combination of the three.
- **Questions:** And certainly, you'll want to prompt the audience for questions and concerns.
- The sample chart below can help you with your organization and brainstorming.

The sample chart below can help you with your organization and brainstorming.

Context: Explain who the intended audience is, what the situation is—before you begin your actual talk.

Introduction: At the beginning of your actual oral report, tell who you are, indicate its topic and purpose, provide an overview of its main contents, get the audience interested.

Body of the report:
- Use verbal headings.
- Explain technical details clearly.
- Use visuals—explain them.
- Speak clearly, not fast. Avoid nervous mannerisms.
- Stay organized.
- Be aware of the 7-minute time limit.

Conclusion: Have a planned way to end your report: summarize, conclude, provide one last general thought. Invite questions.
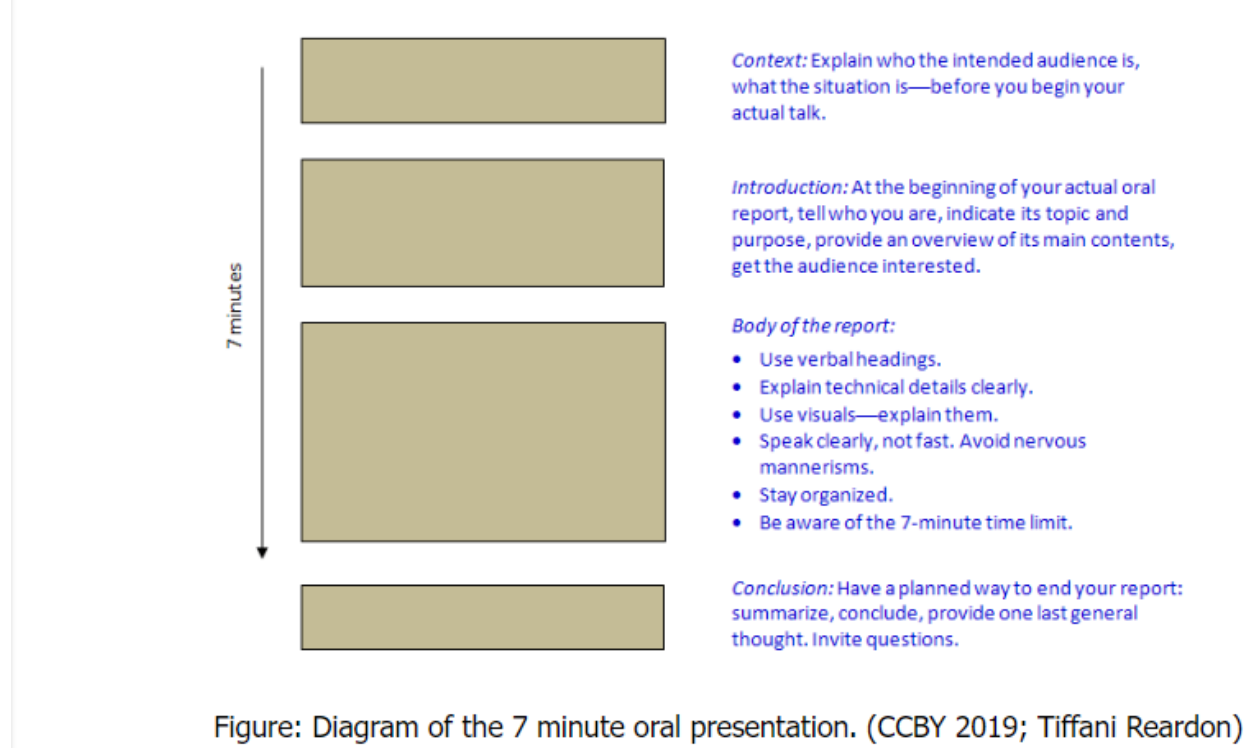
Figure: Diagram of the 7 minute oral presentation. (CCBY 2019; Tiffani Reardon)

Diagram of the 7 minute oral presentation. (CCBY 2019; Tiffani Reardon)

1.5 Preparing for the Oral Presentation

Pick the method of preparing for the talk that best suits your comfort level with public speaking and with your topic. However, plan to do ample preparation and rehearsal—some people assume that they can just jump up there and ad lib for so many minutes and be relaxed and informal. It does not often work that way—drawing a mental blank is the more common experience. A well delivered presentation is the result of a lot of work and a lot of practice.

Here are the obvious possibilities for preparation and delivery:

- Write a script, practice it; keep it around for quick-reference during your talk.

- Set up an outline of your talk; practice with it, bring it for reference.

- Set up cue cards, practice with them, and use them during your talk.

- Write a script and read from it.

A good presentation is one that is clear, understandable, well-planned, organized, and on target with your purpose and audience.

It does not matter which method you use to prepare for the talk, but you want to make sure that you know your material. The head-down style of reading your report directly from a script will not work. There is little or no eye contact or interaction with the audience. The delivery tends to be toward a dull, boring monotone that either puts listeners off or is hard to understand. And, most of us cannot stand to have reports read to us!

For many reasons, most people get nervous when they have to give oral presentations. Being well prepared is your best defense against the nerves. The nerves will wear off someday, the more oral presenting you do. In the meantime, breathe deeply and enjoy.

Visuals for Oral Presentations

There are various types of presentation formats you can use:

- **Presentation software slides:** Projecting images ("slides") using software such as PowerPoint, Keynote, Google Slides, and Prezi, to

name a few. One common problem with the construction of these slides is cramming too much information on individual slides.

- **Poster board-size charts:** Another possibility is to get some poster boards and draw and letter what you want your audience to see. Of course, it's not easy making charts look neat and professional.

- **Handouts:** You can run off copies of what you want your audience to see and hand them out before or during your talk. This option is even less effective than the first two because you cannot point to what you want your audience to see and because handouts distract the audience's attention away from you. Still, for certain visual needs, handouts are the only choice. Keep in mind that if you are not well prepared, the handouts become a place for your distracted audience to doodle.

- **Objects:** If you need to demonstrate certain procedures, you may need to bring in actual physical objects. Rehearse what you are going to do with these objects; sometimes they can take up a lot more time than you expect.

- **Zoom, Teams, Google Hangouts (conference style software):** We are seeing more and more companies using these software to conduct business meetings. So, people are conducting virtual meetings and presenting. So learning how to use this software to present your presentations is very important.

Take some time to make your visuals look sharp and professional—do your best to ensure that they are legible to the entire audience.

As for the content of your visuals, consider these ideas:

- **Drawing or diagram of key objects:** If you describe or refer to any objects during your talk, try to get visuals of them, so that you can point to different components or features.

- **Tables, charts, graphs:** If you discuss statistical data, present it in some form or table, chart, or graph. Many members of your audience may be less comfortable "hearing" such data as opposed to seeing it.

- **Outline of your talk, report, or both:** If you are at a loss for visuals to use in your oral presentation, or if your presentation is complex, have an outline of it that you can show at various points during your talk.

- **Key terms and definitions:** A good idea for visuals (especially when you cannot think of any others) is to set up a two-column list of key terms you use during your oral presentation with their definitions in the second column.

- **Key concepts or points:** Similarly, you can list your key points and show them in visuals. (Outlines, key terms, and main points are all good, legitimate ways of incorporating visuals into oral presentations when you cannot think of any others.)

During your actual oral report, make sure to discuss your visuals, refer to them, guide your audience through the key points in your visuals. It is a big problem just to throw a visual up on the screen and never even refer to it.

As you prepare your visuals, look at resources that will help you. There are many rules for using PowerPoint, Keynote, Google Slides, and Prezi down to the font size and how many words to put on a single slide, but you will have to choose the style that best suits your subject and your presentation style.

You may also have heard about the presentation skills of Steve Jobs. The video that follows is the introduction of the I-Phone...and as you watch, take notes on how Jobs sets up his talk and his visuals. Observe how he connects with the audience...and then see if you can work some of his strategies into your own presentation skills. This is a long video...you don't need to watch it all, but do take enough time to form some good impressions.

Feel free to look up: [Steve Jobs iPhone Presentation](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Etyt4osHgX0) at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Etyt4osHgX0 on YouTube.

1.6 Format and Design

Figure: There are four commonly accepted modalities for learning, often abbreviated as VARK.

Presentation software allows you to take an oral presentation to the next level—engaging your audience verbally and visually as well as aurally. What's particularly powerful about using presentation software and other visual aids is the ability to use imagery to bridge cultural and language gaps and arrive at a shared understanding of the issue/opportunity at hand.

Using multimedia—images, photos and video and animation—that supports your point also provides repetition and can increase retention.

Common Presentation Tools

There are various formats you can use to create effective presentations. Depending on your operating system there is Keynote for Mac computers,

PowerPoint is a Microsoft product, and there are online options such as Prezi. These applications are easy to use and can provide step by step instructions.

Various Types of Presentation tools to consider:

1. PowerPoint

2. Prezi

3. Keynote

Creating Effective Presentations

Presentations are quite common in both academic and professional settings, and, because they are such an important part of how you'll likely present your ideas and information to an audience, it's helpful to have some basic information on how to create an effective presentation.

The basic purpose of a presentation is to give you a way to present key ideas to an audience with visual support. Your presentation shouldn't be full of text. It is meant to provide you with speaking points, and detailed notes should be kept from your audience. You want to keep your slides clear, clean, short, focused, and you want to keep your audience from using the expression that we sometimes hear in reference to long, boring presentations, "death by PowerPoint."

When you start to think about the layout of your presentation make sure to have an outline of how you want your presentation to flow. This will help you make

sure you cover all your points. Make sure that your presentation is spaced out well and your content does not look cluttered on the slide. Remember that you want the color to be suitable for all audiences. Some people are color blind and cannot see certain colors. So make sure your colors go well together.

Designing the Presentation

When creating a presentation make sure it is visually appealing and easy to read for your audience. You want to have less text and use more bullet points. You want to also have visuals to highlight your topic. The examples below will help you create a slide that highlights bullet points, illustrated points, and speaker props.
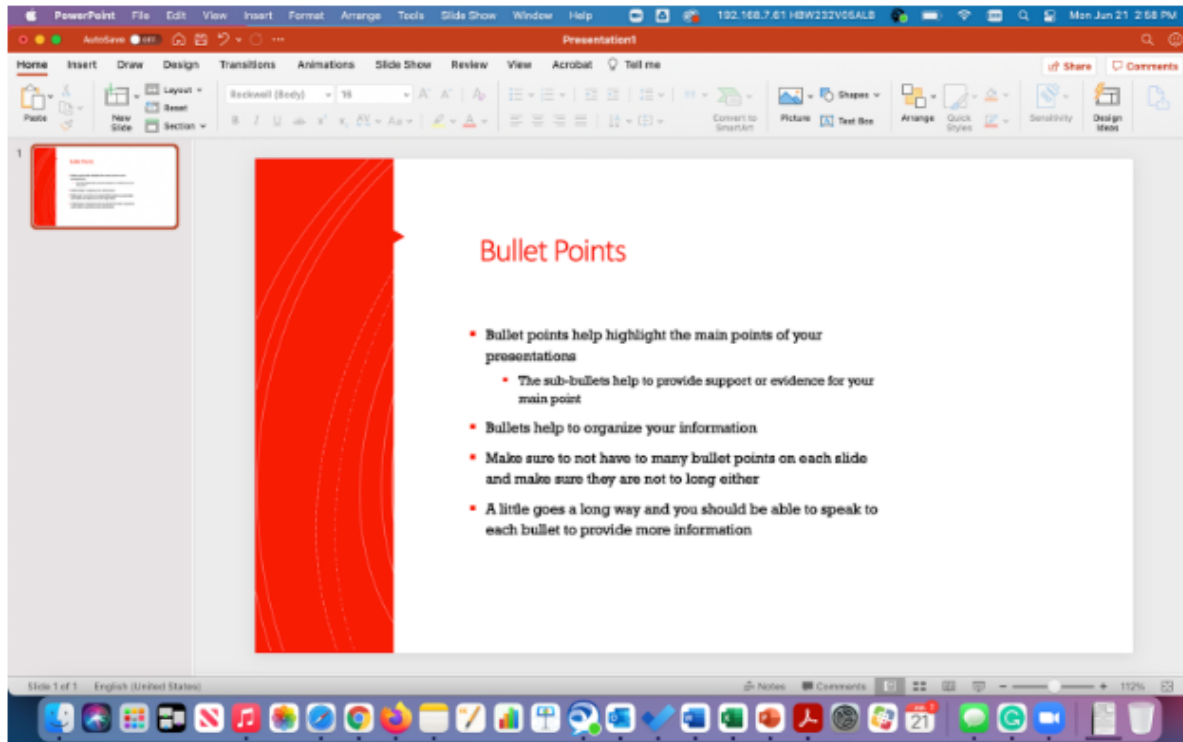
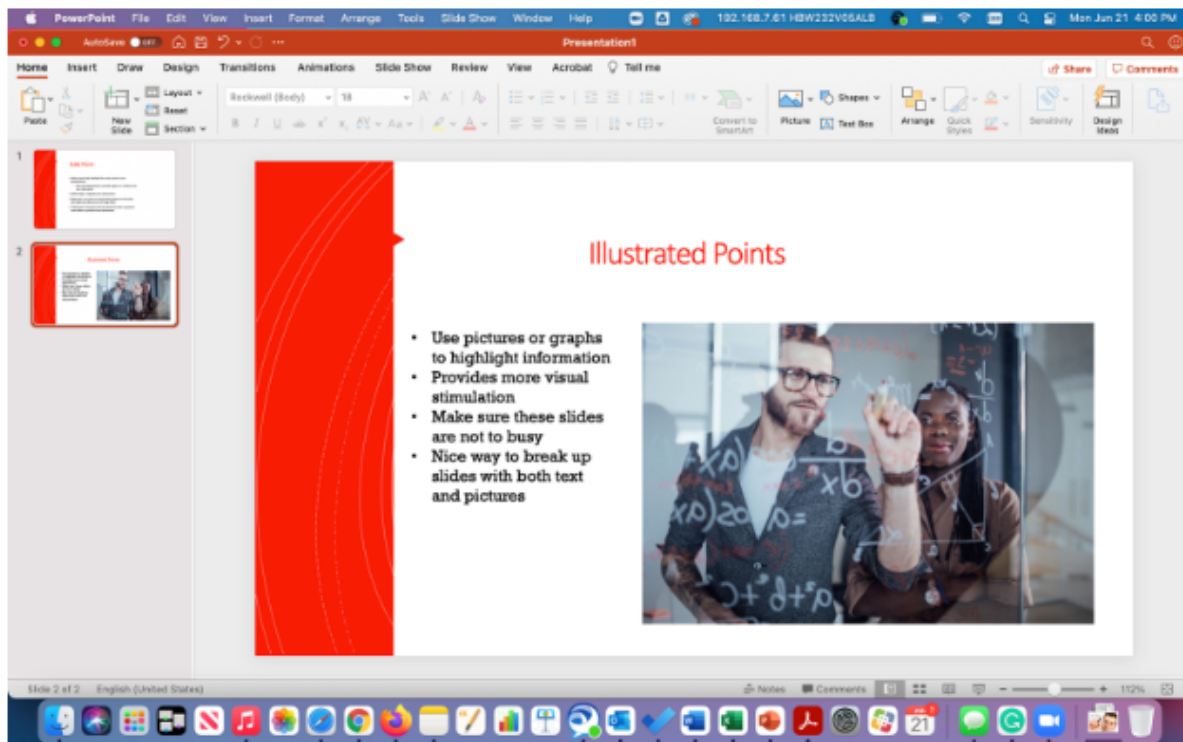Figure: Bullet Pointed Slide (2021; Lise-Pauline Barnett)

Figure: Illustrated points. (2021; Lise-Pauline Barnett)

Speaker Props

This type of presentation is random pictures that will flash across your screen. You have to be careful when using it as it could be distracting for the audience and some people cannot handle flashes like that. The video link listed below is an example of a speaker prop presentation which you could find on YouTube.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=RrpajcAgR1E

Fonts and Size for Your Presentation

When you are creating your presentation make sure to pick a font and size that is easy for your audience to read. Your audience needs to be able to read the information being projected in the room. Remember you could be in a conference room or an auditorium. Make sure you are using the same font throughout your presentation and the font is appropriate for your topic and audience. It can be distracting if you have various fonts throughout the presentation.

Tips

1. Use a font that is easy to read.
2. Make sure the font and the background are compatible.
3. Make sure your title font is bigger than the content and stands out.
4. The common size is 24 font.
5. Bold important information.

Fonts in Both Mac & PC Versions of PowerPoint
*Available in PowerPoint Online

- Arial*
- **Ariel Rounded MT Bold**
- Baskerville Old Face
- Batang
- BatangChe
- **Bauhaus 93**
- Bell MT
- Book Antigua*
- Bookman Old Style*
- Calibri*
- Calibri Light*

- Calisto MT
- Cambria*
- Cambria Math
- Candara*
- Century*
- Century Gothic*
- Century Schoolbook*
- Colonna MT
- Comic Sans MS*
- Consolas*
- Constantia*

- Corbel*
- Courier New*
- Curlz MT
- Dubai
- Edwardian Script ITC
- ENGRAVERS MT
- Franklin Gothic Book*
- Gabriola
- Garamond*
- Georgia*
- Gill Sans MT*

Figure: https://www.templatemonster.com/blog...presentations/

1.7 Aesthetically Pleasing

For our purposes, aesthetics refers to the beauty or good taste of a presentation aid. Earlier we mentioned the universal principles of good design: unity, emphasis or focal point, scale and proportion, balance, and rhythm. Because of wide differences in taste, not everyone will agree on what is aesthetically pleasing, and you may be someone who does not think of yourself as having much artistic talent. Still, if you keep these principles in mind, they will help you to create attractive, professional-looking visuals.

The other aesthetic principle to keep in mind is that your presentation aids are intended to support your speech, not the other way around. The decisions you make in designing your visuals should be dictated by the content of your speech.

If you use color, use it for a clear reason. If you use a border, keep it simple. Whatever you do, make certain that your presentation aids will be perceived as carefully planned and executed elements of your speech.

How to Choose Good Color

Color is very important and can definitely make a strong impact on an audience. However, don't go overboard or decide to use unappealing combinations of color. For example, you should never use a light font color (like yellow) on a solid white background because it's hard for the eye to read. You should also realize that while colors may be rich and vibrant on your computer screen at home, they may be distorted by a different monitor. While we definitely are in favor of experimenting with various color schemes, always check your presentation out on multiple computers to see if the slide color is being distorted in a way that makes it hard to read.

Visual and Audio Effects

Everyone who has had an opportunity to experiment with PowerPoint, Keynote, and Prezi knows that animation in transitions between slides or even on a single slide can be fun, but often people do not realize that too much movement can actually distract audience members. While all presentation software packages offer you very cool slide movements and other bells and whistles, they are not always very helpful for your presentation. If you're going to utilize slide transitions or word animation, stick to only three or four different types of transitions in your whole presentation. Furthermore, do not have more than one type of movement

on a given slide. If you're going to have all your text come from the right side of the screen in a bulleted list, make sure that all the items on the bulleted list come from the right side of the screen.

Good writers make conscious choices. They understand their purpose and audience. Every decision they make on the page, from organizing an essay to choosing a word with just the right connotations, is made with their purpose and audience in mind.

The same principle applies to visual communication. As a presenter, you choose the following:

- When to show images or video for maximum impact;

- Which images will best produce the effect you want;

- When to present information using a table, chart, or other graphic;

- How much text to include in slides or informational graphics; and

- How to organize graphics so they present information clearly.

Your goal is to use visual media to support and enhance your presentation. At the same time, you must make sure these media do not distract your audience or interfere with getting your point across. Your ideas, not your visuals, should be the focus.

Tips

Here are some tips to keep in mind when creating an effective presentation:

1. Remember to avoid too much text. You should keep your text brief and include talking points only. Detailed notes can be inserted into the notes section (or you can use some other form of notes as you present), but only you should see those notes, unless a professor asks to see your notes to evaluate your presentation as an assignment.

2. Be consistent and clear with your font choices. Helvetica is a nice font for presentations. Make sure your font is large enough that an audience in a room would be able to see your text, even if audience members are sitting in the back of the room.

3. Be careful with your color choices for text and background. You want to make sure your audience can read your text easily. Black on white text is easiest to read but is also boring for a presentation. Still, when you add color, just be sure you are adding color that works and doesn't distract.

4. Add images. Text on slides for every slide is boring. Add appropriate images to your slides. Relevant charts and graphs are excellent, as are pictures that will connect to your content. Think about moments where an image can more easily convey information or a message. A powerful image on a slide with no accompanying text can be a powerful way to capture your audience's attention.

5. Make sure your main points are clear. Remember to connect your ideas well and provide background information and transitions when necessary.

6. Keep your audience in mind. Your audience will affect the overall tone and appearance of your presentation. Sometimes, humor can be appropriate. Other times, a more serious tone may be necessary. Just as you evaluate your situation any time you write a paper, you should evaluate your situation for creating a presentation.

1.8 Delivering Oral Presentations

When you give an oral report, focus on common problem areas such as these:

- **Timing:** Make sure you keep within the time limit. Finishing more than a minute under the time limit is also a problem. Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse until you get the timing just right.

- **Volume:** Obviously, you must be sure to speak loud enough so that all of your audience can hear you. You might find some way to practice speaking a little louder in the days before the oral presentation.

- **Pacing, speed:** Sometimes, oral presenters who are nervous talk too fast. All that adrenaline causes them to speed through their talk, making it hard for the audience to follow. In general, it helps listeners understand you better if you speak a bit more slowly and deliberately than you do in normal conversation. Slow down, take it easy, be clear...and breathe.

- **Gestures and posture:** Watch out for nervous hands flying all over the place. This too can be distracting—and a bit comical. At the same time, do not turn yourself into a mannequin. Plan to keep your hands clasped together or holding onto the podium and only occasionally making some gesture. Definitely keep your hands out of your pockets or waistband. As for posture, avoid slouching at the podium or leaning against the wall. Stand up straight, and keep your head up.

- **Verbal crutches:** Watch out for too much "uh," "you know," "okay" and other kinds of nervous verbal habits. Instead of saying "uh" or "you know" every three seconds, just do not say anything at all. In the days before your oral presentation, practice speaking without these verbal crutches. The silence that replaces them is not a bad thing—it gives listeners time to process what you are saying.

- **Practice, Practice, Practice**: It is vital to practice using the technology. Nothing is worse than watching a speaker stand up and not know how to turn on the computer, access the software, or launch his or her presentation. When you use technology, audiences can quickly see if you know what you are doing, so don't give them the opportunity to devalue your credibility because you can't even get the show going.

- **Always Have a Backup Plan**: Unfortunately, things often go wrong. One of the parts of being a professional is keeping the speech moving in spite of unexpected problems. Decide in advance what you will do if things break down or disappear right when you need them. If you take this responsibility seriously and check the room where you will be presenting early, you will have time to adapt.

Face Your Audience: Maintaining eye contact may not be as simple as it sounds. The trick is to focus on one person at a time. Zero in on one person, make eye contact, and maintain it just long enough to establish a connection. (A few seconds will suffice.) Then move on. This way, you connect with your audience, one person at a time. Pay attention to your facial expressions as well.

If you have thought about how you want to convey emotion during different parts of your presentation, you are probably already monitoring your facial expressions as you rehearse. Be aware that the pressure of presenting can make your expression serious or tense without your realizing it.

Tips

If you are speaking to a very large group, it may be difficult to make eye contact with each individual. Instead, focus on a smaller group of persons or one row of people at time. Look in their direction for a few seconds and then shift your gaze to another small group in the room.

This chapter highlighted how to plan, create, and present oral presentations. There are so many presentation solutions out there that you need to find one that works with your computer and you feel comfortable using. When you create a PowerPoint, Prezi, Google Slide, or Keynote presentation, be sure to consider the principles discussed.

1.9 General Presentation Tips

When you create a PowerPoint, Prezi, Google Slide, or Keynote presentation, be sure to consider the principles discussed. You now know how to:

- Brainstorm your topic.

- Plan and prepare your presentation.

- Create content for an effective presentation.

- Choose a presentation medium that fits your audience.

- Use a font and size that is appropriate.

- Position objects and content appropriately.

- Avoid distracting colors and text and make sure colors are in contrast with each other.

- Select backgrounds that are easy to read and see - remember some people are color blind.

- Pick effects and visuals that are stimulating and pleasing to the eye.

Chapter Attributions:

Chapter 2: Defining Communication in Small Groups

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

Getting Started

Communication is an activity, skill, and art that incorporates lessons learned across a wide spectrum of human knowledge. Perhaps the most time-honored form of communication is storytelling. We've told each other stories for ages to help make sense of our world, anticipate the future, and certainly to entertain ourselves. We gather around in groups and hear or see stories that say something about our world, our community, who we are. How did we learn the

stories we tell each other? From each other. Groups and teams come together to create amazing movies. Artists gather together to produce songs that inspire us. People, effectively working together, can do the impossible.

Telling a story to your friends or peers draws on your understanding of yourself, your message, and how you communicate it to a group that is simultaneously communicating back to you. They respond to your story, perhaps tell a few of their own, and you feel like you are in a group. You are an individual, and a member of the group, at the same time. You are a member of many groups. Knowing how to communicate effectively as a member of a team or in a group is key to your success. You were not born knowing how to write, or even how to talk—but in the process of growing up you have probably learned something about how to tell, and how not to tell, a story. When people stand around and want to know what comes next you know you have their attention. They are as much a part of the story as you are. When everyone is involved and listening or participating, it is a fun experience.

You didn't learn to text in a day, and didn't learn all the codes, from LOL (Laugh Out Loud) to BRB (Be Right Back), right away. In the same way, learning to communicate well requires you to read and study how others have expressed themselves, then to adapt what you have learned to your present task, whether it is texting a brief message to a friend, presenting your qualifications in a job interview, or making a sales presentation. You come to this text with skills and an understanding that will provide a valuable foundation as we explore group communication.

Effective communication, in all its many forms, takes preparation, practice, and persistence. There are many ways to learn communication skills; the school of experience, or "hard knocks," is one of them. But in the real world, a "knock" (or lesson learned) may come at the expense of your credibility through a blown presentation to a client. The classroom environment, with a compilation of information and resources such as a text, can offer you a trial run where you get to try out new ideas and skills before you have to use them to communicate effectively to make a sale, motivate your team members, or form a new partnership. Listening to yourself, or perhaps the comments of others, may help you reflect on new ways to present, or perceive, thoughts, ideas and concepts. The net result is your growth; ultimately your ability to communicate in teams and groups will improve, opening more doors than you might anticipate.

As you learn the material in this text, each part will contribute to the whole. The degree to which you attend to each part will ultimately help give you the skills, confidence, and preparation to use communication in furthering your career.

2.1 Why Study Group Communication?

Learning Objective

1. Understand the importance of group communication

Communication is key to your success, in relationships, in the workplace, as a citizen of your country, and across your lifetime. Your ability to communicate comes from experience, which can be an effective teacher, but this text and the

related group communication course will offer you a wealth of experiences gathered from professionals across their lifetimes. You can learn from the lessons they've learned and be a more effective team and group communicator right out of the gate. According to Ken Boughrum, Executive Vice President and Managing Director, and Tyler Durham, Vice President and Managing Consultant, Stromberg Consulting, "Great teams are distinguished from good teams by how effectively they communicate. Great team communication is more than the words that are said or written. Power is leveraged by the team's ability to actively listen, clarify, understand, and live by the principle that "everything communicates." The actions, the tone, the gestures, the infrastructure, the environment and the things that are not done or said speak and inform just as loudly as words.O'Rourke, J., and Yarbrough, B, (2008). Leading Groups and Teams. Mason, OH: South-Western Cengage Learning, p. 2. Effective teams and groups start with effective communication.

Communication Influences Your Thinking about Yourself and Others

We all share a fundamental drive to communicate. Communication can be defined as the process of understanding and sharing meaning. Pearson, J., & Nelson, P. (2000). An Introduction to Human Communication: Understanding and Sharing. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill. p. 6. You share meaning in what you say and how you say it, both in oral and written forms. If you could not communicate,

what would life be like? A series of never-ending frustrations? Not being able to ask for what you need, or even to understand the needs of others?

Being unable to communicate might even mean losing a part of yourself, for you communicate your *self-concept*—your sense of self and awareness of who you are—in many ways. Do you like to write? Do you find it easy to make a phone call to a stranger, or to speak to a room full of people? Do you like to work in teams and groups? Perhaps someone told you that you don't speak clearly, or your grammar needs improvement. Does that make you more or less likely to want to communicate? For some it may be a positive challenge, while for others it may be discouraging, but in all cases your ability to communicate is central to your self-concept.

Take a look at your clothes. What are the brands you are wearing? What do you think they say about you? Do you feel that certain styles of shoes, jewelry, tattoos, music, or even automobiles express who you are? Part of your self-concept may be that you express yourself through texting, or through writing longer documents like essays and research papers, or through the way you speak. Those labels and brands in some ways communicate with your group or community. They are recognized, and to some degree, are associated with you. Just as your words represent you in writing, how you present yourself with symbols and images influences how others perceive you.

On the other side of the coin, your communication skills help you to understand others—not just their words, but also their tone of voice, their nonverbal gestures,

or the format of their written documents provide you with clues about who they are and what their values and priorities may be. Active listening and reading are also part of being a successful communicator.

Communication Influences How You Learn

When you were an infant, you learned to talk over a period of many months. There was a group of caregivers around you that talked to each other, and sometimes you, and you caught on that you could get something when you used a word correctly. Before you knew it you were speaking in sentences, with words, in a language you learned from your family or those around you. When you got older, you didn't learn to ride a bike, drive a car, or even text a message on your cell phone in one brief moment. You need to begin the process of improving your communication skills with the frame of mind that it will require effort, persistence, and self-correction.

You learn to speak in public by first having conversations, then by answering questions and expressing your opinions in class, and finally by preparing and delivering a "stand-up" speech. Similarly, you learn to write by first learning to read, then by writing and learning to think critically. Your speaking and writing are reflections of your thoughts, experience, and education, and part of that combination is your level of experience listening to other speakers, reading documents and styles of writing, and studying formats similar to what you aim to produce. Speaking and writing are both key communication skills that you will use in teams and groups.

As you study group communication, you may receive suggestions for improvement and clarification from professionals more experienced than yourself. Take their suggestions as challenges to improve, don't give up when your first speech or first draft does not communicate the message you intend. Stick with it until you get it right. Your success in communicating is a skill that applies to almost every field of work, and it makes a difference in your relationships with others.

Remember, luck is simply a combination of preparation and timing. You want to be prepared to communicate well when given the opportunity. Each time you do a good job, your success will bring more success.

Communication Represents You and Your Employer

You want to make a good first impression on your friends and family, on your instructors, and on your employer. They all want you to convey a positive image, as it reflects on them. In your career you will represent your business or company in teams and groups, and your professionalism and attention to detail will reflect positively on you and set you up for success.

As an effective member of the team, you will benefit from having the ability to communicate clearly and with clarity. These are skills you will use for the rest of your life. Positive improvements in these skills will have a positive impact on your relationships, your prospects for employment, and your ability to make a difference in the world.

Communication Skills Are Desired by Business and Industry

Oral and written communication proficiencies are consistently ranked in the top ten desirable skills by employer surveys year after year. In fact, high-powered business executives sometimes hire consultants to coach them in sharpening their communication skills. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, the top five personal qualities/skills potential employers seek are (NACE, 2017):

1. Problem-solving skills
2. Ability to work in a team
3. Communication skills
4. Leadership
5. Strong work ethic

Knowing this, you can see that one way for you to be successful and increase your promotion potential is to increase your abilities to speak and write effectively.

Teams and groups are almost universal across all fields because no one person has all the skills, knowledge, or ability to do everything with an equal degree of excellence. Employees work with each other in manufacturing and service industries on a daily basis. An individual with excellent communication skills is an asset to every organization. No matter what career you plan to pursue, learning to interact, contribute, and excel in groups and teams will help you get there.

Key Takeaway

Communication helps you understand yourself and others, learn new things, and build your career.

Exercises

1. Imagine that you have been hired to make "cold calls" to ask people whether they are familiar with a new restaurant that has just opened in your neighborhood. Write a script for the phone call, and focus on the climate, the environment, and the service. Ask a classmate to co-present as you deliver the script orally in class, as if you were making a phone call to the classmate. Discuss your experience with the rest of the class.

2. Imagine you have been assigned the task of creating a job description for a Social Media Manager. Search online and find at least two sample job descriptions, and create one. Make sure you pay attention to words like "effective in virtual teams" and other details that highlight the importance of communication skills. Please present the job description to the class and share what you learned on how communication skills play a role in the tasks or duties you have included.

2.2 What Is Communication?

Learning Objectives

1. Define communication and describe communication as a process.

2. Identify and describe the eight essential components of communication.

3. Identify and describe two models of communication.

Many theories have been proposed to describe, predict, and understand the behaviors and phenomena of which communication consists. When it comes to communicating in the workplace, we are often less interested in theory than in making sure our interactions generate the desired results. As a member of a group or team we are often collectively judged on what we produced, not what we individually contributed to the final product. Working in a team can be a challenge, but it can also produce results no individual member could have accomplished alone. Knowing what makes for a productive group starts with effective communication underscore how valuable it can be to understand what communication is and how it works.

Defining Communication

The root of the word "communication" in Latin is *communicare*, which means to share, or to make common.Weekley, E. (1967). An Etymological Dictionary of Modern English (Vol. 1). New York: Dover Publications, p. 338. Pearson, J., & Nelson, P. (2000). *An Introduction to Human Communication: Understanding and Sharing*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, p. 6.

At the center of our study of communication is the relationship that involves interaction between participants. This definition serves us well with its emphasis on the process, which we'll examine in depth across this text, of coming to understand and share another's point of view effectively.

The first key word in this definition is the word *process*. A process is a dynamic activity that is hard to describe because it changes.Pearson, J., & Nelson, P. (2000). *An Introduction to Human Communication: Understanding And Sharing*. Boston: McGraw-Hill. Imagine you are alone in your kitchen, thinking to yourself. Someone you know (say, your mother) enters the kitchen and you talk briefly. What has changed? Now imagine that your mother is joined by someone else, someone you haven't met before—and that this stranger listens intently as you speak, almost as if you were giving a speech. What has changed? Your perspective might change, and you might watch your words more closely. The feedback or response from your mother and the stranger may cause you to re-evaluate what you are saying. When we interact, all of these factors and many more influence the process of communication.

The second key word is *understanding*. "To understand is to perceive, to interpret, and to relate our perception and interpretation to what we already know."McLean, S. (2003). The basics of speech communication. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. If a friend tells you a story about falling off a bike, what image comes to mind? Now your friend points out the window and you see a motorcycle lying on the ground. Understanding the words and the concepts or objects they refer to is an important part of the communication process.

Next comes the word _sharing_. Sharing means doing something together with one or more other people. You may share a joint activity, as when you share in compiling a report; or you may benefit jointly from a resource, as when you and several co-workers share a pizza. In communication, sharing occurs when you convey thoughts, feelings, ideas or insights to others. You can also share with yourself—a process called intrapersonal communication—when you bring ideas to consciousness, ponder how you feel about something, or figure out the solution to a problem and have a classic "Aha!" moment where something becomes clear.

Finally, _meaning_ is what we share through communication. The word "bike" represents both a bicycle and a short name for a motorcycle. By looking at the context the word is used in, and by asking questions, we can discover the shared meaning of the word and understand the message.

Eight Essential Components of Communication

In order to better understand the communication process and how it provides a foundation for group communication, let's break it down into eight essential components. Each component serves an integral function in the overall process.

Source

The _source_ imagines, creates, and sends the message. In a public speaking situation, the source is the person giving the speech. He or she conveys the message by sharing new information with the audience. The speaker also

conveys a message through his or her tone of voice, body language, and choice of clothing. Taking a turn as a group member can sometimes feel like a speech as all eyes are on you. The speaker begins by first determining the message—what they want to say and how they want to say it. The next step involves encoding the message by choosing just the right order or the perfect words to convey the intended meaning. The third step is to present the information, sending the information to the receiver, audience, or group members. Finally, by watching for the audience's reaction, the source perceives how well they received the message, and responds with clarification or supporting information.

Message

"The *message* is the stimulus or meaning produced by the source for the receiver or audience." McLean, S. (2005). *The Basics of Interpersonal Communication*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, p. 10. When you plan to give a speech or write a report, your message may seem to be only the words you choose that will convey your meaning. But that is just the beginning. The words are brought together with grammar and organization. You may choose to save your most important point for last. The message also consists of the way you say it—in a speech, with your tone of voice, your body language, and your appearance—and in a report, with your writing style, punctuation (!), and the headings and formatting you choose. In addition, part of the message may be the environment or context you present in and any noise which may make your message hard to hear or see.

Imagine, for example, that you are addressing a large audience of sales reps and are aware there is a World Series game tonight. Your sales team members might have a hard time settling down, but you may choose to open with, "I understand there is an important game tonight." In this way, by expressing verbally something that most people in your audience are aware of and interested in, you might grasp and focus their attention.

Channel

"The *channel* is the way in which a message or messages travel between source and receiver."McLean, S. (2005). *The Basics of Interpersonal Communication*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, p.10. For example, think of your television. How many channels do you have on your television? Each channel takes up some space, even in a digital world, in the cable or in the signal that brings the message of each channel to your home. Television combines an audio signal you hear with a visual signal you see. Together they convey the message to the receiver or audience. Turn off the volume on your television. Can you still understand what is happening? Many times you can, because the body language conveys part of the message of the show. Now turn up the volume but turn around so that you cannot see the television. You can still hear the dialogue and follow the story line.

Similarly, when you speak or write, you are using a channel to convey your message. Spoken channels include face-to-face conversations, speeches, telephone conversations and voice mail messages, radio, public address systems, and voice-over-internet protocol (VOIP). Written channels include

letters, memorandums, purchase orders, invoices, newspaper and magazine articles, blogs, e-mail, text messages, tweets, and so forth.

Receiver

"The *receiver* receives the message from the source, analyzing and interpreting the message in ways both intended and unintended by the source."McLean, S. (2005). *The Basics of Interpersonal Communication*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, p.10. To better understand this component, think of a receiver on a football team. The quarterback throws the message (football) to a receiver, who must see and interpret where to catch the football. The quarterback may intend for the receiver to "catch" his message in one way, but the receiver may see things differently and miss the football (the intended meaning) altogether. When the quarterback and receiver, as well as the rest of the team, fail to communicate, an interception—like a miscommunication—is bound to occur.

As a receiver you listen, see, touch, smell, and/or taste to receive a message. Your team members "size you up," much as you might check them out long before you open your mouth. The nonverbal responses of your listeners can serve as clues on how to adjust your opening. By imagining yourself in their place, you anticipate what you would look for if you were them. Just as a quarterback plans where the receiver will be in order to place the ball correctly, you too can recognize the interaction between source and receiver in a business communication context. All of this happens at the same time, illustrating why and how communication is always changing.

Feedback

When you respond to the source, intentionally or unintentionally, you are giving feedback. *Feedback* is composed of messages the receiver sends back to the source. Verbal or nonverbal, all of these feedback signals allow the source to see how well, how accurately (or how poorly and inaccurately) the message was received. Feedback also provides an opportunity for the receiver or audience to ask for clarification, to agree or disagree, or to indicate that the source could make the message more interesting. As the amount of feedback increases, the accuracy of communication also increases.Leavitt, & Mueller, R. (1951). some effects of feedback on communication. *Human Relations , 4*, 401–410.

For example, suppose you are a sales manager participating in a conference call with four sales reps. As the source, you want to tell the reps to take advantage of the fact that it is World Series season to close sales on baseball-related sports gear. You state your message, but you hear no replies from your listeners. You might assume that this means they understood and agreed with you—but later in the month you might be disappointed to find that very few sales were made. If you followed up your message with a request for feedback ("Does this make sense? Do any of you have any questions?") you might have an opportunity to clarify your message, and to find out whether any of the sales reps believed your suggestion would not work with their customers.

Environment

"The _environment_ is the atmosphere, physical and psychological, where you send and receive messages."McLean, S. (2005). _The Basics of Interpersonal Communication_. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, p. 11. The environment can include the tables, chairs, lighting, and sound equipment that are in the room. The room itself is an example of the environment. The environment can also include factors like formal dress, that may indicate whether a discussion is open and caring or more professional and formal. People may be more likely to have an intimate conversation when they are physically close to each other, and less likely when they can only see each other from across the room. In that case, they may text each other, itself an intimate form of communication. The choice to text is influenced by the environment. As a speaker, your environment will impact and play a role in your speech. It's always a good idea to go check out where you'll be speaking before the day of the actual presentation.

Context

"The _context_ of the communication interaction involves the setting, scene, and expectations of the individuals involved."McLean, S. (2005). _The Basics of Interpersonal Communication._ Boston: Allyn & Bacon, p.11. A professional communication context may involve business suits (environmental cues) that directly or indirectly influence expectations of language and behavior among the participants.

A meeting, presentation, or personal conversation does not take place as an isolated event. When you came to class, you came from somewhere. So did the person seated next to you, as did the instructor. The degree to which the environment is formal or informal depends on the contextual expectations for communication held by the participants. The person sitting next to you may be used to informal communication with instructors, but this particular instructor may be used to verbal and nonverbal displays of respect in the academic environment. You may be used to formal interactions with instructors as well, and find your classmate's question of "Hey Teacher, do we have homework today?" as rude and inconsiderate when they see it as normal. The nonverbal response from the instructor will certainly give you a clue about how they perceive the interaction, both the word choices and how they were said.

Context is all about what people expect from each other, and we often create those expectations out of environmental cues. Traditional gatherings like weddings or quinceaneras are often formal events. There is a time for quiet social greetings, a time for silence as the bride walks down the aisle, or the father may have the first dance with his daughter as she transforms from a girl to womanhood in the eyes of her community. In either celebration there may come a time for rambunctious celebration and dancing. You may be called upon to give a toast, and the wedding or quinceanera context will influence your presentation, timing, and effectiveness.

In a business meeting, who speaks first? That probably has some relation to the position and role each person has outside of the meeting. Context plays a very important role in communication, particularly across cultures.

Interference

Interference, also called noise, can come from any source. "*Interference* is anything that blocks or changes the source's intended meaning of the message."McLean, S. (2005). *The Basics of Interpersonal Communication.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon, p. 11. For example, if you drove a car to work or school, chances are you were surrounded by noise. Car horns, billboards, or perhaps the radio in your own car interrupted your thoughts, or your conversation with a passenger.

Psychological noise is what happens when your own thoughts occupy your attention while you are hearing, or reading, a message. Imagine that it is 4:45 p.m. and your boss, who is at a meeting in another city, e-mails you asking for last month's sales figures, an analysis of current sales projections, and the sales figures from the same month for the past five years. You may open the email, start to read, and think "Great—no problem—I have those figures and that analysis right here in my computer." You fire off a reply with last month's sales figures and the current projections attached. Then, at 5 o'clock, you turn off your computer and go home. The next morning, your boss calls on the phone to tell you he was inconvenienced because you neglected to include the sales figures from the previous years. What was the problem? Interference: by thinking about

how you wanted to respond to your boss's message, you prevented yourself from reading attentively enough to understand the whole message.

Interference can come from other sources, too. Perhaps you are hungry, and your attention to your own situation interferes with your ability to listen. Maybe the office is hot and stuffy. If you were a member of an audience listening to an executive speech, how could this impact your ability to listen and participate?

Noise interferes with normal encoding and decoding of the message carried by the channel between source and receiver. Not all noise is bad, but noise interferes with the communication process. For example, your cellphone ringtone may be a welcome noise to you, but it may interrupt the communication process in class and bother your classmates.

Two Models of Communication

Researchers have observed that when communication takes place, the source and the receiver may send messages at the same time, often overlapping. You, as the speaker, will often play both roles, as source and receiver. You'll focus on the communication and the reception of your messages to the audience. The audience will respond in the form of feedback that will give you important clues. While there are many models of communication, here we will focus on two that offer perspectives and lessons for effective communicators.

Rather than looking at the source sending a message and someone receiving it as two distinct acts, researchers often view communication as a *transactional*

process (See figure titled "The Transactional Model of Communication"), with actions often happening at the same time. The distinction between source and receiver is blurred in conversational turn-taking, for example, where both participants play both roles simultaneously.

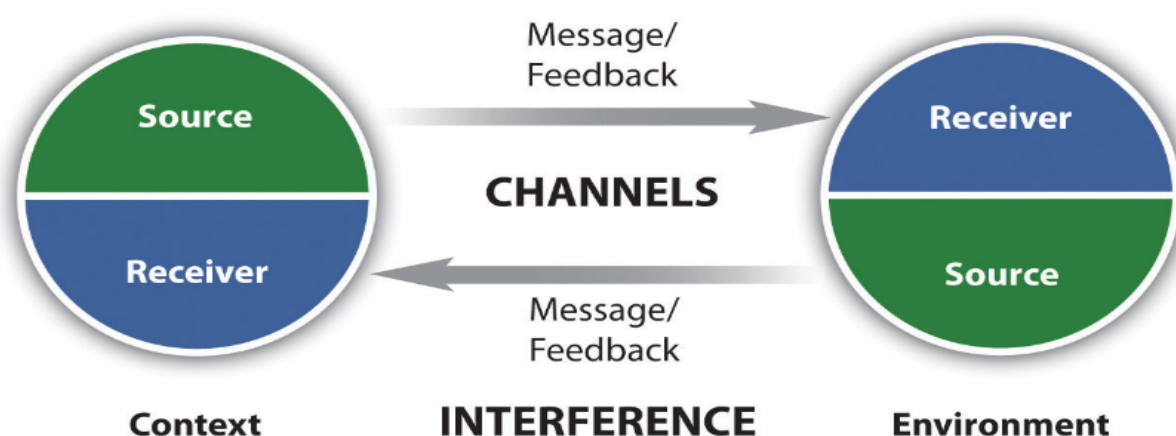## Figure 1.1 The Transactional Model of Communication

Figure: The Transactional Model of Communication

Researchers have also examined the idea that we all construct our own interpretations of the message. What I said (or wrote) and what you heard may be different. In the *constructivist* model (Figure "The Constructivist Model of Communication"), we focus on the negotiated meaning, or common ground, when trying to describe communication.Pearce, W. B., & Cronen, V. (1980). *Communication, Action, and Meaning: The Creating of Social Realities.* New York: Praeger.'Cronen, V., & Pearce, W. B. (1982). The coordinated management of meaning: a theory of communication. In F. E. Dance (Ed.), *Human Communication Theory* (pp. 61–89). New York: Harper & Row.

Imagine that you are visiting Atlanta, Georgia, and go to a restaurant for dinner. When asked if you want a "Coke," you may reply, "sure." The waiter may then ask you again, "what kind?" and you may reply, "Coke is fine." The waiter then may ask a third time, "what kind of soft drink would you like?" The misunderstanding in this example is that in Atlanta, the home of The Coca-Cola Company, most soft drinks are generically referred to as "Coke." When you order a soft drink, you need to specify what type, even if you wish to order a beverage that is not a cola or not even made by The Coca-Cola Company. To someone from other regions of the United States, the words "pop," "soda pop," or "soda" may be the familiar way to refer to a soft drink; not necessarily the brand "Coke." In this example, both you and the waiter understand the word "Coke," but you each understand it to mean something different. In order to communicate, you must each realize what the term means to the other person, and establish common ground, in order to fully understand the request and provide an answer.

Because we carry the multiple meanings of words, gestures, and ideas within us, we can use a dictionary to guide us, but we will still need to negotiate meaning.
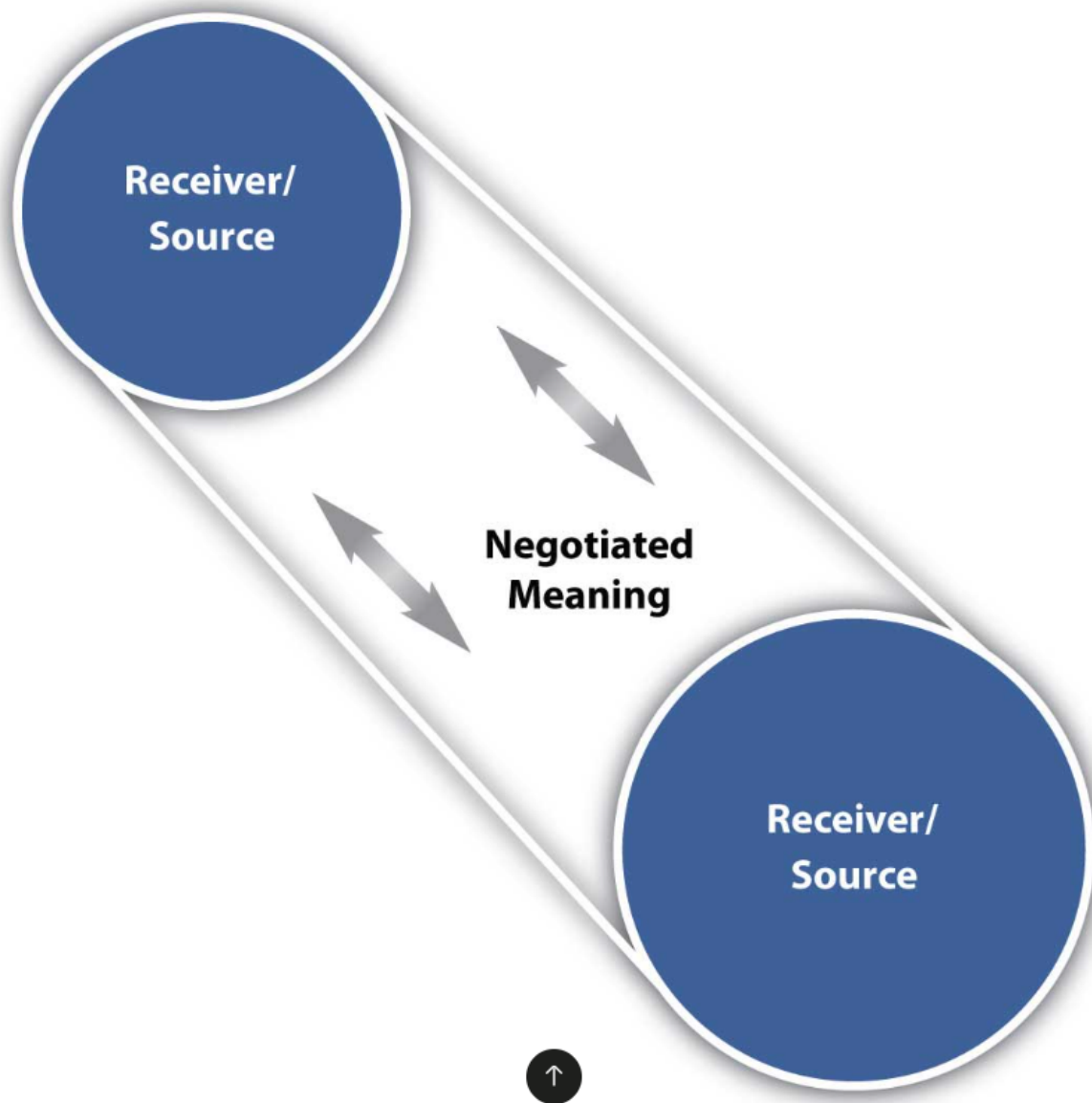
Figure: The Constructivist Model of Communication

Key Takeaway

The communication process involves understanding, sharing, and meaning, and it consists of 8 essential elements: source, message, channel, receiver, feedback, environment, context, and interference.

Exercises

1. Draw what you think communication looks like. Share your drawing with your classmates.

2. List three environmental cues and indicate how they influence your expectations for communication. Please share your results with your classmates.

3. How does context influence your communication? If you could design the perfect date, what activities, places, and/or environmental cues would you include to set the mood? Please share your results with your classmates.

2.3 Communication in Context

Learning Objective

1. Identify and describe five types of communication contexts.

Now that we have examined the eight components of communication, let's examine this in context. Is a quiet dinner conversation with someone you care about the same experience as a discussion in class or giving a speech? Is sending a text message to a friend the same experience as writing a professional project proposal or a purchase order? Is working in a team or group the same as working together as a family? Each context has an influence on the communication process. Contexts can overlap, creating an even more dynamic process. You have been communicating in many of these contexts across your

lifetime, and you'll be able to apply what you've learned through experience in each context to group communication.

Intrapersonal Communication

Have you ever listened to a speech or lecture and gotten caught up in your own thoughts so that, while the speaker continued, you were no longer listening? During a phone conversation, have you ever been thinking about what you are going to say, or what question you might ask, instead of listening to the other person? Finally, have you ever told yourself how you did after you wrote a document or gave a presentation? As you "talk with yourself" you are engaged in intrapersonal communication.

Intrapersonal communication involves one person; it is often called "self-talk."Wood, J. (1997). *Communication in Our Lives*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth, p.22. Donna Vocate'sVocate, D. (Ed.). (1994). *Intrapersonal Communication: Different Voices, Different Minds.* Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. book on intrapersonal communication explains how, as we use language to reflect on our own experiences, we talk ourselves through situations. For example, the voice within you that tells you, "Keep on Going! I can DO IT!" when you are putting your all into completing a five-mile race; or that says, "This report I've written is pretty good." Your intrapersonal communication can be positive or negative, and directly influences how you perceive and react to situations and communication with others.

What you perceive in communication with others is also influenced by your culture, native language, and your world view. As the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas said, "Every process of reaching understanding takes place against the background of a culturally ingrained preunderstanding. "Habermas, J. (1984). *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Vol. 1). Boston: Beacon Press, p. 100.

For example, you may have certain expectations of time and punctuality. You weren't born with them, so where did you learn them? From those around you as you grew up. You learned from your family, or the group of people who raised you. What was normal for them became normal for you, but not everyone's idea of normal, is the same.

When your supervisor invites you to a meeting and says it will start at 7 p.m., does that mean 7:00 sharp, 7-ish, or even 7:30? In the business context, when a meeting is supposed to start at 9 a.m., is it promptly a 9 a.m.? Variations in time expectations depend on regional and national culture as well as individual corporate cultures. In some companies, everyone may be expected to arrive 10-15 minutes before the announced start time to take their seats and be ready to commence business at 9:00 sharp. In other companies, "meeting and greeting" from about 9 to 9:05 or even 9:10 is the norm. When you are unfamiliar with the expectations for a business event, it is always wise to err on the side of being punctual, regardless of what your own internal assumptions about time and punctuality may be.

Interpersonal Communication

The second major context within the field of communication is interpersonal communication. *Interpersonal communication* normally involves two people, and can range from intimate and very personal to formal and impersonal. You may carry on a conversation with a loved one, sharing a serious concern. Later, at work, you may have a brief conversation about plans for the weekend with the security guard on your way home. What's the difference? Both scenarios involve interpersonal communication, but are different in levels of intimacy. The first example implies a trusting relationship established over time between two caring individuals. The second example level implies some previous familiarity, and is really more about acknowledging each other than any actual exchange of information, much like saying hello or goodbye.

Group Communication

Have you ever noticed how a small group of people in class sit near each other? Perhaps they are members of the same sports program, or just friends, but no doubt they often engage in group communication.

"*Group communication* is a dynamic process where a small number of people engage in a conversation."McLean, S. (2005). *The Basics of Interpersonal Communication.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon, p. 14. Group communication is generally defined as involving three to eight people. The larger the group, the more likely it is to break down into smaller groups.

To take a page from marketing, does your audience have segments or any points of convergence/divergence? We could consider factors like age, education, sex, and location to learn more about groups and their general preferences as well as dislikes. You may find several groups within the larger audience, such as specific areas of education, and use this knowledge to increase your effectiveness as a communicator.

Public Communication

In *public communication*, one person speaks to a group of people; the same is true of public written communication, where one person writes a message to be read by a small or large group. The speaker or writer may ask questions, and engage the audience in a discussion (in writing, examples are an email discussion or a point-counter-point series of letters to the editor), but the dynamics of the conversation are distinct from group communication, where different rules apply. In a public speaking situation, the group normally defers to the speaker. For example, the boss speaks to everyone, and the sales team quietly listens without interruption.

This generalization is changing as norms and expectations change, and many cultures have a tradition of "call outs" or interjections that are not to be interpreted as interruptions or competition for the floor, but instead as affirmations. The boss may say, as part of a charged-up motivational speech, "Do you hear me?" and the sales team is expected to call back "Yes Sir!" The boss, as a public speaker, recognizes that intrapersonal communication (thoughts of

the individual members) or interpersonal communication (communication between team members) may interfere with this classic public speaking dynamic of all to one, or the audience devoting all its attention to the speaker, and incorporate attention getting and engagement strategies to keep the sales team focused on the message.

Mass Communication

How do you tell everyone on campus where and when all the classes are held? Would a speech from the front steps work? Perhaps it might meet the need if your school is a very small one. A written schedule that lists all classes would be a better alternative. How do you let everyone know there is a sale on in your store, or that your new product will meet their needs, or that your position on a political issue is the same as your constituents? You send a message to as many people as you can through mass communication. Does everyone receive mass communication the same way they might receive a personal phone call? Not likely. Some people who receive mass mailings assume that they are "junk mail" (i.e., that they do not meet the recipients' needs) and throw them away unopened. People may tune out a television advertisement with a click of the mute button, delete tweets or ignore friend requests on Facebook by the hundreds, or send all unsolicited email straight to the spam folder unread.

Mass media is a powerful force in modern society and our daily lives, and is adapting rapidly to new technologies. *Mass communication* involves sending a single message to a group. It allows us to communicate our message to a large

number of people, but we are limited in our ability to tailor our message to specific audiences, groups, or individuals. As a business communicator, you can use multimedia as a visual aid or reference common programs, films or other images that your audience finds familiar yet engaging. You can tweet a picture that is worth far more than 140 characters, and are just as likely to elicit a significant response. By choosing messages or references that many audience members will recognize or can identify with, you can develop common ground and increase the appeal of your message.

Key Takeaway

Communication contexts include intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, public, and mass communication.

Exercises

1. Please recall a time when you gave a speech in front of a group. How did you feel? What was your experience? What did you learn from your experience? If given a second opportunity, how would you approach the group differently?
2. If you were asked to get the attention of your peers, what image or word would you choose and why?
3. If you were asked to get the attention of someone like yourself, what image or word would you choose and why?
4. Make a list of mass communication messages you observe for a one hour period of time. Share your list with classmates.

2.4 Advantages and Disadvantages of Working in Groups

Learning Objectives

1. Identify ways in which group communication differs from interpersonal communication.
2. Identify relationship and task advantages and disadvantages of working in groups *versus* individually.

> *"It used to be argued that slavery was abolished simply*
> *because it had ceased to be profitable, but all the evidence*
> *points the other way: in fact, it was abolished despite the*
> *fact that it was still profitable. What we need to understand,*
> *then, is a collective change of heart. Like all such great*
> *changes, it had small beginnings. Ferguson, N. Empire:*
> *The Rise and Demise of the British Empire and the*
> *Lessons for Global Power, quoted in Steffen, A. (2006).*
> *Worldchanging: A User's Guide for the 21st Century. New*
> *York: Harry N. Abrams.*
>
> *Niall Ferguson*

All human beings exist, spend time, and behave both individually and in groups. When you're a student, you spend a great deal of your time in groups. In the working world, whether you're already in it or not, you spend even more. O'Hair,

D. & Wineman, M.O. (2004). *The Essential Guide to Group Communication.* Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, p. 7.

Of course, many times you have no choice whether you'll work alone or in a group. You're just told what to do. Still, you're best apt to be prepared if you know what to expect of each status.

Differences between Group and Interpersonal Communication

The mere fact that groups include multiple people leads to at least four consequences. Whether these consequences prove to be advantageous or not depends on the skill level and knowledge of a group's members.

First, since not everyone in a group can talk at the same time (at least, not if they intend to understand and be understood by each other), members have to seek permission to speak. They need to decide how to take turns. In this respect, a group is inherently more formal than a single individual or a dyad.

Second, members of a group have to share time together. The larger the group, the less average time per person is available and the fewer opportunities each member will likely have to contribute to discussions.

Third, communication in groups is generally less intimate than in interpersonal settings. Because there are so many personalities and levels of relationship to consider, people in groups are less inclined to share personal details or express controversial views.

Finally, group work is more time-consuming than individual or interpersonal effort. Why? For one thing, group members usually try to let everyone share information and views. Also, the more people are involved in a discussion, the more diverse opinions may need to be considered and allowed to compete.

As we've noted earlier, groups apply themselves toward reaching aims and accomplishing things. In addition to this task-oriented characteristic, however, they include and depend upon relationships among their members. Although these two elements are usually intertwined rather than discrete and separate, an overview of the pluses and minuses of each can help you make the most of your experience in a group.

Relationship Advantages

The columnist David Brooks interpreted research as indicating that human beings are "wired to cooperate and collaborate, just as much as we are to compete."Galanes, G., & Adams, K. (2013). *Effective Group Discussion: Theory and Practice.* New York: McGraw-Hill, p. 5. What's in it for you in terms of relationships, then, if you work in a group instead of alone? Well, you may have a number of your most important human needs satisfied. Here are some specifics:

- You may enjoy fellowship and companionship.
- You may receive moral and emotional support for your views and objectives.
- You may meet three important needs identified by William Schutz, which we'll discuss more in a later chapter "Group Communication Theory":

Galante's, G., & Adams, K. (2013). *Effective Group Discussion: Theory and Practice.* New York: McGraw-Hill, p. 5. inclusion, affection, and control.

- You may have your impulsiveness curbed or your reticence challenged.
- You may cultivate ties that yield future personal or career advantages.

In the next chapter we'll further explore the ideas William Schutz, who theorized about levels of basic human needs and how they may vary from person to person and according to people's circumstances. We'll also review Abraham Maslow's model of human needs.

Relationship Disadvantages

Despite the advantages it offers, working in groups almost invariably presents challenges and disadvantages in the realm of relationships. These are some of the chief dangers you may encounter as part of a group:

- It will probably take a lot of time to create, maintain, and repair the human relationships involved in a group.
- Your group may generate conflict which hurts people's feelings and otherwise undermines their relationships.
- You may misunderstand other group members' intentions or messages.
- Some group members may attempt to deceive, manipulate, or betray the trust of other members.

Task Advantages

Anthropologists have asserted that a major feature of mainstream culture in the United States is a relentless pressure to do things—to accomplish things. Tom Peters is credited with first calling this cultural feature "a bias for action." One best-selling business self-help book reinforced this national passion for dynamic behavior. Its title is *A Bias for Action: How Effective Managers Harness Their Willpower, Achieve Results, and Stop Wasting Time*.Bruch, H., & Ghoshal, S. (2004). *A Bias for Action: How Effective Managers Harness Their Willpower, Achieve Results, and Stop Wasting Time.* Boston: Harvard Business Review Press. Without doubt, accomplishing tasks constitutes a central purpose of most human behavior in the modern world.

When you're trying to get something done, working in a group promises many positive possibilities, among them being the following:

- The group will most likely have access to much more information than any member possesses.
- The group can focus multiple attentions and diverse energy on a topic.
- The group may be more thorough in dealing with a topic than any individual might be. This thoroughness may arise simply because of the number of perspectives represented in the group, but it also owes to the fact that members often "propel each other's thinking. "Wood, J.T. (1997). *Communication in Our Lives*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, p. 270.

- The group may harness and exploit conflict to generate new and better ideas than an individual could. When tension and disagreement are resolved constructively, chances of achieving group goals increase.

- The group may attain deeper understanding of topics. One analysis of studies, for instance, indicated that students in group-based learning environments learned more, and remembered more of what they learned, than did counterparts exposed to more traditional methods. Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R.T., & Smith, K.A. (1998, July/August). Cooperative learning returns to college. *Change*, *30*(4), 31.

- *Synergy*—a combined effect greater than the simple sum total of individual contributions—can arise. Sometimes synergy results through enhanced creativity as group members share and build upon each other's strengths and perspectives. You can probably think of examples of an athletic squad or business group comprising members with modest individual strengths that performed superlatively together.

- The group may spur needed social change. Margaret Mead wrote, "Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." It may be reasonable to question whether the world always works the way Mead described, but many examples do exist of small groups which initiated changes which spread to larger and larger parts of society. All other things being equal, a group of committed individuals will project more credibility and engender more support than will a solitary person.

Task Disadvantages

Groups aren't always successful at reaching their goals. You've probably experienced many situations in which you became frustrated or angry because a group you were part of seemed to be taking two steps backward for every step forward—or perhaps you felt it was going only backward. Here are some features of group work which distinguish it in a potentially negative way from what you might be able to accomplish by yourself or with a single partner:

- In order to be successful, groups need broad, ongoing, time-consuming exchanges of messages. They need to invest in coordinating and monitoring what they're doing. With people as busy as they are in the twenty-first century, "out of sight" is indeed often "out of mind." If they don't keep in touch frequently, group members may forget what they've most recently discussed or decided as a group. They also run the risk of losing track of the structures and processes they've put in place to help them move toward their goals.

- Some group members may engage in "*social loafing,*" When one or two people are assigned a task, they know they're being watched and are apt to shoulder the burden. In a larger group, however, any given member will feel less personally responsible for what takes place in it. If too many members follow the natural tendency to observe rather than act, a group may lose its efficiency and thereby find it much more difficult to reach its aims.

Groupthink may sap the creative potential of the members. Too much diversity in outlooks and work styles may act as a barrier to a group, but too little diversity

also represents a threat to success. If they too easily adopt and hold onto one viewpoint or course of action, people may fall prey to two dangers. First, they may overlook flaws in their thinking. Second, they may fail to anticipate dangers that they might have been detected with closer scrutiny and longer reflection.

Key Takeaway

To accomplish tasks and relate effectively in a group, it's important to know the advantages and disadvantages inherent in groups.

Exercises

Identify two groups of which you're a member. Describe

1. how each group determined how to take turns in communicating—or, if you weren't part of determining this process, how people take turns now;
2. the most controversial view you can recall being expressed in each group; and
3. a task which feel each group performed better than any of its individuals might have done alone.

Describe an experience in which you observed people cooperating or collaborating when they might instead have competed. What do you believe motivated them to cooperate?

1. Identify two examples of your personal or vocational growth which you feel you owe to participation in a group.
2. Identify a group you've been part of which contributed to positive social change. How did it establish its credibility and influence with other people and groups?

Section Attributions:

Chapter 3: Communication Principles of Group Members

"Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results."

Andrew Carnegie

Getting Started

As humans, we are social beings. We naturally form relationships with others. In fact, relationships are often noted as one of the most important aspects of a person's life, and they exist in many forms. Interpersonal communication occurs between two people, but group communication may involve two or more individuals. Groups are a primary context for interaction within the business community. Groups may have heroes and enemies, sages alongside new members. Groups overlap, and may share common goals, but may also engage

in conflict. Groups can be supportive or coercive, and can exert powerful influences over individuals.

Within a group, individuals may behave in distinct ways, use unique or specialized terms, or display symbols that have meaning to that group. Those same terms or symbols may be confusing, meaningless, or even unacceptable to another group. An individual may belong to both groups, adapting his or her communication patterns to meet group normative expectations. Groups are increasingly important across social media venues, and there are many examples of successful business ventures on the web that value and promote group interaction.

Groups use words to exchange meaning, establish territory, and identify who is a stranger versus who is a trusted member. Are you familiar with the term "troll"? It is often used to identify someone who is not a member of an online group or community, who does not share the values and beliefs of the group, and who posts a message in an online discussion board to initiate flame wars, cause disruption, or otherwise challenge the group members. Members often use words to respond to the challenge that are not otherwise common in the discussions, and the less than flattering descriptions of the troll are a rallying point.

Groups have existed throughout human history, and continue to follow familiar patterns across emerging venues as we adapt to technology, computer-mediated interaction, suburban sprawl, and modern life. We need groups, and groups need

us. Our relationship with groups warrants attention on this interdependence as we come to know ourselves, our communities, and our world.

3.1 What Is a Group?

Learning Objectives

1. Define groups and teams.
2. Discuss how primary and secondary groups meet our interpersonal needs.
3. Discuss how groups tend to limit their own size and create group norms.

Let's get into a time machine and travel way, way back to join early humans in prehistoric times. Their needs are like ours today: they cannot exist or thrive without air, food, and water—and a sense of belonging. How did they meet these needs? Through cooperation and competition. If food scarcity was an issue, who got more and who got less? This serves as our first introduction to roles, status and power, and hierarchy within a group. When food scarcity becomes an issue, who gets to keep their spoon? In some Latin American cultures, having a job or earning a living is referred to by the slang term "*cuchara*," which literally means "spoon" and figuratively implies food, safety, and security.

Now let's return to the present and enter a modern office. Cubicles define territories, and corner offices denote status. In times of economic recession or slumping sales for the company, there is a greater need for cooperation, and there is competition for scarce resources. The loss of a "spoon"—or of one's

cubicle—may now come in the form of a pink slip of paper instead of no food around the fire, but it is no less devastating.

We form self-identities through our communication with others, and much of that interaction occurs in a group context. A group may be defined as three or more individuals who affiliate, interact or cooperate in a familial, social, or work context. *Group communication* may be defined as the exchange of information with those who are alike culturally, linguistically, and/or geographically. Group members may be known by their symbols, such as patches and insignia on a military uniform. They may be known by their use of specialized language or jargon; for example, someone in information technology may use the term "server" in reference to the internet, whereas someone in the food service industry may use "server" to refer to the worker who takes customer orders in a restaurant. Group members may also be known by their proximity, as in gated communities. Regardless of how the group defines itself, and regardless of the extent to which its borders are porous or permeable, a group recognizes itself as a group. Humans naturally make groups a part of their context or environment.

Types of Groups in the Workplace

As a skilled communicator, learning more about groups, group dynamics, management, and leadership will serve you well. Mergers, forced sales, downsizing, and entering new markets all call upon individuals within a business or organization to become members of groups. Groups can also be discussed in

terms of their relationship to the individual, and the degree to which they meet interpersonal needs.

Some groups may be assembled at work to solve problems, and once the challenge has been resolved, they dissolve into previous or yet to be determined groups. Functional groups like this may be immediately familiar to you. You take a class in sociology from a professor of sociology, who is a member of the discipline of sociology. To be a member of a discipline is to be a disciple, and adhere to a common framework for viewing the world. Disciplines involve a common set of theories that explain the world around us, terms to explain those theories, and have grown to reflect the advance of human knowledge. Compared to your sociology instructor, your physics instructor may see the world from a completely different perspective. Still, both may be members of divisions or schools, dedicated to teaching or research, and come together under the large group heading we know as the university.

In business, we may have marketing experts who are members of the marketing department, who perceive their tasks differently from a member of the sales staff or someone in accounting. You may work in the mailroom, and the mailroom staff is a group in itself, both distinct from and interconnected with the larger organization.

Relationships are part of any group, and can be described in terms of status, power, control, as well as role, function, or viewpoint. Within a family, for example, the ties that bind you together may be common experiences, collaborative efforts, and even pain and suffering. The birth process may forge a

relationship between mother and daughter, but it also may not. An adoption may transform a family. Relationships are formed through communication interaction across time, and often share a common history, values, and beliefs about the world around us.

In business, an idea may bring professionals together, and they may even refer to the new product or service as their "baby," speaking in reverent tones about a project they have taken from the drawing board and "birthed" into the real world. As in family communication, work groups or teams may have challenges, rivalries, and even "birthing pains" as a product is adjusted, adapted, and transformed. Struggles are a part of relationships, both in families and business, and form a common history of shared challenged overcome through effort and hard work.

Through conversations and a shared sense that you and your co-workers belong together, you meet many of your basic human needs, such as the need to feel included, the need for affection, and the need for control.Schutz, W. (1966). *The Interpersonal Underworld*. Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books. In a work context, "affection" may sound odd, but we all experience affection at work in the form of friendly comments like "good morning," "have a nice weekend," and "good job!" Our professional lives also fulfill more basic needs such as air, food, and water, as well as safety. While your workgroup may be gathered together with common goals, such as to deliver the mail in a timely fashion to the corresponding departments and individuals, your daily interactions may well go beyond this functional perspective.

In the same way, your family may provide a place for you at the table and meet your basic needs, but they also may not meet other needs. If you grow to understand yourself and your place in a way that challenges group norms, you will be able to choose which parts of your life to share and to withhold in different groups, and to choose where to seek acceptance, affection, and control.

Primary and Secondary Groups

There are fundamentally two types of groups that can be observed in many contexts, from church, to school, from family to work: primary and secondary groups. The hierarchy denotes the degree to which the group(s) meet your interpersonal needs. *Primary groups* meet most, if not all, of one's needs. Groups that meet some, but not all, needs are called *secondary groups*. Secondary groups often include work groups, where the goal is to complete a task or solve a problem. If you are a member of the sales department, your purpose is to sell.

In terms of problem-solving, work groups can accomplish more than individuals. People, each of whom have specialized skills, talents, experience, or education come together in new combinations with new challenges, find new perspectives to create unique approaches that they themselves would not have formulated alone.

Secondary groups may meet your need for professional acceptance, and celebrate your success, but may not meet your need for understanding and sharing on a personal level. Family members may understand you in ways that your co-workers cannot, and vice versa.

If Two's Company and Three's a Crowd, What Is a Group?

This old cliché refers to the human tendency to form pairs. Pairing is the most basic form of relationship formation; it applies to childhood "best friends," college roommates, romantic couples, business partners, and many other dyads (two-person relationships). A *group*, by definition, includes at least three people. We can categorize groups in terms of their size and complexity.

When we discuss demographic groups as part of a market study, we may focus on large numbers of individuals that share common characteristics. If you are the producer of an ecologically innovative car such as the Smart For Two, and know your customers have an average of four members in their family, you may discuss developing a new model with additional seats. While the target audience is a group, car customers don't relate to each other as a unified whole. Even if they form car clubs and have regional gatherings, a newsletter, and competitions at their local race tracks each year, they still subdivide the overall community of car owners into smaller groups.

The larger the group grows, the more likely it is to subdivide. Analysis of these smaller, or microgroups, is increasingly a point of study as the internet allows individuals to join people of similar mind or habit to share across time and distance. A *microgroup* is a small, independent group that has a link, affiliation, or association with a larger group. With each additional group member the number of possible interactions increases.Harris, T., & Sherblom, J. (1999). *Small Group and Team Communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.,McLean, S. (2003). *The Basics Of Speech Communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Number of Group Members	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Number of Possible Interactions	2	9	28	75	186	441	1,056

Table: Possible Interaction in Groups

Small groups normally contain between three and eight people. One person may involve intrapersonal communication, while two may constitute interpersonal communication, and both may be present within a group communication context. You may think to yourself before taking a speech turn or writing your next post, and you may turn to your neighbor or co-worker and have a side conversation, but a group relationship normally involves three to eight people.

In the table above titled "Possible Interaction in Groups", you can quickly see how the number of possible interactions grows according to how many people are in the group. At some point we all find the possible and actual interactions overwhelming, and subdivide into smaller groups. Forums may have hundreds or thousands of members, and you may have hundreds of friends on FaceBook, but how many do you regularly communicate with? You may be tempted to provide a number well north of eight, but if you exclude the "all to one" messages, such as a general Twitter to everyone (but no one person in particular), you'll find the group norms will appear.

Group norms are customs, standards, and behavioral expectations that emerge as a group forms. If you blog everyday on your FaceBook page, and your friends stop by to post on your wall and comment, and then stop for a week, you'll violate

a group norm. They will wonder if you are sick or in the hospital where you can't access a computer to keep them updated. If, however, you only post once a week, the group will come to naturally expect your customary post. Norms involve expectations, self and group imposed, that often arise as groups form and develop.

If there are more than eight members, it becomes a challenge to have equal participation, where everyone has a chance to speak, be heard, listen, and respond. Some will dominate, others will recede, and smaller groups will form. Finding a natural balance within a group can also be a challenge. Small groups need to have enough members to generate a rich and stimulating exchange of ideas, information, and interaction, but not so many people that what each brings cannot be shared. Galanes, G., Adams, K., & Brilhart, J. (2000). *Communication in Groups: Applications and Skills* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

Key Takeaway

Forming groups fulfills many human needs, such as the need for affiliation, affection, and control; individuals also need to cooperate in groups to fulfill basic survival needs.

Exercises

1. Think of the online groups you participate in. Forums may have hundreds or thousands of members, and you may have hundreds of friends on Facebook, but how many do you regularly communicate with? Exclude the "all-to-one" messages, such as a general Twitter to everyone (but no one

person in particular). Do you find that you gravitate toward the group norm of eight or fewer group members? Discuss your answer with your classmates.

2. What are some of the primary groups in your life? How do they compare with the secondary groups in your life? Write a 2–3 paragraph description of these groups and compare it with a classmate's description.

3. What group is most important to people? Create a survey with at least two questions, identify a target sample size, and conduct your survey. Report how you completed the activity and your findings. Compare the results with those of your classmates.

4. Are there times when it is better to work alone rather than in a group? Why or why not? Discuss your opinion with a classmate.

3.2 Structure of Groups & Group Roles

(The following section is remixed from: Introduction to Communication by Paynton & Hahn at Humboldt State University)

Take a moment to think about the individuals in a particular group you were in and the role each of them played. You may recall that some people were extremely helpful, organized and made getting the job done easy. Others may have been more difficult to work with, or seemed to disrupt the group process. In each case, the participants were performing roles that manifest themselves in most groups. Early studies on group communication provide an overwhelming number of different types of group roles. To simplify, we provide an overview of some of the more common roles. As you study group roles, remember that we

usually play more than one role at a time, and that we do not always play the same roles from group to group.

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

- **Task Roles**. While there are many task roles a person can play in a group, we want to emphasize five common ones. The **Task Leader** is *the person that keeps the group focused on the primary goal or task by setting agendas, controlling the participation and communication of the group's members, and evaluating ideas and contributions of participants*. Your associated students president probably performs the task leader role. **Information Gatherers** are those people who *seek and/or provide the factual information necessary for evaluating ideas, problem solving,*

and reaching conclusions. This is the person who serves as the liaison with your professors about what they expect from a group project. **Opinion Gatherers** are those that *seek out and/or provide subjective responses about ideas and suggestions*. They most often take into account the values, beliefs, and attitudes of members. If you have a quiet member of your group, the opinion gatherer may ask, "What do you think?" in order to get that person's feedback. The **Devil's Advocate** is the person that *argues a contrary or opposing point of view*. This may be done positively in an effort to ensure that all perspectives are considered, or negatively as the unwillingness of a single person to participate in the group's ideas. The **Energizer** is the person who *functions as the group's cheer-leader, providing energy, motivation, and positive encouragement*.

- **Social-Emotional Roles**. Group members play a variety of roles in order to **build and maintain relationships in groups.** The **Social-Emotional Leader** is the person who is *concerned with maintaining and balancing the social and emotional needs of the group members and tends to play many, if not all, of the roles in this category*. The **Encourager** practices good listening skills in order to *create a safe space for others to share ideas and offer suggestions*. **Followers** are group members that do what they are told, *going along with decisions and assignments from the group*. The **Tension Releaser** is the person that *uses humor, or can skillfully change the subject in an attempt to minimize tension and avoid conflict*. The **Compromiser** is the one who *mediates disagreements or conflicts among members by encouraging others to give in on small*

issues for the sake of meeting the goals of the group. What role do you find yourself most likely to enact in groups? Or, do you find you switch between these roles depending on the group?

- **Procedural Roles**. Groups cannot function properly without having a system of rules or norms in place. Members are responsible for maintaining the norms of a group and play many roles to accomplish this. The **Facilitator** acts like a traffic director by *managing the flow of information to keep the group on task*. **Gatekeepers** are those group members that attempt to *maintain proper communicative balance*. These people also serve as the points of contact between times of official group meetings. The **Recorder** is the person responsible for *tracking group ideas, decisions, and progress*. Often, a written record is necessary, thus, this person has the responsibility for keeping, maintaining, and sharing group notes. If you're the person who pulls out a pen and paper in order to track what the group talks about, you're the recorder.

- **Individual Roles**. Because groups are made of individuals, group members often play various roles in order to achieve individual goals. The **Aggressor** engages in *forceful or dominating communication to put others down or initiate conflict with other members*. This communication style can cause some members to remain silent or passive. The **Blocker** is the person that fusses or *complains about small procedural matters, often blocking the group's progress by not letting them get to the task*. They worry about small details that, overall, are not important to achieving the group's desired outcome. The **Self-Confessor** uses the

group as a setting to *discuss personal or emotional matters not relevant to the group or its task*. This is the person that views the group as one that is there to perform group therapy. The **Playboy or Playgirl***shows little interest in the group or the problem at hand* and does not contribute in a meaningful way, or at all. This is the person who does essentially no work, yet still gets credit for the group's work. The **Joker or Clown** uses *inappropriate humor or remarks that can steer the group from its mission*.

Case-in-Point

The popular sitcom Workaholics (2011-present) follows three college drop-outs who work in a telemarketing company and are notoriously terrible workers. Always working as a group in their shared cubicle, the three young men are all prime examples of group members who play Individual Roles: Anders as the Aggressor, Blake as the Self-Confessor, Adam as the Blocker, and all three of them as the joker or clown at one point or another. As you might guess, this group is very unproductive and ineffective.

While we certainly do not have the space to cover every role you might encounter in a group, we're sure you can point to your own examples of people who have filled the roles we've discussed. Perhaps you can point to examples of when you have filled some of these roles yourself. Important for group members to understand, are the various roles they play in groups in order to engage in positive actions that help the group along. One dynamic that these roles

contribute to in the process of group communication is leadership in groups. Let's briefly examine how leadership functions in groups.

Contributions and Affiliations

3.3 Group Life Cycles and Member Roles

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the typical stages in the life cycle of a group.
2. Describe different types of group members and group member roles.

Groups are dynamic systems, in constant change. Groups grow together and eventually come apart. People join groups and others leave. This dynamic

changes and transforms the very nature of the group. *Group socialization* involves how the group members interact with one another and form relationships. Just as you were once born, and changed your family, they changed you. You came to know a language and culture, a value system and set of beliefs that influences you to this day. You came to be *socialized*, to experience the process of learning to associate, communicate, or interact within a group. A group you belong to this year—perhaps a soccer team or the cast of a play—may not be part of your life next year. And those who are in leadership positions may ascend or descend the leadership hierarchy as the needs of the group, and other circumstances, change over time.

3.4 Why Communicate in Groups?

Learning Objective

1. Understand the role of interpersonal needs in group communication.

"I love mankind. It's people I can't stand."

Charles M. Schulz (through Charlie Brown)

"Communication is a continual balancing act, juggling the conflicting needs for intimacy and independence."

Deborah Tannen

Munro Leaf wrote and illustrated a classic children's book in 1936 called *Manners Can Be Fun*. Here are the drawings and text from its first few pages:

If you lived all by yourself out on a desert island, others would not care whether you had good manners or not. It wouldn't bother them. But if someone else lived there with you, you would both have to learn to get along together pleasantly.
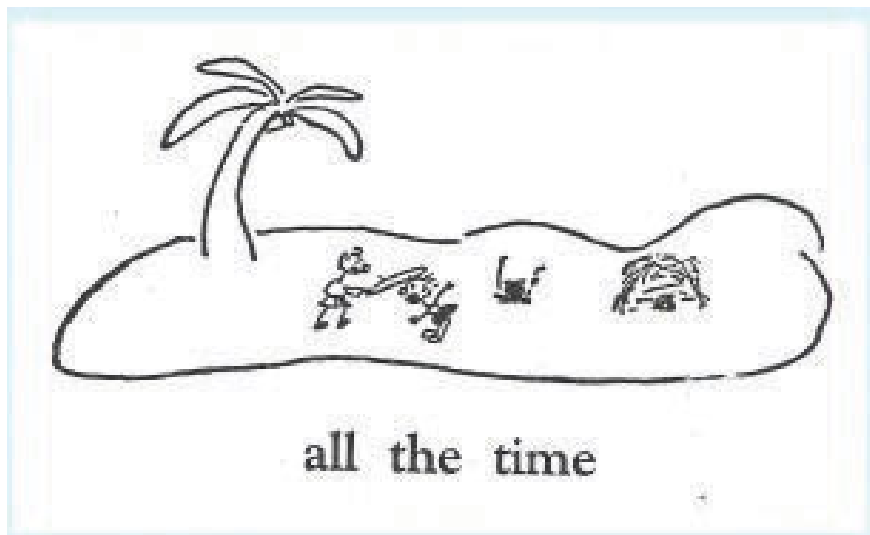
If you did not, you would probably quarrel and fight all the time, *or*——
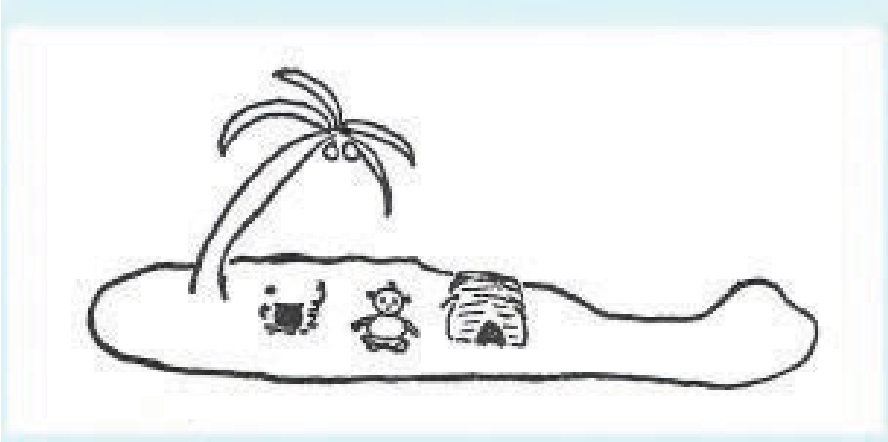
stay apart and be lonesome because you could not have a good time together. Neither would be much fun.

Although Leaf's drawings and text are simple and plain, they convey important truths about human beings: we need to get along with other people, and to get along we need to communicate in groups.

If we ask ourselves, then, "What's the point of communicating in groups instead of just sitting at home or in a workplace alone?" we'll conclude that our group interactions and relationships help us meet basic human needs. We may also recognize that not all our needs are met by any one person, job, experience, or context; instead, we need to diversify our communication interactions in order to meet our needs. McLean, S. (2010). *Business Communication for Success*. Irvington, NY: Flat World Knowledge.

At first, you may be skeptical of the idea that we communicate to meet our basic needs. Let's consider two theories on the subject, however, and see how well they predict, describe, and anticipate our tendency to interact.

Abraham *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*, represented in the figure below may be familiar to you. Maslow, A. (1970). *Motivation and Personality* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Harper & Row. We need the resources listed in level one (e.g., air, food, and water) to survive. If we have met those basic needs, we move to level two: safety. A job may represent this level of safety at its most basic level. Regardless of how much satisfaction you may receive from a job well done, a paycheck ultimately represents meeting basic needs for many.

If we feel safe and secure, we are more likely to seek the companionship of others. Human beings tend to form groups naturally, and if basic needs are met, love and belonging occur in level three. Perhaps you've been new to a class, or a club, or at work and didn't understand the first thing about what was going on. Conflict may have been part of that experience, but you were probably still eager to interact with the other people in the group rather than staying by yourself like the miserable stick figure in Leaf's final drawing of the desert island.

As you came to know what was what and who was who, you learned how to negotiate the landscape and avoid landmines. Your self-esteem (level four) improved as you perceived that you belonged as part of the group.

Over time, you may have learned your job tasks and the strategies for succeeding in your class, your club, or your job. Perhaps you even came to be known as a reliable resource for others, as someone who would know how to respond helpfully if someone came to you with a problem. People may eventually have looked up to you within your role and have been impressed with your ability

to make a difference. Maslow called this "self-actualization" (level five) and discussed how people come to perceive a sense of control or empowerment over their context and environment.

Beyond self-actualization, Maslow recognized our innate need to know (level six) that drives us to grow and learn, explore our environment, or engage in new experiences. We come to appreciate a sense of self that extends beyond our immediate experiences, beyond the function, and into the community and the representational. We can take in beauty for its own sake, and value aesthetics (level seven) that we previously ignored or had little time to consider.
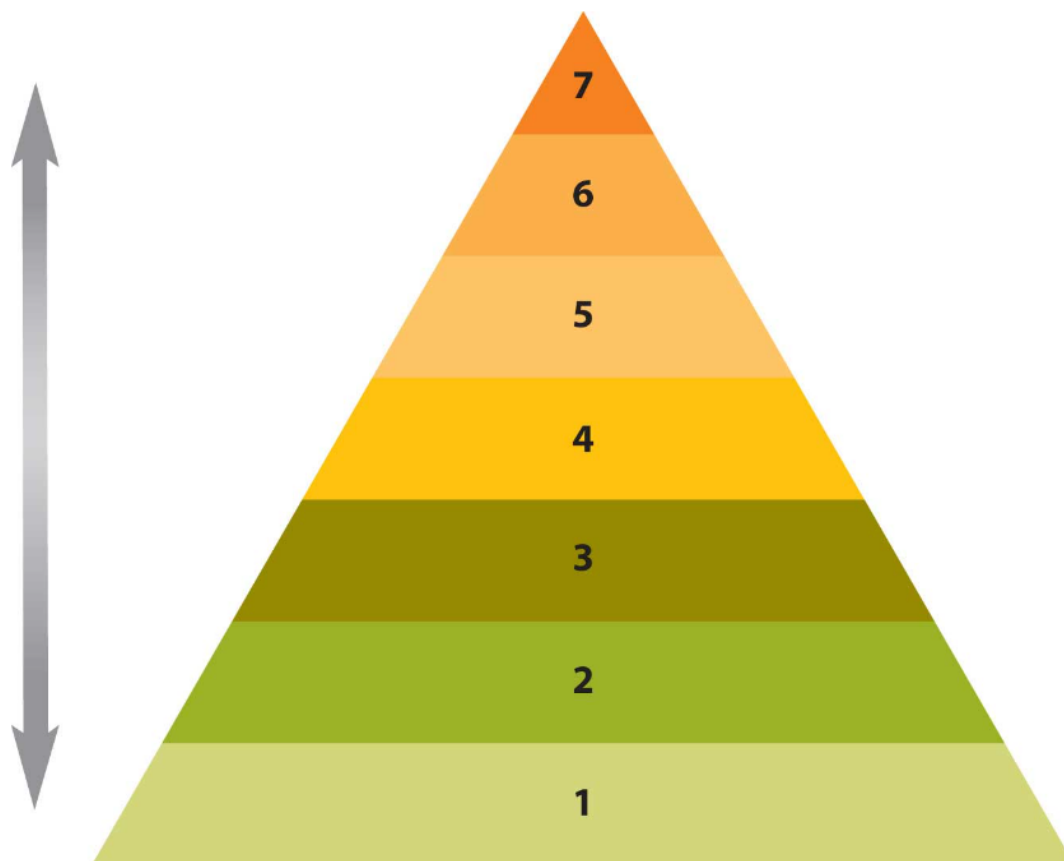

Figure: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's theory is individualistic, focusing primarily on how one person at a time may meet his or her basic needs. The theory has been criticized in light of the fact that many cultures are not centered on the individual. It's also been pointed out that even people whose physical resources are severely limited can enjoy rich interpersonal relationships and experience cultural, intellectual, and social treasures. Nevertheless, Maslow's hierarchy serves as a good place from which to begin our discussion about group communication.

What do we need from our environment? Why do we communicate in groups? The answers to both questions are often related.

William Schutz's Interpersonal Needs offered an alternate version of human interaction.Schutz, W. (1966). *The Interpersonal Underworld*. Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books. Like Maslow, he considered the universal aspects of our needs, but he contended that they operate within a range or continuum for each person. McLean, S. (2010). *Business Communication for Success*. Irvington, NY: Flat World Knowledge. According to Schutz, the need for affection, or appreciation, is basic to all humans. We all need to be recognized and feel like we belong, but some people need more interaction with groups than others. Schutz describes *under personals* as people who seek limited interaction. On the opposite end of the spectrum, you may know people in school or at work who continually seek attention and affirmation. Schutz refers to these people as *overpersonals*. The individual who strikes a healthy balance between meeting

needs through solitary action and group interaction is referred to as a personal individual.

Humans also have a need for control, or the ability to influence people and events. But that need may vary according to the context, environment, and sense of security. If you act primarily autonomously to plan and organize your affairs as part of a group, Schutz would describe your efforts to control your situation as *autocratic,* or self-directed. *Abdicrats*, on the other hand, are people who according to Schutz shift the burden of responsibility from themselves to others and rely upon others for a sense of control. *Democrats*, finally, balance individual and group and are apt to gather and share information on the road to group progress.

Finally, Schutz echoed Maslow in his assertion that belonging is a basic interpersonal need, but he noted that it exists within a range or continuum and that some people need more and others less. *Under socials* may be less likely to seek interaction, may prefer smaller groups, and will generally not be found on center stage. *Over socials*, by contrast, crave attention and are highly motivated to seek belonging. A *social* person is one who strikes a healthy balance between being withdrawn and being the constant center of attention.

Schutz described these three *interpersonal needs* of affection, control, and belonging as interdependent and variable. In one context, an individual may have a high need for control, while in others he or she may not perceive the same level of motivation or compulsion to meet that need. Maslow and Schutz offer us two

related versions of interpersonal needs that begin to address the central question: why communicate in groups?

We communicate with each other to meet our needs, regardless of how we define those needs. From the time you are a newborn infant crying for food or the time you are a toddler learning to say "please" when requesting a cup of milk, to the time you are an adult learning the rituals of a college classroom or a job interview, you learn to communicate in groups to gain a sense of self within the group or community, meeting your basic needs as you grow and learn.

Key Takeaway

Human beings communicate in groups in order to meet some of their most important basic needs.

Exercises

1. Review the types of individuals from Schutz's theory described in this section. Which types do you think fit you? Which types fit some of your coworkers or classmates? Why? Share your opinions with your classmates and compare your self-assessment with the types they believe describe you.

2. Think of two or more different situations and how you might express your personal needs differently from one situation to the other. Have you observed similar variations in personal needs in other people from one situation to another? Discuss your thoughts with a classmate.

3.5 Group Communication Theory

Learning Objectives

1. Identify ways in which group communication theory can help groups.

2. Understand how theories are properly developed.

3. Identify prominent theoretical paradigms regarding communication.

"[C]reating a new theory is not like destroying an old barn and erecting a skyscraper in its place. It is rather like climbing a mountain, gaining new and wider views, discovering unexpected connections between our starting point and its rich environment. But the point from which we started out still exists, and can be seen, although it appears smaller and forms a tiny part of our broad view gained by the mastery of the obstacles on our adventurous way up."

Albert Einstein

"In making theories, always keep a window open so that you can throw one out if necessary." Einstein, A., & Infeld, L. (1938). The Evolution of Physics. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Béla Schick

Functions of Group Communication Theory

"Theory helps us to bear our ignorance of facts."

George Santayana in The Sense of Beauty

What can theories about group communication do for us? Like all theories, they can help us explain, postdict, and predict behavior. Specifically, theory can help us deal with group communication (Hahn, L.K., Lipper, L., & Paynton, S.T. (2011). *Survey of Communication Study*. http://bit.ly/ImokVO.) in four ways.

First, these theories can help us interpret and understand what happens when we communicate in groups. For example, a person from a culture such as Japan's may be taken by surprise when someone from mainstream US culture expresses anger openly in a formal meeting. If we're familiar with a theory which describes and identifies "high" versus "low-context" cultures, we can make better sense of interactions like this with people from cultures other than our own.

Second, the theories can help us choose what elements of our experience in groups to pay attention to. As Einstein wrote, "It is theory that decides what can be observed." If we know that cultures can be "high-" or "low-context," then when we interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds we'll watch for behaviors which we believe are associated with each of those categories. For example, if people are from high-context cultures they may tend to avoid explicit explanations and questions.

Third, the theories can enlarge our understanding. Theories strengthen as they're examined and tested in the light of people's experience. Students, scholars, and citizens can all broaden their knowledge by discussing and explaining theories. Reflecting on questions and other reactions they receive in response can also refine theories and make them more useful.

Fourth, the theories may impel us to challenge prevailing cultural, social, and political practices. Most of the ways that people behave in groups are products of habit, custom, and learning. They aren't, in other words, innate. By applying theoretical perspectives to how groups operate, we may be able to identify fairer and more just approaches.

Where Group Communication Theories Come From

"It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data."

Arthur Conan Doyle (via Sherlock Holmes in "A Scandal in

Bohemia," 1891)

To develop group communication theories, people generally follow a three-step process which parallels what Western science calls "the scientific method."Littlejohn, S. W., & Foss, K. A. (2005). *Theories of Human Communication* (8th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

1. Ask important questions. What stages should most groups expect to pass through as they form and adopt goals? How does the size of a group affect its ability to pursue its goals? What methods of group decision-making work best with which kinds of people? Which blend of individual personalities contributes most to the satisfaction of a group? All these questions are meaningful and significant to groups, and all of them have served as the foundation of theories about group communication.

2. Observe people's behavior in groups. To be productive, this observation should proceed on the basis of well-defined terms and within clear boundaries. To find out which blend of individual personalities contributes most to group satisfaction, for instance, it's necessary first to define "personality" and "satisfaction." It is also important to decide which kinds of groups to observe under which circumstances.

3. Analyze the results of the observation process and base new theories upon them. The theories should fit the results of the observations as closely as possible.

You may want to go on line and look at a journal devoted to group communication topics, such as "Small Group Research." If you do, you'll see that the titles of its articles refer often to existing theories and that the articles themselves describe experiments with groups which have tested and elaborated upon those theories.

Theoretical Paradigms for Group Communication

Groups of theories may compose _theoretical paradigms_, which are collections of concepts, values, assumptions, and practices that constitute a way of viewing reality for a community that shares them.Hahn, L.K., Lipper, L., & Paynton, S.T. (2011). _Survey of Communication Study_. http://bit.ly/ImokVO Group communication theories tend to cluster around the following five paradigms:

- The _systems theory paradigm_. Systems theory examines the inputs, processes, and outputs of systems as those systems strive toward balance, or _homeostasis_. This paradigm for group communication emphasizes that processes and relationships among components of a group are interdependent and goal-oriented. Thus, the adage that "it is impossible to do just one thing" is taken to be true by systems theorists. Focus is placed more on developing a complete picture of groups than upon examining their parts in isolation.

- The _rhetorical theories paradigm_. The field of rhetoric originated with the Greeks and Romans and is the study of how symbols affect human beings. For example, Aristotle's three elements of persuasion—ethos (credibility), logos (logic), and pathos (appeal to emotion)—are still used today to describe and categorize people's statements. Rhetorical analysis of group communication lays greatest emphasis on describing messages, exploring their functions, and evaluating their effectiveness.

- The _empirical laws paradigm_. This paradigm, also known as the positivist approach, bases investigation of group communication on the assumption that universal laws govern human interaction in much the

same way that gravity or magnetism act upon all physical objects. "If X, then Y" statements may be used to characterize communication behavior in this paradigm. For instance, you might claim that "If people in a group sit in a circle, a larger proportion of them will share in a conversation than if they are arranged in rows facing one direction." The effects of empirical laws governing group communication are usually held to be highly likely rather than absolute.

- The *human rules paradigm*. Instead of contending that behavior by people in groups conforms to absolute and reliable laws, this paradigm holds that people construct and then follow rules for their interactions. Because these rules are subjective and arise out of social circumstances and cultural environments which may change, they can't be pinned down the way that laws describing the physical world can be and are apt to evolve over time.

- The *critical theories paradigm*. Should we simply analyze and describe the ways in which groups communicate, or should we challenge those ways and propose others? The critical theories paradigm proposes that we should strive to understand how communication may be used to exert power and oppress people.Foss, K. A., & Foss, S. K. (1989). Incorporating the feminist perspective in communication scholarship: A research commentary. In C. Spitzack & K. Carter (Eds.), *Doing Research on Women's Communication: Alternative Perspectives in Theory and Method* (pp. 64–94). Norwood, NJ: Ablex. When we have determined

how this oppression takes place, we should seek to remedy it. This combination of theory and action is defined as praxis.

No single theoretical paradigm is accepted by everyone who studies group communication. Whether a description or prediction concerning people's behavior in groups is found to be accurate or not will depend on which viewpoint we come from and which kinds of groups we observe.

Key Takeaway

If they are properly developed, theories of group communication can help group members understand and influence group processes.

Exercises

1. Identify a group that you've been part of at school or in the workplace. What aspects of its behavior do you feel you might have better understood if you'd had a grasp of group communication theory?
2. Think of another significant experience you've had recently as part of a group. Of the theoretical paradigms for group communication described in this section, which would you feel most comfortable in applying to the experience? Which paradigm, if any, do you feel it would be inappropriate to apply? Why?

Additional Resources

Read about groups and teams on the business website 1000 Ventures.

http://www.1000ventures.com/business_guide/crosscuttings/team_main.html

Learn more about Tuckman's Linear Model. http://www.infed.org/thinkers/tuckman.htm

Read about groups and teams, and contribute to a wiki about them, on Wikibooks.

http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Managing_Groups_and_Teams

How did Twitter get started? Find out. http://twitter.com/about

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Chapter 4: Verbal & Non-Verbal Communication

Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee and just as hard to sleep after.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

The meanings of words are not in the words; they are in us [Hayakawa, S. I. (1978). Language in thought and action. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, p. 212.]

S. I. Hayakawa

The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said.

Peter F. Drucker

Getting Started

Successful group communication is often associated with writing and speaking well, being articulate or proficient with words. Yet, in the quote above, the famous linguist S. I. Hayakawa wisely observes that meaning lies within us, not in the words we use. Indeed, communication in this text is defined as the process of understanding and sharing meaning.Pearson, J., & Nelson, P. (2000). *An introduction to human communication: understanding and sharing*. Boston: McGraw-Hill. When you communicate you are sharing meaning with one or more other people—this may include members of your family, your community, your work community, your school, or any group that considers itself a group.

How do you communicate? How do you think? We use language as a system to create and exchange meaning with one another, and the types of words we use influence both our perceptions and others interpretation of our meanings. What kinds of words would you use to describe your thoughts and feelings, your preferences in music, cars, food, or other things that matter to you?

Imagine that you are using written or spoken language to create a bridge over which you hope to transport meaning, much like a gift or package, to your receiver. You hope that your meaning arrives relatively intact, so that your receiver receives something like what you sent. Will the package look the same to them on the receiving end? Will they interpret the package, its wrapping and colors, the way you intended? That depends. What is certain is that they will interpret it based on their framework of experience. The package represents your

words arranged in a pattern that both the source (you) and the receiver (your group) can interpret. The words as a package try to contain the meaning and deliver it intact, but they themselves are not the meaning. That lies within us. So is the package empty? Are the words we use empty? Without us to give them life and meaning, the answer is yes. Knowing what words will correspond to meanings that your group members hold within themselves will help you communicate more effectively. Professional jargon can be quite appropriate, even preferred, when everyone around the table understands the terminology. Knowing what meanings lie within you is your door to understanding yourself.

In this chapter's third Introductory Exercise, we focus on how a person presents ideas, not the ideas themselves. Have you ever been in class and found it hard to listen to the professor, not because he or she wasn't well informed or the topic wasn't interesting or important to you, but because the style of presentation didn't engage you as a listener? If your answer is yes, then you know that you want to avoid making the same mistake when you share information with your group or team. It's not always what you say, but how you say it that makes a difference. We sometimes call this "body language," or "nonverbal communication," and it is a key aspect of effective group communication.

One common concern is when to present your idea within a group setting to make sure it gets considered. Timing is an important aspect of nonverbal communication, but trying to understand what a single example of timing means is challenging. Context may make a difference. For example, if you have known the group member for years and they have always responded positively to your

input, you may not have reason for concern. If their behavior doesn't match what you are familiar with, and this sudden, unexplained change in the established pattern may mean that you need to follow up. Group dynamics, like communication itself, is constantly changing.

This chapter discusses the importance of verbal and nonverbal communication. It examines how the characteristics of language interact in ways that can both improve and diminish effective group communication. We will examine how language plays a significant role in how you perceive and interact with the world, and how culture, language, education, gender, race and ethnicity all influence this dynamic process. We will look at ways to avoid miscommunication and focus on constructive ways to improve effective group communication.

4.1 Principles of Verbal Communication

Learning Objective

1. Identify and describe five key principles of verbal communication.

Verbal communication is based on several basic principles. In this section, we'll examine each principle and explore how it influences everyday communication. Whether it's a simply conversation with a co-worker or a formal sales presentation to a board of directors, these principles apply to all contexts of communication.

Language Has Rules

Language is a code, a collection of symbols, letters, or words with arbitrary meanings that are arranged according to the rules of syntax and are used to communicate. Pearson, J., & Nelson, P. (2000). *An introduction to human communication: understanding and sharing.* Boston: McGraw-Hill, p. 54.

In this chapter's Introductory Exercise #1, were you able to successfully match the terms to their meanings? Did you find that some of the definitions did not match your understanding of the terms? The words themselves have meaning within their specific context or language community. But without a grasp of that context, "my bad" may have just sounded odd. Your familiarity with the words and phrases may have made the exercise easy for you, but it isn't an easy exercise for everyone. The words themselves only carry meaning if you know the understood meaning and have a grasp of their context to interpret them correctly.

There are three types of rules which govern or control our use of words. You may not be aware that they exist, or that they influence you, but from the moment you text a word or speak, these rules govern your communications. Think of a word that is all right to use in certain situations and not in others. Why? And how do you know?

Syntactic rules govern the order of words in a sentence. In some languages, such as German, syntax or word order is strictly prescribed. English syntax, in contrast, is relatively flexible and open to style. Still, there are definite combinations of words that are correct and incorrect in English. It is equally

correct to say, "Please come to the meeting in the auditorium at 12 noon on Wednesday" or, "Please come to the meeting on Wednesday at 12 noon in the auditorium." But it would be incorrect to say, "Please to the auditorium on Wednesday in the meeting at 12 noon come."

Semantic rules govern the meaning of words and how to interpret them.Martinich, A. P. (ed.) (1996), _The philosophy of language_, 3rd edition. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press. Semantics is the study of meaning in language. It considers what words mean or are intended to mean, as opposed to their sound, spelling, grammatical function, and so on. Does a given statement refer to other statements already communicated? Is the statement true or false? Does it carry a certain intent? What does the sender or receiver need to know in order to understand its meaning? These are questions addressed by semantic rules.

Contextual rules govern meaning and word choice according to context and social custom. For example, suppose Greg is talking about his co-worker, Carol, and says, "She always meets her deadlines." This may seem like a straightforward statement that would not vary according to context or social custom. But suppose another co-worker asked Greg, "How do you like working with Carol?" and, after a long pause, Greg answered, "She always meets her deadlines." Are there factors in the context of the question, or social customs, that would influence the meaning of Greg's statement?

Even when we follow these linguistic rules, miscommunication is possible, for our cultural context or community may hold different meanings for the words used than the source intended. Words attempt to represent the ideas we want to communicate, but they are sometimes limited by factors beyond our control. They often require us to negotiate their meaning, or to explain what we mean in more than one way, in order to create a common vocabulary. You may need to state a word, define it, and provide an example in order to come to an understanding with your team about the meaning of your message.

Our Reality Is Shaped by Our Language

What would your life be like if you had been raised in a country other than the one where you grew up? Malaysia, for example? Italy? Afghanistan? or Bolivia? Or suppose you had been born male instead of female, or vice versa. Or had been raised in the northeastern U.S. instead of the Southwest, the Midwest instead of the Southeast. In any of these cases, you would not have the same identity you have today. You would have learned another set of customs, values, traditions, other language patterns and ways of communicating. You would be a different person who communicated in different ways.

You didn't choose your birth, customs, values, traditions, or your language. You didn't even choose to learn to read this sentence or to speak with those of your community, but somehow you accomplished this challenging task. As an adult, you can choose to see things from a new or diverse perspective, but what language do you think with? It's not just the words themselves, or even how they

are organized, that makes communication such a challenge. Your language itself, ever changing and growing, in many ways determines your reality. [Whorf, B. L. (1956). Science and linguistics. In J. B. Carroll (Ed.), *Language, thought and reality*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 207–219.] You can't escape your language or culture completely, and always see the world through a shade or tint of what you've been taught, learned, or experienced.

Suppose you were raised in a culture that values formality. At work, you pride yourself on being well dressed. It's part of your expectation for yourself and, whether you admit it or not, for others. Many people in your organization, however, come from less formal cultures, and they prefer "business casual" attire. You may be able to recognize the difference, and because humans are highly adaptable, you may get used to a less formal dress expectation, but it won't change your fundamental values.

Thomas Kuhn [Kuhn, T. (1996). *The structure of scientific revolutions* (3rd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.] makes the point that "*paradigms*, or a clear point of view involving theories, laws, and/or generalizations that provide a framework for understanding, tend to form and become set around key validity claims, or statements of the way things work."McLean, S. (2003). *The basics of speech communication*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, p. 50. The paradigm, or worldview, may be individual or collective. And paradigm shifts are often painful. New ideas are always suspect, and usually opposed, without any other reason than because they are not already common. Ackerman, B. A. (1980). *Social justice in the liberal state*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

As an example, consider the earth-heavens paradigm. Medieval Europeans believed that the Earth was flat and that the edge was to be avoided, otherwise you might fall off. For centuries after the acceptance of a "round earth" belief, the earth was still believed to be the center of the universe, with the sun and all planets revolving around it. Eventually, someone challenged the accepted view. Over time, despite considerable resistance to protect the status quo, people came to better understand the earth and its relationship to the heavens.

In the same way, the makes of the Intel microprocessor once thought that a slight calculation error, unlikely to negatively impact 99.9% of users, was better left as is and hidden. Emery, V. (1996). The pentium chip story: A learning experience. Accessed at http://www.emery.com/1e/pentium.htm. Like many things in the information age, the error was discovered by a user of the product, became publicly known, and damaged Intel's credibility and sales for years. Recalls and prompt, public communication in response to similar issues are now the industry-wide protocol.

Paradigms involve premises that are taken as fact. Of course the Earth is the center of the universe, of course no one will ever be impacted by a mathematical error so far removed from most people's everyday use of computers, and of course you never danced the macarena at a company party. We now can see how those facts, attitudes, beliefs, and ideas of "cool" are overturned.

How does this insight lends itself to your understanding of verbal communication? Do all people share the same paradigms, words, or ideas? Will

you be presenting ideas outside of your group's frame of reference? Outside of their worldview? Just as you look back at your macarena performance, get outside of your own frame of reference and consider how to best communicate your thoughts, ideas and points to a group that may not have your same experiences or understanding of the topic.

By taking into account your group's background and experience, you can become more "other-oriented," a successful strategy to narrow the gap between you and your group members. Our experiences are like sunglasses, tinting the way we see the world. Our challenge, perhaps, is to avoid letting them function as blinders, like those worn by working horses, which create tunnel vision and limit our perspective.

Language Is Arbitrary and Symbolic

As we have discussed previously, words, by themselves, do not have any inherent meaning. Humans give meaning to them, and their meanings change across time. The arbitrary symbols, including letters, numbers, and punctuation marks, stand for concepts in our experience. We have to negotiate the meaning of the word "home," and define it, through visual images or dialogue, in order to communicate with our team or group.

Words have two types of meanings: denotative and connotative. Attention to both is necessary to reduce the possibility of misinterpretation. The *denotative meaning* is the common meaning, often found in the dictionary. The *connotative meaning* is often not found in the dictionary but in the community of users itself. It

can involve an emotional association with a word, positive or negative, and can be individual or collective, but is not universal.

With a common vocabulary in both denotative and connotative terms, effective communication becomes a more distinct possibility. But what if we have to transfer meaning from one vocabulary to another? That is essentially what we are doing when we translate a message. In such cases, language and culture can sometimes make for interesting twists. *The New York Times* [Sterngold, J. (1998). Lost, and gained, in the translation. *New York Times* (November 15).] noted that the title of the 1998 film *There's Something about Mary* proved difficult to translate when it was released in foreign markets. The movie was renamed to capture the idea and to adapt to local groups' frame of reference: In Poland, where blonde jokes are popular and common, the film title (translated back to English for our use) was *For the Love of a Blonde*. In France, *Mary at All Costs* communicated the idea, while in Thailand *My True Love Will Stand All Outrageous Events* dropped the reference to Mary altogether.

Capturing our ideas with words is a challenge when both conversational partners speak the same language, but across languages, cultures, and generations the complexity multiplies exponentially.

Language Is Abstract

Words represent aspects of our environment, and can play an important role in that environment. They may describe an important idea or concept, but the very act of labeling and invoking a word simplifies and distorts our concept of the thing

itself. This ability to simplify concepts makes it easier to communicate, but it sometimes makes us lose track of the specific meaning we are trying to convey through abstraction. Let's look at one important part of life in America: transportation.

Take the word "car" and consider what it represents. Freedom, status, or style? Does what you drive say something about you? To describe a car as a form of transportation is to consider one of its most basic, and universal aspects. This level of abstraction means we lose individual distinctions between cars until we impose another level of labeling. We could divide cars into sedans (or saloon) and coupe (or coupé) simply by counting the number of doors (i.e., four versus two). We could also examine cost, size, engine displacement, fuel economy, and style. We might arrive at an American classic, the Mustang, and consider it for all of these factors and its legacy as an accessible American sports car. To describe it in terms of transportation only is to lose the distinctiveness of what makes a Mustang a desirable American sports car.
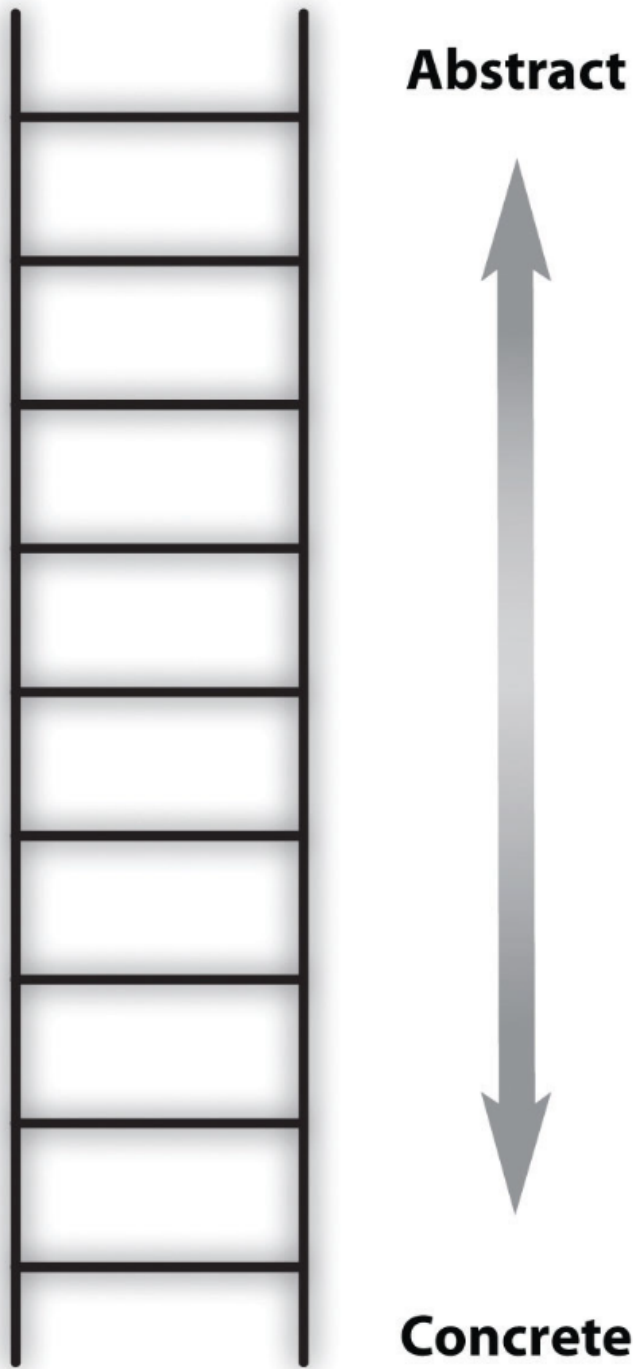
Figure: Abstraction Ladder

Source: Adapted from DeVito, J. (1999). *Messages: building interpersonal communication skills*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, p. 119.

We can see how, at the extreme level of abstraction, a car is like any other automobile. We can also see how, at the base level, the concept is most concrete. "Mustang," the name given to one of the best selling American sports cars, is a specific make and model, with specific markings, size, shape and coloring and a relationship with a classic design. By focusing on concrete terms and examples, you help your group grasp your content.

Language Organizes and Classifies Reality

We use language to create and express some sense of order in our world. We often group words that represent concepts by their physical proximity or their similarity to one another. For example, in biology, animals with similar traits are classified together. An ostrich may be said to be related to an emu and a nandu, but you wouldn't group an ostrich with an elephant or a salamander. Our ability to organize is useful, but artificial. The systems of organization we use are not part of the natural world but an expression of our views about the natural world.

What is a doctor? A nurse? A teacher? If a male came to mind in the case of the word "doctor," but a female came to mind in reference to "nurse" or "teacher," then your habits of mind include a gender bias. There was once a time in the United States where that gender stereotype was more than just a stereotype, it was the general rule, the social custom, the norm. Now it no longer holds true. More and more men are training to serve as nurses, and *Business Week* noted in 2008 that one-third of the U.S. physician workforce was female. Are there too

many women doctors? As an MD shortage looms, female physicians and their flexible hours are taking some of the blame. *Business Week* (April 17).

We all use systems of classification to navigate through the world. Imagine how confusing life would be if we had no categories such as male/female, young/old, tall/short, doctor/nurse/teacher! These categories only become problematic when we use them to uphold biases and ingrained assumptions that are no longer valid. We may assume, through our biases, that elements are related when they have no relationship at all. As a result, our thinking is limited and our grasp of reality impaired. It is often easier to spot these biases in others, but it behooves us as communicators to become aware of them in ourselves. Holding them unconsciously will limit our thinking, our grasp of reality, and our ability to communicate successfully.

Key Takeaway

- Language is a system governed by rules of syntax, semantics, and context; and we use paradigms to understand the world and frame our communications.

Exercises

1. Write at least five examples of English sentences with correct syntax. Then rewrite each sentence, using the same words in an order that

displays incorrect syntax. Compare your results with those of your classmates.

2. Think of at least five words whose denotative meaning differs from their connotative meaning. Use each word in two sentences, one employing the denotative meaning and the other employing the connotative. Compare your results with those of your classmates.

3. Do you associate meaning with the car someone drives? Does it say something about them? List five cars you observe people you know driving and discuss each one, noting whether you perceive it says something about them or not. Share and compare with classmates.

4.2 Language Can Be an Obstacle to Communication

Learning Objective

1. Demonstrate six ways in which language can be an obstacle to communication.

As part of our discussion you no doubt came to see that language and verbal communication can work both for you and against you. Language allows you to communicate, but it also allows you to miscommunicate and misunderstand. The same system we use to express our most intimate thoughts can be frustrating when it fails to capture our thoughts, to represent what we want to express, and to reach our group. For all its faults, though, it is the best system we have, and

part of improving the communication process is the clear identification of where it breaks down. Anticipate where a word or expression may need more clarification and you will be on your way to reducing errors and improving verbal communication.

In an article titled "The Miscommunication Gap," Susan Washburn lists several undesirable results of poor communication in business: Washburn, S. (2008). The miscommunication gap. *ESI Horizons 9*:02 (February). Accessed at http://www.esi-intl.com/public/Library/html/200802HorizonsArticle1.asp?UnityID=8522516.1290.

- damaged relationships
- loss of productivity
- inefficiency and rework
- conflict
- missed opportunities
- schedule slippage
- scope creep…or leap
- wasted resources
- unclear or unmet requirements

In this section we discuss how words can serve either as a bridge, or a barrier, to understanding and communication of meaning. Our goals of effective and efficient group communication mean an inherent value of words and terms that keep the bridge clear and free of obstacles.

Cliché

A _cliché_ is a once-clever word or phrase that has lost its impact through overuse. If you spoke or wrote in clichés, how would your group react? Let's try it. How do you react when you read this sentence: "A cliché is something to avoid like the plague, for it is nothing but a tired old war horse, and if the shoe were on the other foot you too would have an axe to grind."? As you can see, the problem with clichés is that they often sound silly or boring.

Clichés are sometimes a symptom of lazy communication—the person using the cliché hasn't bothered to search for original words to convey the intended meaning. Clichés lose their impact because readers and listeners tend to gloss over them, assuming their common meaning while ignoring your specific use of them. As a result, they can be obstacles to successful communication.

Jargon

Let's pretend you've been assigned to the task of preparing a short presentation on your company's latest product for a group of potential customers. It's a big responsibility. You only have one opportunity to get it right. You will need to do extensive planning and preparation, and your effort, if done well, will produce a presentation that is smooth and confident, looking simple to the casual group member.

What words do you use to communicate information about your product? Is your group of clients familiar with your field and its specialized terms? As potential

customers, they are probably somewhat knowledgeable in the field, but not to the extent that you and your co-workers are; even less so compared to the "techies" who developed the product. For your presentation to succeed, your challenge is to walk a fine line between using too much profession-specific language on the one hand, and "talking down" to your group on the other hand.

While your potential customers may not understand all the engineering and schematic detail terms involved in the product, they do know what they and their organizations are looking for in considering a purchase. Your solution may be to focus on common ground—what you know of their past history in terms of contracting services or buying products from your company. What can you tell from their historical purchases? If your research shows that they place a high value on saving time, you can focus your presentation on the time-saving aspects of your new product and leave the technical terms to the user's manual.

Jargon is an occupation-specific language used by people in a given profession. Jargon does not necessarily imply formal education, but instead focuses on the language people in a profession use to communicate with each other. Members of the information technology department have a distinct group of terms that refer to common aspects in their field. Members of the marketing department, or advertising, or engineering, research, and development also have sets of terms they use within their professional community. People who work with sewing machines, or in automobile factories, or in agriculture also have jargon in their profession, independent of formal education.

Whether or not to use jargon is often a judgment call, and one that is easier to make in speaking than in writing. In an oral context, we may be able to use a technical term and instantly know whether or not they "got it." If they didn't, we can define it on the spot. In written language, we lack that immediate response and must attend more to the context of receiver. The more we learn about our group, company, or corporation, the better we can tailor our chosen words. If we lack information or want our document to be understood by a variety of readers, it pays to use common words and avoid jargon.

Slang

Think for a moment about the words and expressions you use when you communicate with your best friends. If a co-worker was to hang out with you and your friends, would they understand all the words you use, the music you listen to, the stories you tell and the way you tell them? Probably not, because you and your friends probably use certain words and expressions in ways that have special meaning to you.

This special form of language, which in some ways resembles jargon, is slang. *Slang* is the use of existing or newly invented words to take the place of standard or traditional words with the intent of adding an unconventional, non-standard, humorous or rebellious effect. It differs from jargon in that it is used in informal contexts, among friends or members of a certain age group, rather than by professionals in a certain industry.

If you say something is "phat," you may mean "cool," which is now a commonly understood slang word, but your co-worker may not know this. As word "phat" moves into the mainstream, it will be replaced and adapted by the communities that use it.

Since our emphasis in group communication is on clarity, and a slang word runs the risk of creating misinterpretation, it is generally best to avoid slang. You may see the marketing department use a slang word to target a specific, well-researched group, but for our purposes of your general presentation introducing a product or service, we will stick to clear, common words that are easily understood.

Sexist and Racist Language

Some forms of slang involve put-downs of people belonging to various groups. This type of slang often crosses the line and becomes offensive, not only to the groups that are being put down, but also to others who may hear it. In today's workplace there is no place where sexist or racist language is appropriate. In fact, using such language can be a violation of company policies and in some cases anti-discrimination laws.

Sexist language uses gender as a discriminating factor. Referring to adult women as "girls" or using the word "man" to refer to humankind are examples of sexist language. In a more blatant example, several decades ago a woman was the first female sales representative in her company's sales force. The men resented her

and were certain they could outsell her, so they held a "Beat the Broad" sales contest. Today, a contest with a name like that would be out of the question.

Racist language discriminates against members of a given race or ethnic group. While it may be obvious that racial and ethnic slurs have no place in group communication, there can also be issues with more subtle references to "*those* people" or "you know how *they* are." If race or ethnicity genuinely enters into the subject of your communication—in a drugstore, for example, there is often an aisle for black hair care products—then naturally it makes sense to mention customers belonging to that group. The key is that mentioning racial and ethnic groups should be done with the same respect you would desire if someone else were referring to groups you belong to.

Euphemisms

In seeking to avoid offensive slang, it is important not to assume that a euphemism is the solution. A *euphemism* involves substituting an acceptable word for an offensive, controversial, or unacceptable one that conveys the same or similar meaning. The problem is that the group still knows what the expression means, and understands that the communicator is choosing a euphemism for the purpose of sounding more educated or genteel.

Euphemisms can also be used sarcastically or humorously—"H-E-double-hockey-sticks," for example, is a euphemism for "hell" that may be amusing in some contexts. If your friend has just gotten a new job as a janitor, you may jokingly ask, "How's my favorite sanitation engineer this

morning?" But such humor is not always appreciated, and can convey disrespect even when none is intended.

Euphemistic words are not always disrespectful, however. For example, when referring to a death, it is considered polite in many parts of the U.S. to say that the person "passed" or "passed away," rather than the relatively insensitive word, "died." Similarly, people say, "I need to find a bathroom" when it is well understood they are not planning to take a bath.

Still, these polite euphemisms are exceptions to the rule. Euphemisms are generally more of a hindrance than a help to understanding. In group communication the goal is clarity, and the very purpose of euphemism is to be vague. To be clear, choose words that mean what you intend to convey.

Doublespeak

Doublespeak is the deliberate use of words to disguise, obscure, or change meaning. Doublespeak is often present in bureaucratic communication, where it can serve to cast a person or an organization in a less unfavorable light than plain language would do.

When you ask a friend, "How does it feel to be downsized?" you are using a euphemism to convey humor, possibly even dark humor. Your friend's employer was likely not joking, though, when the action was announced as a "downsizing" rather than as a "layoff" or "dismissal." In military communications, "collateral damage" is often used to refer to civilian deaths, but no mention of the dead is

present. You may recall the "Bailout" of the U.S. economy in 2008, which quickly came to be called the "Rescue" and finally the "Buy In" as the U.S. bought interests in nine regional and national banks. The meaning changed from saving an economic system or its institutions to investing in them. This change of terms, and the attempt to change the meaning of the actions, became common in comedy routines across the nation.

Doublespeak can be quite dangerous when it is used deliberately to obscure meaning and the listener cannot anticipate or predict consequences based on the (in)effective communication. When a medical insurance company says "we insure companies with up to 20,000 lives," is it possible to forget that those "lives" are people? Ethical issues quickly arise when humans are dehumanized and referred to as "objects" or "subjects." When genocide is referred to as "ethnic cleansing," is it any less deadly than when called by its true name?

If the meaning was successfully hidden from the group, one might argue that the doublespeak was in fact effective. But our goal continues to be clear and concise communication with a minimum of misinterpretation. Learn to recognize doublespeak by what it does not communicate as well as what it communicates.

Each of these six obstacles to communication contribute to misunderstanding and miscommunication, intentionally or unintentionally. If you recognize one of them, you can address it right away. You can redirect a question and get to essential meaning, rather than leaving with a misunderstanding that impacts the relationship. In group communication, our goal of clear and concise

communication remains constant, but we can never forget that trust is the foundation for effective communication. Part of our effort must include reinforcing the relationship inherent between source and receiver, and one effective step towards that goal is to reduce obstacles to effective communication.

Key Takeaway

- To avoid obstacles to communication, avoid clichés, jargon, slang, sexist and racist language, euphemisms, and doublespeak.

Exercises

1. Identify at least five common clichés and look up their origins. Try to understand how and when each phrase became a cliché. Share your findings with your classmates.

2. Using your library's microfilm files or an online database, look through newspaper articles from the 1950s or earlier. Find at least one article that uses sexist or racist language. What makes it racist or sexist? How would a journalist convey the same information today? Share your findings with your class.

3. Identify one slang term and one euphemism you know is used in your community, among your friends, or where you work. Share and compare with classmates.

4.3 Improving Verbal Communication

Learning Objective

1. Demonstrate six strategies for improving verbal communication.

Throughout the chapter we have visited examples and stories that highlight the importance of verbal communication. To end the chapter, we need to consider how language can be used to enlighten or deceive, encourage or discourage, empower or destroy. By defining the terms we use and choosing precise words, we will maximize our group's understanding of our message. In addition, it is important to consider the group members, control your tone, check for understanding, and focus on results. Recognizing the power of verbal communication is the first step to understanding its role and impact on the communication process.

Define Your Terms

Even when you are careful to craft your message clearly and concisely, not everyone will understand every word you say or write. As an effective group communicator, you know it is your responsibility to give every group member every advantage in understanding your meaning. Yet your presentation would fall flat if you tried to define each and every term—you would end up sounding like a dictionary!

The solution is to be aware of any words you are using that may not be familiar to everyone in your group, and provide clues to meaning in the process of making

and supporting your points. Give examples to illustrate each concept. Use parallels from everyday life. Rephrase unfamiliar terms in different words. In summary, keep your group members in mind and imagine yourself in their place. This will help you to adjust your writing level and style to their needs, maximizing the likelihood that your message will be understood.

Choose Precise Words

To increase understanding, choose *precise words* that paint as vivid and accurate a mental picture as possible for your group. If you use language that is vague or abstract, your meaning may be lost or misinterpreted. Your document or presentation will also be less dynamic and interesting than it could be.

The table below, "Precisely What Are You Saying?", lists some examples of phrases that are imprecise and precise. Which one evokes a more dynamic image in your imagination?

The famous writer William Safire died in 2009; he was over 70.	The former Nixon speech writer, language authority, and New York Times columnist William Safire died of pancreatic cancer in 2009; he was 79.
Clumber spaniels are large dogs.	The Clumber Spaniel Club of America describes the breed as a "long, low, substantial dog," standing 17 to 20 inches high and weighing 55 to 80 pounds.
It is important to eat a healthy diet during pregnancy.	Eating a diet rich in whole grains, fruits and vegetables, lean meats, low-fat dairy products can improve your health during pregnancy and boost your chances of having a healthy baby.
We are making good progress on the project.	In the two weeks since inception, our four-member team has achieved three of the six objectives we identified for project completion; we are on track to complete the project in another three to four weeks.
For the same amount of spend, we expected more value added.	We have examined several proposals in the $10,000 range, and they all offer more features than what we see in the $12,500 system ABC Corp. is offering.
Officers were called to the scene.	Responding to a 911 call, State Police Officers Arellano and Chavez sped to the intersection of County Route 53 and State Highway 21.
The victim went down the street.	The victim ran screaming to a neighbor's house.
Several different colorways are available.	The silk jacquard fabric is available in ivory, moss, cinnamon, and topaz colorways.

This smartphone has more applications than customers can imagine.	At last count, the BlueBerry Tempest has more than 500 applications, many costing 99 cents or less; users can get real-time sports scores, upload videos to TwitVid, browse commuter train schedules, edit emails before forwarding, and find recipes—but so far, it doesn't do the cooking for you!
A woman was heckled when she spoke at a health care event.	On August 25, 2009, Rep. Frank Pallone (Democrat of New Jersey's 6th congressional district) hosted a "town hall" meeting on health care reform where many audience members heckled and booed a woman in a wheelchair as she spoke about the need for affordable health insurance and her fears that she might lose her home.

Table: Precisely What Are You Saying?

Consider Your Group Members

In addition to precise words and clear definitions, contextual clues are important to guide your group members as they read. If you use a jargon word, which may be appropriate for many people in your group, follow it by a common reference that clearly relates its essential meaning. With this positive strategy you will meet group member's needs with diverse backgrounds. Internal summaries tell us what we've heard and forecast what is to come. It's not just the words, but also how people hear them that counts.

If you say the magic words "in conclusion," you set in motion a set of expectations that you are about to wrap it up. If, however, you introduce a new point and continue to speak, the group will perceive an expectancy violation and hold you accountable. You said the magic words but didn't honor them. One of the best ways to display respect for your group is to not exceed the expected

time in a presentation or length in a document. Your careful attention to contextual clues will demonstrate that you are clearly considering your group.

Take Control of Your Tone

Does your writing or speech sound pleasant and agreeable? Or does it come across as stuffy, formal, bloated, ironic, sarcastic, flowery, rude, or inconsiderate? Recognition may be simple, but getting a handle on how to influence tone and to make your voice match your intentions takes time and skill.

One useful tip is to read your document out loud before you deliver it, just as you would practice a presentation before you present it to your group. Sometimes hearing your own words can reveal their tone, helping you decide whether it is correct or appropriate. Another way is to listen or watch others' presentations that have been described with terms associated with tone. Martin Luther King Jr. had one style while President Barack Obama has another. You can learn from both. Don't just take the word of one critic but if several point to a speech as an example of pompous eloquence, and you don't want to come across in your presentation as pompous, you may learn what to avoid.

Check for Understanding

When we talk to each other face to face, seeing if someone understood you isn't all that difficult. Even if they really didn't get it, you can see, ask questions, and clarify right away. That gives oral communication, particularly live interaction, a distinct advantage. Use this immediacy for feedback to your advantage. Make

time for feedback and plan for it. Ask clarifying questions. Share your presentation with more than one person, and choose people that have similar characteristics to your anticipated group or team.

If you were going to present to a group that you knew in advance was of a certain age, sex, or professional background, it would only make sense to connect with someone from that group prior to your actual performance to check and see if what you have created and what they expect are similar. In oral communication, feedback is core component of the communication model and we can often see it, hear it, and it takes less effort to assess it.

Be Results Oriented

At the end of the day, the assignment has to be complete. It can be a challenge to balance the need for attention to detail with the need to arrive at the end product—and its due date. Stephen CoveyCovey, S. (1989). *The seven habits of highly effective people*. New York: Simon & Schuster. suggests beginning with the end in mind as one strategy for success. If you have done your preparation, know your assignment goals, desired results, have learned about your group members and tailored the message to their expectations, then you are well on your way to completing the task. No document or presentation is perfect, but the goal itself is worthy of your continued effort for improvement.

Here the key is to know when further revision will not benefit the presentation and to shift the focus to test marketing, asking for feedback, or simply sharing it with a mentor or co-worker for a quick review. Finding balance while engaging in an

activity that requires a high level of attention to detail can be challenge for any communicator, but it is helpful to keep the end in mind.

Key Takeaway

- To improve communication, define your terms, choose precise words, consider your group members, control your tone, check for understanding, and aim for results.

Exercises

1. Choose a piece of writing from a profession you are unfamiliar with. For example, if you are studying biology, choose an excerpt from a book on fashion design. Identify several terms you are unfamiliar with, terms that may be considered jargon. How does the writer help you understand the meaning of these terms? Could the writer make them easier to understand? Share your findings with your class.

2. In your chosen profession, identify ten jargon words, define them, and share them with the class.

3. Describe a simple process, from brushing your teeth to opening the top of a bottle, in as precise terms as possible. Present to the class.

4.4 Principles of Nonverbal Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Demonstrate nonverbal communication and describe its role in the communication process.

2. Understand and explain the principles of nonverbal communication.

Nonverbal Communication Is Fluid

Chances are you have had many experiences where words were misunderstood, or where the meaning of words was unclear. When it comes to nonverbal communication, meaning is even harder to discern. We can sometimes tell what people are communicating through their nonverbal communication, but there is no foolproof "dictionary" of how to interpret nonverbal messages. *Nonverbal communication* is the process of conveying a message without the use of words. It can include gestures and facial expressions, tone of voice, timing, posture and where you stand as you communicate. It can help or hinder the clear understanding of your message, but it doesn't reveal (and can even mask) what you are really thinking. Nonverbal communication is far from simple, and its complexity makes our study, and our understanding, a worthy but challenging goal.

Where does a wink start and a nod end? Nonverbal communication involves the entire body, the space it occupies and dominates, the time it interacts, and not only what is not said, but how it is not said. Confused? Try to focus on just one

element of nonverbal communication and it will soon get lost among all the other stimuli. Let's consider eye contact. What does it mean by itself without context, or chin position, or eyebrows to flag interest or signal a threat? Nonverbal action flows almost seamlessly from one to the next, making it a challenge to interpret one element, or even a series of elements.

We perceive time as linear, flowing along in a straight line. We did one task, we're doing another task now, and we are planning on doing something else all the time. Sometimes we place more emphasis on the future, or the past, forgetting that we are actually living in the present moment whether we focus on "the now" or not. Nonverbal communication is always in motion, as long as we are, and is never the same twice.

Nonverbal communication is irreversible. In written communication you can write a clarification, correction, or retraction. While it never makes the original statement go completely away, it does allow for correction. Unlike written communication, oral communication may allow "do-overs" on the spot: you can explain and restate, hoping to clarify your point. You can also dig the hole you are in just a little bit deeper. The old sayings "When you find yourself in a hole, stop digging" and "Open mouth, insert foot" can sometimes apply to oral communications. We've all said something we would give anything to take back, but we all know we can't. Oral communication, like written communication, allows for some correction, but it still doesn't erase the original message or its impact. Nonverbal communication takes it one step further. You can't separate one

nonverbal action from the context of all the other verbal and nonverbal communication acts, and you can't take it back.

In a speech, nonverbal communication is continuous in the sense that it is always occurring, and because it is so fluid, it can be hard to determine where one nonverbal message starts and another stops. Words can be easily identified and isolated, but if we try to single out a group member's gestures, smile, or stance without looking at how they all come together in context, we may miss the point and draw the wrong conclusion. You need to be conscious of this aspect of public speaking because, to quote another old saying, "Actions speak louder than words." This is true in the sense that people often pay more attention to your nonverbal expressions more than your words. As a result, nonverbal communication is a powerful way to contribute to (or detract from) your success in communicating your message to the group.

Nonverbal Communication Is Fast

Let's pretend you are at your computer at work. You see that an e-mail has arrived, but you are right in the middle of tallying a spreadsheet whose numbers just don't add up. You see that the e-mail is from a co-worker and you click on it. The subject line reads "pink slips." You could interpret this to mean a suggestion for a Halloween costume, or a challenge to race for each other's car ownership, but in the context of the workplace you may assume it means layoffs.

Your emotional response is immediate. If the author of the e-mail could see your face, they would know that your response was one of disbelief and frustration,

even anger, all via your nonverbal communication. Yes, when a tree falls in the forest it makes a sound, even if no one is there to hear it. In the same way, you express yourself via nonverbal communication all the time without much conscious thought at all. You may think about how to share the news with your partner, and try to display a smile and a sense of calm when you feel like anything but smiling.

Nonverbal communication gives our thoughts and feelings away before we are even aware of what we are thinking or how we feel. People may see and hear more than you ever anticipated. Your nonverbal communication includes both intentional and unintentional messages, but since it all happens so fast, the unintentional ones can contradict what you know you are supposed to say or how you are supposed to react.

Nonverbal Communication Can Add to or Replace Verbal Communication

People tend to pay more attention to how you say it than what you actually say. In presenting a speech this is particularly true. We communicate nonverbally more than we engage in verbal communication, and often use nonverbal expressions to add to, or even replace, words we might otherwise say. We use a nonverbal gesture called an *illustrator* to communicate our message effectively and reinforce our point. Your co-worker Andrew may ask you about "Barney's Bar after work?" as he walks by, and you simply nod and say "yeah." Andrew may

respond with a nonverbal gesture, called an *emblem*, by signaling with the "OK" sign as he walks away.

In addition to illustrators or emblematic nonverbal communication, we also use regulators. "*Regulators* are nonverbal messages which control, maintain or discourage interaction."McLean, S. (2003). The basics of speech communication. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. For example, if someone is telling you a message that is confusing or upsetting, you may hold up your hand, a commonly recognized regulator that asks the current speaker in a group to stop talking.

Let's say you are in a meeting presenting a speech that introduces your company's latest product. If your group members nod their heads in agreement on important points and maintain good eye contact, it is a good sign. Nonverbally, they are using regulators encouraging you to continue with your presentation. In contrast, if they look away, tap their feet, and begin drawing in the margins of their notebook, these are regulators suggesting that you had better think of a way to regain their interest or else wrap up your presentation quickly.

"*Affect displays* are nonverbal communication that express emotions or feelings."McLean, S. (2003). The basics of speech communication. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. pp.77 An affect display that might accompany holding up your hand for silence would be to frown and shake your head from side to side. When you and Andrew are at Barney's Bar, smiling and waving at co-workers who arrive lets them know where you are seated and welcomes them.

"*Adaptors* are displays of nonverbal communication that help you adapt to your environment and each context, helping you feel comfortable and secure."McLean, S. (2003). The basics of speech communication. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. pp.77 A *self-adaptor* involves you meeting your need for security, by playing with your hair for example, by adapting something about yourself in way for which it was not designed or for no apparent purpose. Combing your hair would be an example of a purposeful action, unlike a self-adaptive behavior. An *object-adaptor* involves the use of an object in a way for which it was not designed. You may see group members tapping their pencils, chewing on them, or playing with them, while ignoring you and your presentation. Or perhaps someone pulls out a comb and repeatedly rubs a thumbnail against the comb's teeth. They are using the comb or the pencil in a way other than its intended design, an object-adaptor that communicates a lack of engagement or enthusiasm in your speech.

Intentional nonverbal communication can complement, repeat, replace, mask or contradict what we say. When Andrew invited you to Barney's, you said "yeah" and nodded, complementing and repeating the message. You could have simply nodded, effectively replacing the "yes" with a nonverbal response. You could also have decided to say no, but did not want to hurt Andrew's feelings. Shaking your head "no" while pointing to your watch, communicating work and time issues, may mask your real thoughts or feelings. Masking involves the substitution of appropriate nonverbal communication for nonverbal communication you may want to display.McLean, S. (2003). The basics of speech communication. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. pp.77 Finally, nonverbal messages that conflict with verbal

communication can confuse the listener. The table below, "Some Nonverbal Expressions," summarizes these concepts.

Adaptors	Help us feel comfortable or indicate emotions or moods
Affect displays	Express emotions or feelings
Complementing	Reinforcing verbal communication
Contradicting	Contradicting verbal communication
Emblems	Nonverbal gestures that carry a specific meaning, and can replace or reinforce words
Illustrators	Reinforce a verbal message
Masking	Substituting more appropriate displays for less appropriate displays
Object-adaptors	Using an object for a purpose other than its intended design
Regulators	Control, encourage or discourage interaction
Repeating	Repeating verbal communication
Replacing	Replacing verbal communication
Self-adaptors	Adapting something about yourself in a way for which it was not designed or for no apparent purpose

Table 4.3 Some Nonverbal Expressions

Nonverbal Communication Is Universal

Consider the many contexts in which interaction occurs during your day. In the morning, at work, after work, at home, with friends, with family, and our list could go on for quite awhile. Now consider the differences in nonverbal communication across these many contexts. When you are at work, do you jump up and down and say whatever you want? Why or why not? You may not engage in that behavior because of expectations at work, but the fact remains that from the

moment you wake until you sleep, you are surrounded by nonverbal communication.

If you had been born in a different country, to different parents, perhaps even as a member of the opposite sex, your whole world would be quite different. Yet nonverbal communication would remain a universal constant. It may not look the same, or get used in the same way, but it will still be nonverbal communication in its many functions and displays.

Nonverbal Communication Is Confusing and Contextual

Nonverbal communication can be confusing. We need contextual clues to help us understand, or begin to understand, what a movement, gesture, or lack of display means. Then we have to figure it all out based on our prior knowledge (or lack thereof) of the person and hope to get it right. Talk about a challenge. Nonverbal communication is everywhere, and we all use it, but that doesn't make it simple or independent of when, where, why, or how we communicate.

Nonverbal Communication Can Be Intentional or Unintentional

Suppose you are working as a salesclerk in a retail store, and a customer communicated frustration to you. Would the nonverbal aspects of your response be intentional or unintentional? Your job is to be pleasant and courteous at all times, yet your wrinkled eyebrows or wide eyes may have been unintentional. They clearly communicate your negative feelings at that moment. Restating your

wish to be helpful and displaying nonverbal gestures may communicate "No big deal," but the stress of the moment is still "written" on your face.

Can we tell when people are intentionally or unintentionally communicating nonverbally? Ask ten people this question and compare their responses. You may be surprised. It is clearly a challenge to understand nonverbal communication in action. We often assign intentional motives to nonverbal communication when in fact their display is unintentional, and often hard to interpret.

Nonverbal Messages Communicate Feelings and Attitudes

Beebe, Beebe and RedmondBeebe, S., Beebe, S., & Redmond, M. (2002). *Interpersonal communication relating to others* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. offer us three additional principals of interpersonal nonverbal communication that serve our discussion. One is that you often react faster than you think. Your nonverbal responses communicate your initial reaction before you can process it through language or formulate an appropriate response. If your appropriate, spoken response doesn't match your nonverbal reaction, you may give away your true feelings and attitudes.

Albert MehrabianMehrabian, A. (1972). *Nonverbal communication*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Atherton. asserts that we rarely communicate emotional messages through the spoken word. According to Mehrabian, 93% of the time we communicate our emotions nonverbally, with at least 55% associated with facial

gestures. Vocal cues, body position and movement, and normative space between group members can also be clues to feelings and attitudes.

Is your first emotional response always an accurate and true representation of your feelings and attitudes, or does your emotional response change across time? We are all changing all the time, and sometimes a moment of frustration or a flash of anger can signal to the receiver a feeling or emotion that existed for a moment, but has since passed. Their response to your communication will be based on that perception, even though you might already be over the issue. This is where the spoken word serves us well. You may need to articulate clearly that you were frustrated, but not anymore. The words spoken out loud can serve to clarify and invite additional discussion.

We Believe Nonverbal Communication More Than Verbal

Building on the example of responding to a situation with facial gestures associated with frustration before you even have time to think of an appropriate verbal response, let's ask the question: What would you believe, someone's actions or their words? According to Seiler and Beall,Seiler, W., & Beall, M. (2000). *Communication: making connections* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. most people tend to believe the nonverbal message over the verbal message. People will often answer "actions speak louder than words" and place a disproportionate emphasis on the nonverbal response. Humans aren't logical all the time, and they do experience feelings and attitudes that change. Still, we place more confidence in nonverbal communication, particularly when it comes to

lying behaviors. According to Zuckerman, DePaulo and Rosenthal, there are several behaviors people often display when they are being deceptive:Zuckerman, M., DePaulo, D., & Rosenthal, R. (1981). Verbal and nonverbal communication of deception. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 14*, 1–59.

- reduction in eye contact while engaged in a conversation
- awkward pauses in conversation
- higher pitch in voice
- deliberate pronunciation and articulation of words
- increased delay in response time to a question
- increased body movements like changes in posture
- decreased smiling
- decreased rate of speech

If you notice one of more of the behaviors, you may want to take a closer look. Over time we learn people's patterns of speech and behavior, and form a set of expectations. Variation from their established patterns, combined with the clues above, can serve to alert you to the possibility that something deserves closer attention.

Our nonverbal responses have a connection to our physiological responses to stress, such as heart rate, blood pressure, and skin conductivity. Polygraph machines (popularly referred to as "lie detectors") focus on these physiological responses and demonstrate anomalies, or variations. While movies and TV crime

shows may make polygraphs look foolproof, there is significant debate about whether they measure dishonesty with any degree of accuracy.

Can you train yourself to detect lies? It is unlikely. Our purpose in studying nonverbal communication is not to uncover dishonesty in others, but rather to help you understand how to use the nonverbal aspects of communication to increase understanding.

Nonverbal Communication Is Key in the Group Member Relationship

When we first see each other, before anyone says a word, we are already sizing each other up. Within the first few seconds we have made judgments about each other based on what we wear, our physical characteristics, even our posture. Are these judgments accurate? That is hard to know without context, but we can say that nonverbal communication certainly affects first impressions, for better or worse. When group members first meet, nonverbal communication in terms of space, dress and even personal characteristics can contribute to assumed expectations. The expectations might not be accurate or even fair, but it is important to recognize that they will be present. There is truth in the saying, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." Since beginnings are fragile times, your attention to aspects you can control, both verbal and nonverbal, will help contribute to the first step of forming a relationship with your group. Your eye contact with group members, use of space, and degree of formality will continue to contribute to that relationship.

As a professional, your nonverbal communication is part of the message and can contribute to, or detract from, your overall goals. By being aware of them, you can learn to control them.

Key Takeaways

- Nonverbal communication is the process of conveying a message without the use of words; it relates to the dynamic process of communication, the perception process and listening, and verbal communication.
- Nonverbal communication is fluid and fast, universal, confusing and contextual. It can add to or replace verbal communication, and can be intentional or unintentional.
- Nonverbal communication communicates feelings and attitudes, and people tend to believe nonverbal messages more than verbal ones.

Exercises

1. Does it limit or enhance our understanding of communication to view nonverbal communication as that which is not verbal communication? Explain your answer and discuss with the class.
2. Choose a television personality you admire. What do you like about this person? Watch several minutes of this person with the sound turned off, and make notes of the nonverbal expressions you observe. Turn the sound back on and make notes of their tone of voice, timing, and other audible expressions. Discuss your results with a classmate.

3. Find a program that focuses on micro-expressions and write a brief summary of how they play a role in the program. Share and compare with classmates.

4. Create a survey that addresses the issue of which people trust more, nonverbal or verbal messages. Ask an equal number of men and women, and compare your results with those of your classmates.

5. Search for information on the reliability and admissibility of results from polygraph ("lie detector") tests. Share your findings with classmates.

6. See how long and how much you can get done during the day without the use of verbal messages.

4.5 Types of Nonverbal Communication

Learning Objective

1. Describe the similarities and differences among eight general types of nonverbal communication.

Now that we have discussed the general principles that apply to nonverbal communication, let's examine eight types of nonverbal communication to further understand this challenging aspect of communication:

1. space

2. time

3. physical characteristics

4. body movements

5. touch

6. paralanguage

7. artifacts

8. environment

Space

When we discuss space in a nonverbal context, we mean the space between objects and people. Space is often associated with social rank and is an important part of group communication. Who gets the corner office? Why is the head of the table important and who gets to sit there?

People from diverse cultures may have different normative space expectations. If you are from a large urban area, having people stand close to you may be normal. If you are from a rural area, or a culture where people expect more space, someone may be standing "too close" for comfort and not know it.

Edward T. Hall,Hall, E. T. (1963). Proxemics: the study of man's spacial relations and boundaries. In *Man's image in medicine and anthropology* (pp. 422–445). New York, NY: International Universities Press. serving in the European and South Pacific Regions in the Corps of Engineers during World War II, traveled around the globe. As he moved from one place to another, he noticed that people in different countries kept different distances from each other. In France, they stood closer to each other than they did in England. Hall wondered why that was

and began to study what he called *proxemics*, or the study of the human use of space and distance in communication.

In *The Hidden Dimension*, he indicated there are two main aspects of space: territory and personal space. Hall drew on anthropology to address the concepts of dominance and submission, and noted that the more powerful person often claims more space. This plays an important role in modern society, from who gets the corner office to how we negotiate space between vehicles. Road rage is increasingly common where overcrowding occurs, and as more vehicles occupy the same roads, tensions over space are predictable.

Territory is related to control. As a way of establishing control over your own room, maybe you painted it your favorite color, or put up posters that represent your interests or things you consider unique about yourself. Families or households often mark their space by putting up fences or walls around their houses. This sense of a right to control your space is implicit in territory. *Territory* means the space you claim as your own, are responsible for, or are willing to defend.

The second aspect Hall highlight is *personal space*, or the "bubble" of space surrounding each individual. As you walk down a flight of stairs, which side do you choose? We may choose the right side because we've learned that is what is expected, and people coming up the same stair choose their right, or your left. The right choice insures that personal space is not compromised. But what happens when some comes up the wrong side? They violate the understood

rules of movement and often self-correct. But what happens if they don't change lanes as people move up and down the stairs? They may get dirty looks or even get bumped as people in the crowd handle the invasion of "their" space. There are no lane markers, and bubbles of space around each person move with them, allowing for the possibility of collision.

We recognize the basic need for personal space, but the normative expectations for space vary greatly by culture. You may perceive that in your home people sleep one to each bed, but in many cultures people sleep two or more to a bed and it is considered normal. If you were to share that bed you might feel uncomfortable, while someone raised with group sleeping norms might feel uncomfortable sleeping alone. From where you stand in an aerobics class in relation to others, to where you place your book bag in class, your personal expectations of space are often at variance with others.

As the context of a staircase has norms for nonverbal behavior, so do group interactions. In North America, eye contact is expected. Big movements and gestures are not generally expected and can be distracting. The speaking group member occupies a space on the "stage," when they have the "floor" (or it is their turn to speak), even if there are co-workers on either side. When you occupy that space, the group will expect to behave in certain ways. If you talk to the laptop screen in front of you, the group may perceive that you are not really paying attention to them. They also might think you need to read your own report, a less than confident position. Group members are expected to pay attention to, and interact with, each other, even if in the feedback is primarily nonverbal. Your

movements should coordinate to tone, rhythm, and content of your message. Tapping your pen, keeping your hands in your pockets or your arms crossed may communicate nervousness, or even defensiveness, and detract from your message.

As a general rule, try to act naturally, as if you were telling a friend a story, and your body will relax and your nonverbal gestures will come more naturally. Practice is key to your level of comfort, and the more practice you get, the more comfortable and less intimidating it will seem to you.
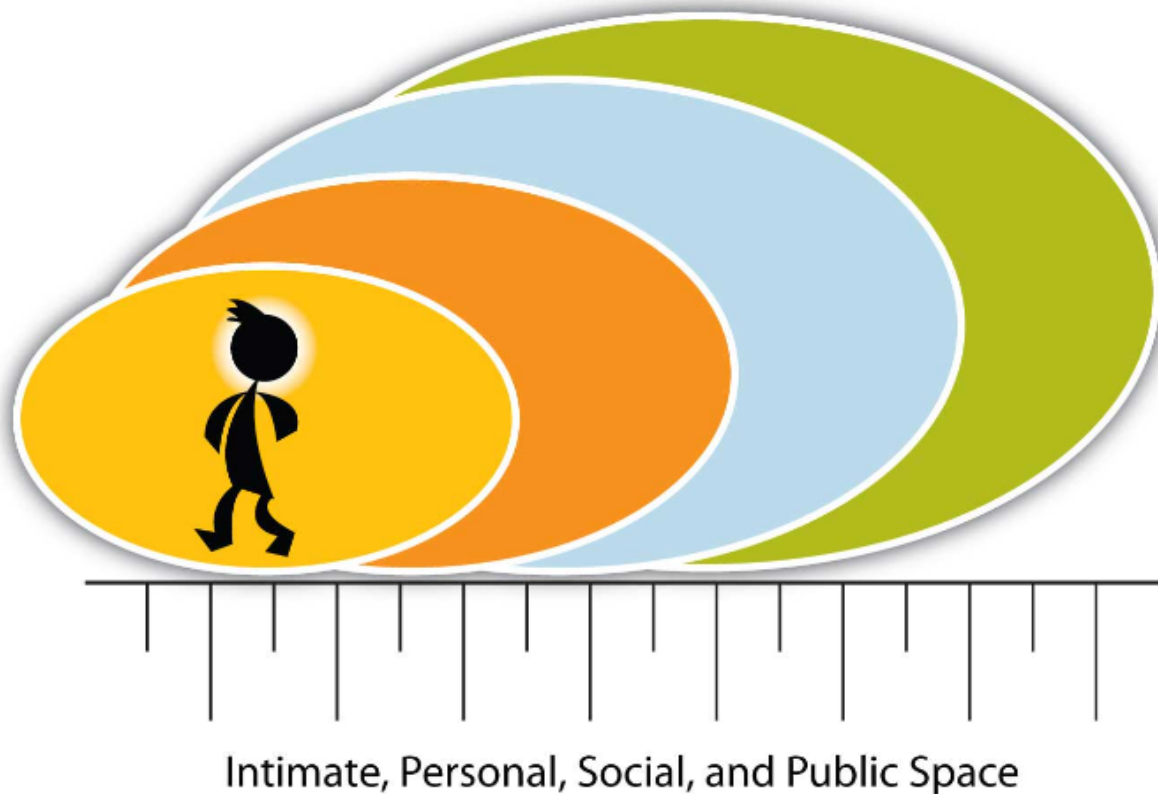

Figure: SPACE

Hall [Hall, E. (1966). *The hidden dimension.* N.Y., NY: Doubleday.] articulated four main categories of distance used in communication.

Time

Do you know what time it is? How aware you are of time varies by culture and normative expectations of adherence (or ignorance) of time. Some people, and the communities and cultures they represent, are very time-oriented. The Eurorail Trains in Germany are famous for departing and arriving according to the schedule. In contrast, if you take the train in Argentina and you'll find that the schedule is more of an approximation of when the train will leave or arrive.

"Time is money" is a common saying across many cultures, and reveals a high value for time. In social contexts it often reveals social status and power. Who are you willing to wait for? A doctor for an office visit when you are sick? A potential employer for a job interview? Your significant other, or children? Sometimes we get impatient, and our impatience underscores our value for time.

When you give a presentation to your team or group, does your group have to wait for you? Time is a relevant factor of the communication process in your speech. The best way to show your group respect is to honor the time expectation associated with your speech. Always try to stop speaking before the group stops listening; if the members perceive that you have "gone over time," they will be less willing to listen. This in turn will have a negative impact on your ability to communicate your message.

Suppose you are presenting a speech to your team that has three main points. Your group will look to you to regulate the time and attention to each point, but if you spend all your time on the first two points and rush through the third, your

presentation won't be balanced and will lose rhythm. The speaker occupies a position of some power, but it is the group that gives them that position. Your team is counting on you to make a difference, and to not waste their time. By displaying respect and maintaining balance, you will move through your points more effectively.

Chronemics is the study of how we refer to and perceive time. Tom Bruneau at Radford University has spent a lifetime investigating how time interacts in communication and culture.Bruneau, T. (1974). Time and nonverbal communication. *Journal of Poplular Culture* , *8*, 658–666.Bruneau, T. (1990). Chronemics: the study of time in human interaction. In J. DeVito, & M. Hecht (Eds.), *The nonverbal reader* (pp. 301–311). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland press.Bruneau, T., & Ishii, S. (1988). Communicative silence: east and west. *World Communication, 17*, 1–33. As he notes, across western society, time is often considered the equivalent of money. The value of speed is highly prized in some societies.Schwartz, T. (1989, January/February). Acceleration syndrome: does everyone live in the fast lane? *Utne Reader*, 36–43. In others, there is a great respect for slowing down and taking a long-term view of time.

When you order a meal at a "fast food" restaurant, what are your expectations for how long you will have to wait? When you order a pizza online for delivery, when do you expect it will arrive? If you order cable service for your home, when do you expect it might be delivered? In the first case you might measure the delivery of a hamburger in a matter of seconds or minutes, and perhaps 30 minutes for pizza delivery, but you may measure the time from your order to working cable in

days or even weeks. You may even have to be at your home from 8 A.M. to noon waiting for its installation. The expectations vary by context, and we often grow frustrated in a time-sensitive culture when the delivery does not match our expectations.

In the same way, how long should it take to respond to a customer's request for assistance or information? If they call on the phone, how long should they wait on hold? How soon should they expect a response to an e-mail? As a skilled group communicator, you will know to anticipate normative expectations and do your best to meet those expectations more quickly than anticipated. Your prompt reply or offer of help in response to a request, even if you cannot solve the issue on the spot, is often regarded positively, contributing to the formation of positive communication interactions.

Physical Characteristics

You didn't choose your birth, your eye color, the natural color of your hair, or your height, but people spend millions every year trying to change their physical characteristics. You can get colored contacts, dye your hair, and, if you are shorter than you'd like to be, buy shoes to raise your stature a couple of inches. You won't be able to change your birth, and no matter how much you stoop to appear shorter, you won't change your height until time and age gradually makes itself apparent. If you are tall, you might find the correct shoe size, pant length, or even the length of mattress a challenge, but there are rewards. Have you ever heard that taller people get paid more?Burnham, T., & Phelan, J. (2000). *Mean*

genes: from sex to money to food: taming our primal instincts. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing. There is some truth to that idea. There is also some truth to the notion that people prefer symmetrical faces (where both sides are equal) over asymmetrical faces (with unequal sides; like a crooked nose or having one eye or ear slightly higher than the other). Burnham, T., & Phelan, J. (2000). *Mean genes: from sex to money to food: taming our primal instincts*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.

We often make judgments about a person's personality or behavior based on physical characteristics, and researchers are quick to note those judgments are often inaccurate.Wells, W., & Siegel, B. (1961). Stereotypes somatypes. *Psychological Reports, 8*, 77–78.,Cash, T., & Kilcullen, R. (1985). The eye of the beholder: susceptibility to sexism and beautyism in the evaluation of managerial applicants. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 15*, 591–605. Regardless of your eye or hair color, or even how tall you are, being comfortable with yourself is an important part of your presentation. Act naturally and consider aspects of your presentation you can control in order to maximize a positive image for the group or team.

Body Movements

The study of body movements, called *kinesics*, is key to understanding nonverbal communication. Since your actions will significantly contribute to the effectiveness of your group interactions, let's examine four distinct ways body movements that complement, repeat, regulate, or replace your verbal messages.

Body movements can complement the verbal message by reinforcing the main idea. For example, you may be providing an orientation presentation to a customer about a software program. As you say, "Click on this tab," you may also initiate that action. Your verbal and nonverbal messages reinforce, or complement, each other. You can also reinforce the message by repeating it. If you first say "Click on the tab," and then motion with your hand to the right, indicating that the customer should move the cursor arrow with the mouse to the tab, your repetition can help the listener understand the message.

In addition to repeating your message, body movements can also regulate conversations. Nodding your head to indicate that you are listening may encourage the customer to continue asking questions. Holding your hand up, palm out, may signal them to stop and provide a pause where you can start to answer.

Body movements also substitute or replace verbal messages. Ekman and FriesenEkman, P., & Friesen, W. (1967). Head and body cures in the judgment of emotions: a reformulation. *Perceptual and Motor Skills, 24*, 711–724. found facial features communicate to others our feelings, but our body movements often reveal how intensely we experience those feelings. For example, if the customer makes a face of frustration while trying to use the software program, they may need assistance. If they push away from the computer and separate themselves physically from interacting with it, they may be extremely frustrated. Learning to gauge feelings and their intensity as expressed by customers takes time and

patience, and your attention to them will improve your ability to facilitate positive interactions.

Touch

Touch in communication interaction is called *haptics*, and Seiler and BeallSeiler, W., & Beall, M. (2000). *Communication: making connections* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. identify five distinct types of touch, from impersonal to intimate, as listed in the table below titled "Types of Touch".

1. Functional-professional touch	Medical examination, physical therapy, sports coach, music teacher
2. Social-polite touch	Handshake
3. Friendship-warmth touch	Hug
4. Love-intimacy touch	Kiss between family members or romantic partners
5. Sexual-arousal touch	Sexual caressing and intercourse

Table: Types of Touch

Before giving your presentation, you may interact with people by shaking hands and making casual conversation. This interaction can help establish trust before you take the stage. While speaking in groups we do not often touch people on the team, but we do interact with visual aids, our note cards, and other objects. How we handle them can communicate our comfort level. It's always a good idea to practice using the technology, visual aids or note cards we'll use in a speech in a practice setting. Using the technology correctly by clicking the right button on

the mouse or pressing the right switch on the overhead project can contribute to, or detract from, your credibility.

Paralanguage

Paralanguage is the exception to the definition of nonverbal communication. You may recall that we defined nonverbal communication as not involving words, but paralanguage exists when we are speaking, using words. *Paralanguage* involves verbal and nonverbal aspects of speech that influence meaning, including tone, intensity, pausing, and even silence.

Perhaps you've also heard of a *pregnant pause*, a silence between verbal messages that is full of meaning. The meaning itself may be hard to understand or decipher, but it is there nonetheless. For example, your co-worker Jan comes back from a sales meeting speechless with a ghost-white complexion. You may ask if the meeting went all right. "Well, ahh…" may be the only response you get. The pause speaks volumes. Something happened, though you may not know what. It could be personal if Jan's report was not well received, or it could be more systemic, like the news that sales figures are off by 40% and pink slips may not be far behind.

Silence or vocal pauses can communicate hesitation, indicate the need to gather thought, or serve as a sign of respect. Keith Basso Basso, K. A. (1970). To give up on words: silence in western Apache culture. In *Cultural communication and intercultural contact* (pp. 301–318). Hillsdale, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum. quotes an

anonymous source as stating, "it is not the case that a man who is silent says nothing." Sometimes we learn just as much, or even more, from what a person does not say as what they do say. In addition, both Basso and Susan Philips Philips, S. (1983). *The invisible culture: communication in the classroom and community on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation*. Chicago, IL: Waveland Press. found that traditional speech among Native Americans places a special emphasis on silence.

Artifacts

Do you cover your tattoos when you are at work? Do you know someone who does? Or perhaps you know someone who has a tattoo and does not need to cover it up on their job? Expectations vary a great deal, but body art or tattoos are still controversial in the workplace. According to the *San Diego Union-Tribune*:Kinsman, M. (2001, August 20). Tattoos and nose rings. *San Diego Union-Tribune*, p. C1.

- 20% of workers indicated their body art had been held against them on the job.
- 42% of employers said the presence of visible body art lowered their opinion of workers.
- 44% of managers surveyed have body art.
- 52% of workers surveyed have body art.

- 67% of workers who have body art or piercings cover or remove them during work hours.

In your line of work, a tattoo might be an important visual aid, or might detract from your effectiveness. Piercings may express individuality, but you need to consider how they will be interpreted by employers and customers.

Artifacts are forms of decorative ornamentation that are chosen to represent self-concept. They can include rings and tattoos, but may also include brand names and logos. From clothes to cars, watches, briefcases, purses, and even eyeglasses, what we choose to surround ourselves with communicates something about our sense of self. They may project gender, role or position, class or status, personality and group membership or affiliation. Paying attention to a customer's artifacts can give you a sense of the self they want to communicate, and may allow you to more accurately adapt your message to meet their needs.

Environment

Environment involves the physical and psychological aspects of the communication context. More than the tables and chairs in an office, environment is an important part of the dynamic communication process. The perception of one's environment influences one's reaction to it. For example, Google is famous for its work environment, with spaces created for physical activity and even in-house food service around the clock. The expense is no doubt considerable,

but Google's actions speak volumes. The results produced in the environment, designed to facilitate creativity, interaction, and collaboration, are worth the effort.

Key Takeaway

- Nonverbal communication can be categorized into eight types: space, time, physical characteristics, body movements, touch, paralanguage, artifacts, and environment.

Exercises

1. Do a www.google.com search on space and culture. Share your findings with your classmates.
2. Note where people sit on the first day of class, and each class session thereafter. Do students return to the same seat? If they do not attend class, do the classmates leave their seat vacant? Compare your results.
3. What kind of value do you have for time? And what is truly important to you? Make a list of what you spend your time on, and what you value most. Do the lists match? Are you spending time on what is truly important to you? Relationships take time, and if you want them to succeed in a personal or business context you have to make them a priority.
4. To what degree is time a relevant factor in communication in the information age? Give some examples. Discuss your ideas with a classmate.
5. How many people do you know who have chosen tattoos or piercings as a representation of self and statement of individuality? Survey your friends and share your findings with your classmates.

4.6 Summary

In this chapter we have defined language as a code that has rules of syntax, semantics, and context. We have examined how language influences our perception of the world and the verbal principles of communication. We have seen that a message has several parts and can be interpreted on different levels. Building on each of these principles, we examined how cliché, jargon, slang, sexist and racist language, euphemisms, and doublespeak can all be impediments to successful communication. We discussed four strategies for giving emphasis to your message: visuals, signposts, internal summaries and foreshadowing, and repetition. Finally, we discussed six ways to improve communication: defining your terms, choosing precise words, considering your group, controlling your tone, checking for understanding, and focusing on results.

Review Questions

1. Interpretive Questions
    1. From your viewpoint, how do you think that thought influences the use of language?
    2. Is there ever a justifiable use for doublespeak? Why or why not? Explain your response and give some examples.
    3. What is meant by *conditioned* in the phrase "people in Western cultures do not realize the extent to which their racial attitudes have been conditioned since early childhood by the power of words to ennoble or condemn, augment or detract, glorify or

demean?"Moore, R. (2003). *Racism in the English language*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

2. Application Questions

    1. How does language change over time? Interview someone older than you, and younger than you, and identify words that have changed. Pay special attention to jargon and slang words.

    2. How does language affect self-concept? Explore and research your answer, finding examples which serve can as case studies.

    3. Can people readily identify the barriers to communication? Survey ten individuals and see if they accurately identify at least one barrier, even if they use a different term or word.

Additional Resources

Benjamin Lee Whorf was one of the 20th century's foremost linguists. Learn more about his theories of speech behavior by visiting this site. http://grail.cba.csuohio.edu/~somos/whorf.html

Visit InfoPlease to learn more about the eminent linguist (and U.S. senator) S. I. Hayakawa. http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0880739.html

Reference.com offers a wealth of definitions, synonym finders, and other guides to choosing the right words. http://dictionary.reference.com/

Visit Goodreads and learn about one of the best word usage guides, Bryan Garner's *Modern American Usage*. http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/344643.Garner_s_Modern_American_Usage

Visit Goodreads and learn about one of the most widely used style manuals, the *Chicago Manual of Style*. http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/103362.The_Chicago_Manual_of_Style

The "I Have a Dream" speech by Martin Luther King Jr. is one of the most famous speeches of all time. View it on video and read the text. http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihaveadream.htm

To learn more about being results oriented, visit the web site of Stephen Covey, author of the best seller *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. https://www.stephencovey.com/

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Chapter 5: Managing Conflict in Teams

I exhort you also to take part in the great combat, which is the combat of life, and greater than every other earthly conflict.

Plato

Introduction

In this chapter, we'll explore the nature, leadership implications, and prevalence of an enduring human reality: conflict in groups. We'll also consider a variety of styles whereby people can engage in conflict and review some strategies for managing conflict effectively. You will learn how to deal with conflict in the workplace and how to create and implement a crisis communication plan.

5.1 What Is Conflict?

Learning Objectives

1. Define conflict.
2. Identify five subjects of conflict in groups.
3. Acknowledge four major dangers of group conflict.

My athletes are always willing to accept my advice as long as it

doesn't conflict with their views.

Lou Holtz (college and professional football coach)

Most people probably regard conflict as something to avoid, or at least not something we go looking for. Still, we'd all agree that it's a familiar, perennial, and powerful part of human interaction. For these reasons, we need to know what it is, how to identify it, what it may deal with, and what damage it may cause if it isn't handled wisely.

Definitions of Conflict

Hocker & Wilmot (2001)Hocker, J.L., & Wilmot, W.W. (2001). *Interpersonal conflict* (6th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. defined _conflict_ as an expressed struggle between interdependent parties over goals which they perceive as

incompatible or resources which they perceive to be insufficient. Let's examine the ingredients in their definition.

First of all, conflict must be expressed. If two members of a group dislike each other or disagree with each other's viewpoints but never show those sentiments, there's no conflict.

Second, conflict takes place between or among parties who are interdependent—that is, who need each other to accomplish something. If they can get what they want without each other, they may differ in how they do so, but they won't come into conflict.

Finally, conflict involves clashes over what people want or over the means for them to achieve it. Party A wants X, whereas party B wants Y. If they either can't both have what they want at all, or they can't each have what they want to the degree that they would prefer to, conflict will arise.

When it came to Lou Holtz and the players on his football teams, it's obvious that Holtz's views of who should take the field and what plays should be run were not always the same as his players'. In a football game it's possible to attempt a pass or to execute a run, for instance, but not both on the same play. In this kind of situation, conflict is inevitable and is probably going to be constant.

Consider the case, likewise, of a small group assigned to complete a project in a biology class. One student in the group, Robin, may be a political science major with a new baby at home to attend to. Robin may be taking the course as an

elective and want to devote as little time as possible to the project so as to be able to spend family time. Another member of the group, Terry, may be on the pre-med track and feel strong curiosity about the topic of the presentation. If Terry is determined to create a product which earns a high grade and helps get the professor's recommendation for a summer research internship, then Robin and Terry will experience conflict over how, when, or how hard to work on their project.

As any conflict takes shape, each person brings a combination of perceptions, emotions, and behavior to bear on it. This combination will evolve and change with time, depending on how people interact with each other and with the forces in their environment.

We can't stop perceiving things in our surroundings. How we perceive others—whether positively or negatively—influences both how we feel about them and how we behave toward them, and *vice versa*. The perceptions we experience of ourselves and of others affect our emotional states, which in turn create new perceptions in those around us.

At the beginning of the biology course we just mentioned, Robin may perceive Terry as intelligent and as someone who can pull most of the weight in their class project. Robin may compliment and praise Terry at this point, and Terry may glow with the satisfaction of being appreciated. Their mutual perceptions are then positive, and their emotional state is favorable.

When the first deadline in the project comes along and the portion of the group's work assigned to Robin turns out to be mediocre, however, things will probably change. Terry is apt to start perceiving Robin as a laggard and as a threat to Terry's own ambitions for the class and beyond. Robin, meanwhile, may feel angry and resist Terry's pressure to put more energy into the remainder of their assigned work.

Subjects of Conflict

Beyond the setting of the biology class we've described, group conflicts may deal with many topics, needs, and elements. Marylin KellyKelly, M.S. (2006). *Communication @ work: Ethical, effective, and expressive communication in the workplace*. Boston: Pearson. identified the following five subjects of conflict:

First, there are *conflicts of substance*. These conflicts, which relate to questions about what choices to make in a given situation, rest on differing views of the facts. If Terry thinks the biology assignment requires an annotated bibliography but Robin believes a simple list of readings will suffice, they're in a conflict of substance. Another term for this kind of conflict is "intrinsic conflict."

Conflicts of value are those in which various parties either hold totally different values or rank the same values in a significantly different order. The famous sociologist Milton RokeachRokeach, M. (1979). *Understanding human values: Individual and societal.* New York: The Free Press., for instance, found that freedom and equality constitute values in the four major political systems of the past 100 years—communism, fascism, socialism, and capitalism. What

differentiated the systems, however, was the degree to which proponents of each system ranked those two key values. According to Rokeach's analysis, socialism holds both values highly; fascism holds them in low regard; communism values equality over freedom, and capitalism values freedom over equality. As we all know, conflict among proponents of these four political systems preoccupied people and governments for the better part of the twentieth century.

Conflicts of process arise when people differ over how to reach goals or pursue values which they share. How closely should they stick to rules and timelines, for instance, and when should they let their hair down and simply brainstorm new ideas? What about when multiple topics and challenges are intertwined; how and when should the group deal with each one? Another term for these disputes is "task conflicts."

Conflicts of misperceived differences come up when people interpret each other's actions or emotions erroneously. You can probably think of several times in your life when you first thought you disagreed with other people but later found out that you'd just misunderstood something they said and that you actually shared a perspective with them. Or perhaps you attributed a different motive to them than what really underlay their actions. One misconception about conflict, however, is that it always arises from misunderstandings. This isn't the case, however. Robert Doolittle Doolittle, R.J. (1976). *Orientations to communication and conflict.* Chicago: Science Research Associates. noted that "some of the most serious conflicts occur among individuals and groups who understand each other very well but who strongly disagree."

The first four kinds of conflict may interact with each other over time, either reinforcing or weakening each other's impact. They may also ebb and flow according to the topics and conditions a group confronts. Even if they're dealt with well, however, further emotional and personal kinds of conflict can occur in a group. *Relationship conflicts*, also known as personality clashes, often involve people's egos and sense of self-worth. Relationship conflicts tend to be particularly difficult to cope with, since they frequently aren't admitted for what they are. Many times, they arise in a struggle for superiority or status.

Dangers of Conflict

As we'll see later in this chapter, conflict is a normal component of group interaction and can actually be beneficial if it is identified accurately and controlled properly. It can also be dangerous, however, in several major ways. Galanes & Adams Galanes, G., & Adams, K. (2013). *Effective group discussion: Theory and practice.* New York: McGraw-Hill. identified three such ways.

The first danger is that individual group members may feel bad. Even when everyone's intentions are good and they intend to be constructively critical, people who receive negative comments about their ideas or behavior may take those comments personally. If the people feel demeaned or mistreated, their level of trust in other members will probably dwindle.

The second danger is an outgrowth of the first. It is that the cohesiveness of the group can be diminished if its members have to nurse hurt feelings that have arisen through conflict. At the very least, someone who has to wonder whether

he or she has the respect of someone else in the group may spend time mulling that question which could otherwise be used to contribute to the group's work.

The third danger is that conflict can actually split a group apart. Although inertia can sustain a group for long periods of time if no threats or disruptions occur, intense conflict can cause members to decide to invest their energy somewhere else. Relationship conflicts, in particular, may lead to all kinds of unhelpful behavior: rumor-mongering; power plays; backing out on promises; playing favorites; ignoring problems or appeals for help; insulting others; innuendo; backstabbing; or dismissing suggestions without considering them seriously. You're probably aware of at least a few groups and organizations whose origins were encouraging but which eventually disintegrated because of internal conflict.

A fourth danger is that conflict can deteriorate into physical violence. Some people in the heat of a conflict may forget this saying, which has been attributed to Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.: "The right to swing my fist ends where the other man's nose begins."

In 1997, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. (1997). Violence in the workplace. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/. reported that more than one million workplace assaults occurred in the United States annually. More recent statistics from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration Occupational Safety and Health Administration. (2012). Workplace violence. Retrieved from http://www.osha.gov/. suggest that twice that many workers may be subject to

violence each year; that 506 workplace homicides were committed in 2010; and that homicide is the leading cause of death for women in American workplaces.

Key Takeaway

■ Conflict, which is a struggle over goals or resources, may take many forms and lead to several kinds of harm if it is not skillfully dealt with.

Exercises

1. Find news on line of a conflict which erupted into violence. What factors in the situation do you feel contributed to that outcome?
2. Tell a fellow student about a values conflict you've experienced in a group. Describe how you concluded that the conflict dealt with values. Did the group make the same determination at the time?
3. Identify a personality clash you believe you have observed in a group. Write 4-6 pieces of advice you think might have helped each party to that conflict.
4. If a conflict has been brought about by a combination of incompatible goals and insufficient resources, what do you believe will happen if one of the two causes is eliminated? Give an example which substantiates your viewpoint.

5.2 Leadership and Conflict

Learning Objectives

1. Describe four roles that a leader might play with respect to conflict.
2. Assess the effectiveness of leadership behavior exhibited in an illustrative academic situation.

"The hope of the world is that wisdom can arrest conflict between brothers. I believe that war is the deadly harvest of arrogant and unreasoning minds."
Dwight Eisenhower

To lead a group successfully through conflict requires patience, good will, and determination. Robert BoltonBolton, R. (1979). *People skills: How to assert yourself, listen to others and resolve conflicts*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall noted that leaders with low levels of defensiveness tend to help people in their organizations avert unnecessary strife because they are able to focus on understanding and dealing with challenges rather than on saving face or overcoming resistance from others in their groups. Bolton also wrote that employing power judiciously, displaying charisma, and employing effective communication skills can positively affect the way conflict is handled. In this section we will examine four general roles a leader may adopt with respect to preparing for inevitable instances of conflict. We will also provide an example of how one leader adopted the fourth role in a conflict situation.

The Leader as Motivator

Just as it takes more than one person to create conflict, it generally requires more than a single individual to resolve it. A leader should, therefore, try somehow to cause other members of a group to identify benefits to themselves of engaging in productive rather than destructive conflict. Randy Komisar, a prominent Silicon Valley executive who has worked with companies such as

WebTV and TiVo and co-founded Claris Corporation, had this to say about the importance of this kind motivational role as his companies grew:

"I found that the art wasn't in getting the numbers to foot, or figuring out a clever way to move something down the assembly line. It was in getting somebody else to do that and to do it better than I could ever do, in encouraging people to exceed their own expectations; in inspiring people to be great; and in getting them to do it all together, in harmony. That was the high art."Komisar, R., & Lineback, K. (2000). *The monk and the riddle: The education of a Silicon Valley entrepreneur.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press. We'll talk later about specific strategies that leaders and other group members can employ to manage conflict by means of motivation and other strategies.

The Leader as Delegator

No leader, even the leader of a handful of other people in a small team, can handle all the challenges or do all the work of a group. In fact, you've probably encountered leaders throughout your life who either exhausted themselves or alienated other group members—or both!—because they tried to do just that. Beyond accepting the sheer impossibility of shouldering all of a group's work, a leader can attempt to prevent or manage conflict by judiciously by acting as a *delegator*, turning over responsibility for various tasks to others.

Warren Bennis, a pioneer in the field of leadership, wrote that such delegation is a vital component of the leader's role. When it is practiced skillfully, according to Bennis, delegation may confine conflicts to the levels at which they occur and

free the leader to conduct higher-level undertakings Bennis, W. (1997). *Why leaders can't lead.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

The Leader as "Structuralist"

Michael Thomas, a professor for many years at the University of Texas, served as a respected consultant to numerous businesses and educational institutions. As he went from group to group, he tackled their problems primarily by reviewing their organizational charts and tinkering with their structure. As an admired organizational theorist and *structuralist*, he believed that nearly any problem, tension, or conflict in a group could be solved structurallyProfessor emeritus Thomas, Jr., dies at 76. (2008, Nov 14). *US Fed News Service, Including US State News.* Retrieved from ProQuest Database.. How people behave, he said, is largely determined by where they sit in an organization and whom they report to and supervise. If Mike saw that people in two separate sections of a group were at odds, for instance, he would propose that the sections be consolidated so that both became responsible to the same supervisor. Mike certainly used further techniques in his consultant's role, but his emphasis on structural changes stands as one kind of advice for leaders who hope to lessen the damaging effects of conflict in their groups.

Realistic Conflict Theory, or Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RGCT), likewise stresses the importance for leaders of configuring subgroups within a larger group so that they are required to meet common goals. A classic study by social psychologist Muzafer SherifSherif, M., Harvey, O.J., White, B.J., Hood, W., &

Sherif, C.W. (1961). *Intergroup conflict and cooperation: The robbers cave experiment*. Norman, OK: The University Book Exchange. with 22 twelve-year-old boys in a summer camp in Oklahoma exemplifies the nature of RGCT and illustrates the concept of "leader as structuralist."

The boys were split into two groups at the start of the study, after which leaders quickly emerged in each group. The two groups were then required to compete in camp games and were rewarded on the basis of their performance. Soon conflict arose as negative attitudes and behavior developed within each group toward the other.

In the third part of the study, the structure of the camp was changed in such a way that the two antagonistic groups were called upon to share responsibility for accomplishing a variety of tasks. The outcome of this structural change was that attitudes within each group toward the other became favorable and conflict lessened dramatically.Sherif, Muzafer (1966). *In common predicament: Social psychology of intergroup conflict and cooperation*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Paradoxically, a leader may also deal with conflict by separating people rather than bringing them together. If a team is experiencing internal conflict that seems to be related to intense personality differences between two individuals, for instance, the leader may decide to change the composition of the team so as to reduce their interaction. (Think about the third-grade teacher who finds two children pummeling each other during recess and sends them to opposite ends of the schoolyard).

The Leader as Promoter of "Constructive Deviation"

Civil disobedience. . . is not our problem. Our problem is civil obedience…The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.

Howard Zinn

I was at a conference in Jackson Hole, talking with Peter McLaren and Donaldo Macedo and David Gabbard. This guy in a herring-bone suit, all prim and proper, came over and said, "Well, Dr. Macedo, very, very interesting talk. I enjoyed it very much. Dr. Gabbard, very interesting talk. I enjoyed it very much."

He was going around being polite. And then he turned and looked at Peter McLaren, and he said, "Mr. Mclaren…"—not "doctor"—"your discourse stretches my comfort zone just a little too much."

And before any of us could say anything, Donaldo turned to him and said, "There are millions of people born, live their entire lives, and die on this planet without ever knowing the luxury of a comfort zone."

The guy was speechless. It was a very polite way for him to say, "You know, I'm tired of hearing white men tell me that they're feeling a little oppressed by discourse."

The guy walked away, and Peter McLaren turned to me and said, "F**k! Why didn't I say that?" But that's Macedo. Macedo is on his toes, all the time. He's never caught tongue-tied. He knows exactly how to turn it around.

Roberto Bahruth

A *deviate* is someone who differs in some important way from the rest of a group. Research Valentine, K.B., & Fisher, B.A. (1974). An interaction analysis of verbal innovative deviance in small groups. *Speech Monographs*, *41*, 413–420. indicates that interaction with deviates may account for up to a quarter of many groups' time and that such interaction may serve a positive function if it successfully causes people who hold a majority opinion to examine their views critically. In essence, dealing with deviates can keep group members on their toes and counteract the tendency to engage in groupthink. Encouraging deviates is one measure a leader can take to promote constructive conflict which brings a group to a higher level of understanding and harmony.

Of course, listening to a deviate may be disconcerting, since it may push us outside our comfort zone in the way that Peter McLaren did in the story told by Roberto Bahruth. In fact, deviates naturally have great difficulty influencing a

group because of other people's resistance. For this reason, part of a leader's responsibility may sometimes consist in simply making sure that a deviate is not outright silenced by members of the majority. In other cases, it is the leader who at least at times assumes the role of deviate herself or himself.

Because deviates by their very nature call the members of the majority in a group to stop and seriously question their attitudes and behavior, which is usually disconcerting and uncomfortable, the most successful deviates are generally those who attempt to lead others in a cautious fashion and who demonstrate loyalty to their group and its goals.Thameling, C.L., & Andrews, P.H. (1992). Majority responses to opinion deviates: A communicative analysis. *Small Group Research*, *23*, 475–502. Timing can also determine whether a deviate's influence will be accepted. Waiting until a group has developed a sense of cohesiveness is most likely to be more effective, for instance, than jumping in with an unexpected or unconventional proposal during the group's formative stages.

A Leadership Example

In early 1980 the brutal Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia had just been defeated at the end of many years of fighting, and several hundred thousand Cambodian refugees flooded hastily-constructed camps in eastern Thailand.Chandler, D.P. (1992). *A history of Cambodia*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Many Americans became concerned about the suffering in the refugee camps, and a group of 25 graduate students in Vermont studying international

administration nearly played a direct role in the situation because their program's director was willing to speak out as a deviate.

The students were seated in a circle one morning, engaged in a discussion about human service agencies. One of them noticed that the director of the program, Walter Johnson, had been silent for some time and asked, "Walter, what do you think?"

Walter took a deep breath and replied, "I think what we're talking about is all well and good, but what I'd really like to do is call a colleague of mine at the U.N. and see if we could help the Cambodian refugees in those horrible camps in Thailand."

A stunned silence fell over the group. Someone asked, "Are you serious?"

Walter replied, "Yes, I am."

Silence returned. Finally, one of the students said, "Walter, if you believe what you're saying, go ahead and talk to your friend."

Walter left the room and returned in half an hour to say that his U.N. colleague was willing to investigate humanitarian service options in Thailand for the students. The challenge, then, was to explore whether the students themselves would consider performing such service.

For the next two days, the whole group engaged in difficult, soul-searching discussions about what it would mean for them to go to Thailand. They quickly

realized that if they made that choice they would have to abandon their curriculum at the school and might imperil their financial aid. Some of them would probably have to leave a spouse or children behind. And they might be putting themselves in danger of disease or violence. On the other hand, they could potentially be able to act according to their shared ideal of contributing to world peace in a personal, direct, and powerful manner.

Ultimately, the group realized that it was facing an "all or none" question: either every one of them would have to agree to travel to Thailand, or none of them should. Walter's role as a constructive deviate in the Vermont group stimulated it to consider an option—the "go to Thailand option"—which in turn spurred earnest and productive conflict which most likely would not otherwise have taken place.

Key Takeaway

- To harness conflict in a positive manner and contribute to the healthy functioning of a group, a leader should play the roles of motivator, delegator, structuralist, and promoter of constructive deviation.

Exercises

1. Think of someone you met in a group whom you would consider to be a "deviate." On what basis did you make that determination? To what degree did others in the group share your assessment of the person?
2. Do you share the view of managing conflict from above? What examples from your own experience support your answer? Consider a group that

you're currently part of, imagine a change in its structure which you feel
could reduce its conflict, and share the information with two fellow
students.

3. All other things being equal, would you prefer to address a conflict by
   bringing the parties together or separating them? Explain your reasons
   and provide an example which you believe supports them.

5.3 Conflict Is Normal

Learning Objectives

1. Describe the role of contradiction, negation, and rational unit in the
   thought of Friedrich Hegel.
2. Identify two opposing models for characterizing conflict.
3. List ways in which healthy conflict can benefit a group.

That which is willed happens but rarely; in the majority of

instances the numerous desired ends cross and conflict with

one another, or these ends themselves are from the outset

incapable of realization, or the means of attaining them are

insufficient. Thus the conflicts of innumerable individual wills

and individual actions in the domain of history produce a state

of affairs entirely analogous to that prevailing in the realm of

unconscious nature.

Friedrich Engels

I don't like that person. I'm going to have to get to know him

better

Abraham Lincoln

A cartoon from the 1970s shows two women standing behind a couch where their husbands are sitting and watching a football game. One woman says to the other, "I thought they settled all that last year!" Do you suppose it would be nice if people could settle their differences once and for all, if conflict would just go away, and if everyone would just agree with each other and get along all the time?

Of course, those rosy developments aren't going to take place. Conflict seems to stubbornly retain its position as part of the human landscape; you can hardly find a group of people who aren't experiencing it right now or have never experienced it.

There's reason to believe, too, that a moderate amount of conflict can actually be a healthy and necessary part of group life if it is handled productively and ethically. Amason, A. C. (1996). Distinguishing the effects of functional and dysfunctional conflict on strategic decision making: Resolving a paradox for top management teams. *Academy of Management Journal*, *39*, 123–148. We may actually be better off, in other words, if we experience conflict than if we don't, provided that we turn it to advantage.

The 19th-century German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel believed that contradiction and negation, which constitute both causes and ingredients of conflict, lead every domain of reality toward higher rational unity. He wrote that each level of interaction among human beings, including those which take place in larger social structures, preserves the contradictions of previous levels as phases and subparts Pelczynski, A.Z. (1984). 'The significance of Hegel's separation of the state and civil society. In A.Z. Pelczynski (Ed.), *The State and Civil Society* (pp. 1–13). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press..

Much more recently, research by Jehn and Mannix Jehn, K. A., & Mannix, E. A. (2001). The dynamic nature of conflict: A longitudinal study of intergroup conflict and group performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, *44*, 238–251. indicated that "effective teams over time are characterized by low but increasing levels of task conflict, low levels of relationship conflict with a rise toward the end of a project, and moderate levels of task conflict in the middle of the task timeline."

Conflict and the Hope of Social Change

Many years ago one of the authors attended a multi-day workshop in New York City on how to promote international peace and reconciliation. After hearing a presentation at the workshop about nuclear proliferation and biological weapons, a participant asked, "Human history is full of violence, bloodshed, and cruelty. What hope do we have of ever saving ourselves?"

The presenter replied, "Yes, we've had violence and bloodshed and cruelty throughout history. And as long as there are differences between people and their opinions, the danger will exist that we'll destroy ourselves, especially now that we have weapons that can wipe out our whole species. But the question isn't, 'Can we eliminate conflict?' The question is really, 'Can we accept conflict as part of the human condition and handle it so that we move forward instead of annihilating ourselves?'"

The presenter then offered what she said were signs of hope that groups of people can, indeed, work through even profound differences without descending into chaos or perpetual hatred. Slavery was once considered a normal part of society, she said, but no more. Child labor, too, used to be considered acceptable. And miscegenation laws existed in the United States until 1967. The presenter's point here was that, with hard work, groups can overcome past evils and deficiencies if they're willing to work through the conflict that invariably crops up when individuals are asked to change their behavior.

Two Models of Conflict

The presenter in New York went on to say that we can conceive conflict in terms of two models. The first is the *cancer model*, which portrays conflict as an insidious and incessantly expanding element which if left to itself will inevitably overwhelm and destroy a group. If we accept this model, conflict must either be prevented, if possible, or extirpated if it does manage to take root.

In the *friction model*, by contrast, conflict is seen as a natural by-product of human relations. Any machine generates waste heat simply through the interaction of its component parts, and this heat seldom threatens to halt the actions of the machine as long as people conduct preventive and ongoing maintenance—adding oil, greasing joints, and so forth. Likewise, according to this model, groups inevitably produce conflict through the interaction of their members and need not fear that it will destroy them as long as they handle it wisely. Saul Alinsky, a prominent 20th-century community organizer, wrote these words in support of the friction model of conflict: "Change means movement. Movement means friction. Only in the frictionless vacuum of a nonexistent abstract world can movement or change occur without that abrasive friction of conflict."Alinsky, S. (1971). *Rules for radicals: A pragmatic primer for realistic radicals.* New York: Random House.

Benefits of Healthy Conflict

Without conflict, life in general can easily become stagnant and tedious. When conflict is absent in a group, it often means that people are silencing themselves and holding back their opinions. If group discussions are significant, rather than merely routine, then varying opinions about the best course of action should be expected to arise. If people suppress their opinions, on the other hand, groupthink may spread and the final result may not be the best solution.

One favorable feature of healthy conflict is that people engaged in it point out difficulties or weaknesses in proposed alternatives and work together to solve

them. As noted in another section, a key to keeping conflict healthy is to make sure that discussion remains focused on the task rather than upon people's personalities.

If it is properly guided and not allowed to deteriorate into damaging forms, conflict can benefit a group in several ways. Besides broadening the range of ideas which group members take into consideration, it can help people clarify their own views and those of others so that they have a better chance of sharing a common understanding of issues. It can also help group members unearth erroneous assumptions about one another. Finally, it can actually make a group more cohesive as members realize they are surmounting difficulties together. In short, conflict is indeed normal.

Key Takeaway

- Conflict may be viewed as a pernicious and destructive element of group interaction, but considering it as a normal by-product of human relationships is a more accurate perspective.

Exercises

1. An adage says, "If you want an omelet, you have to break some eggs." To what degree do you subscribe to this folk saying? What reservations, if any, do you have about how it has been or might be used with respect to social change?
2. Some conflict throughout history has spread perniciously, as the cancer model might suggest. Have you personally experienced such enlargement of conflict in a group? If so, what factors do you believe

contributed to the situation? At what point did normal friction among the group's members turn into a more harmful form of conflict?

3. Describe a situation in which you gained increased important understanding as a result of conflict in a group you were part of.

5.4 Conflict Styles

Learning Objectives

1. List and describe a range of styles which people may use in cases of conflict.
2. Distinguish between concern for self and concern for others as elements of conflict styles.
3. Assess the nature and value of assertion as an ingredient in conflict.

The hard and strong will fall. The soft and weak will overcome.

Lao-tzu

If you're a member of a group, you most likely want to minimize futile conflict—conflict that is unlikely to be resolved no matter what you do to address it. You also probably prefer to avoid conflicts which might weaken your group, or those whose nature or outcome is irrelevant to your goals. Once you and the other members of a group recognize that you are involved in a significant conflict whose resolution may make it more likely that you can achieve your goals, you may engage in the conflict via several styles. In this section we'll consider "menus" of styles proposed by three groups of communication authorities.

Three Style "Menus"

All three style "menus" include a range of approaches, as represented in the table below titled "Individual Styles of Conflict in Groups". The styles described by Linda Putnam and Charmaine Wilson Putnam, L.L., & Wilson, C.E. (1982). Communicative strategies in organizational conflicts: Reliability and validity of a measurement scale, in M. Burgoon (Ed.), *Communication yearbook 6* (pp. 629–652)*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage. range from nonconfrontational to controlling and cooperative. According to Putnam and Wilson, if you adopt a *nonconfrontational style*, you refrain from expressing your thoughts and opinions during a conflict. This may be because you're shy or feel intimidated by the group environment or the behavior of some of its members. It may also be because you don't know how to express viewpoints constructively under the time constraints of a conflict situation or lack information about the topic of the conflict. If you adopt a *controlling style*, by contrast, you'll try to monopolize discussion during a conflict and make a serious effort to force others in the group to either agree with you or at least accept your proposals for how the group should act. The *cooperative style* of conflict, finally, involves active participation in the group's conflicts in a spirit of give and take, with the group's *superordinate goals* in mind.

Rahim, Antonioni, and Psenicka Rahim, M.A., Antonioni, D., & Psenicka, C. (2001). A structural equations model of leader power, subordinates' styles of handling conflict, and job performance. *International Journal of Conflict Management, 12*(3), 191–211. enlarged upon Putnam and Wilson's three-style "menu" by adding two further options. They framed their conceptualization in

terms of potential combinations of two dimensions, concern for self and concern for others. Here are the options resulting from the combinations:

High concern for self and others (*integrating style*): Openness; willingness to exchange information and resolve conflict in a manner acceptable to all parties.

Low concern for self and high concern for others (*obliging style*): A tendency to minimize points of difference among parties to a conflict and to try to satisfy other people's needs.

High concern for self and low concern for others (*dominating style*): A win-lose orientation and a drive to compel others to accept one's position.

Low concern for self and low concern for others (*avoiding style*): Sidestepping areas of conflict, passing the buck to others, or withdrawing entirely from the conflict situation.

Intermediate concern for self and for others (*compromising style*): Mutual sacrifice for the sake of achieving an outcome that all members of the group can accept.

Putnam & Wilson	Rahim, Antonioni, & Psenicka	Adler & Rodman
Nonconfrontational	Integrating	Nonassertive
	Obliging	Directly Aggressive
Controlling	Dominating	Passive Aggressive
	Avoiding	Indirectly Communicating
Cooperative	Compromising	Assertive

Table: Individual Styles of Conflict in Groups

Adler and Rodman Adler, R.B., & Rodman, G. (2009). *Understanding human communication* (10th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press. emphasized communication elements in their listing of five conflict styles. First of all, they designated *nonassertion* as a style of conflict in which the group member is unable or unwilling to express him- or herself. According to these theorists, this conflict style is widely used in intimate relationships such as marriages, in which the partners may disagree with each other frequently yet decide not to provoke or prolong conflicts by voicing their differences. People in groups can display a nonassertive style by either ignoring areas of conflict, trying to change the subject when a conflict appears to be arising, physically removing themselves from a place where a conflict is taking place, or simply giving in to someone else's desires during a conflict.

Direct aggression is the second conflict style identified by Adler and Rodman. A group member who attacks someone else willfully—by saying "That's ridiculous" or "That's a crazy idea" or something else that attempts to demean the person—is engaging in direct aggression. Direct aggression need not be verbal; gestures, facial expressions, and posture can all be used to convey aggressive meaning.

Passive aggression, referred to as "*crazymaking*" by George Bach Bach, G.R., & Goldberg, H. (1974). *Creative aggression.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday., is a subtle conflict style in which a person expresses hostility or resistance to others through stubbornness, resentment, procrastination, jokes with ambiguous meanings, petty annoyances, or persistent failure to fully meet expectations or

responsibilities. Someone who displays this style of conflict may disavow any negative intent if confronted or questioned about his or her behavior.

Indirect communication is a style which avoids the unmistakable force of the aggressive style and which instead implies concern for the person or persons it is directed toward.Kellermann, K., & Shea, B.C. Threats, suggestions, hints, and promises: Gaining compliance efficiently and politely. *Communication quarterly, 44*, 145–165. Rather than bluntly saying, "I'd like you to get out of my office now" when a discussion is bogging down, for instance, you might yawn discreetly or comment on how much work you have to do on a big project. Indirect communication may comprise hints, suggestions, or other polite means of seeking someone else's compliance with one's desires. Sometimes it can be used to send "*trial balloons*" to group members—proposals which are tentative and provisional and don't have a great deal of *ego investment.* Personal, emotional commitment to an idea or course of action in a conflict. behind them.

Assertion is the final style of communication identified by Adler and Rodman, and it is also the one that we recommend in most cases. Group members who operate according to this style express their feelings and thoughts clearly but neither coerce nor judge others while doing so. If you choose to use what Adler and Towne [Adler, R.B., & Towne, N. (2002). *Looking out/looking in* (10th ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.] called a "*clear message format*". According to Adler and Towne, a five-step process of transmitting assertive messages in a conflict.," you can practice assertion by following five steps in a conflict situation.

The first step is to offer an objective description of behavior being exhibited by those with whom you are in conflict. Don't interpret or assess the behavior; just describe it. For example, you might say, "Lee, you just rolled your eyes at me."

The second step is to present your interpretation of the behavior, but without stating the interpretation as fact. For instance, "Lee, I get the impression that you may have dismissed my proposal, because you rolled your eyes at me."

The third step is to express your feelings about the behavior you've described and interpreted. For example, "When you roll your eyes like that, I get the impression that you've dismissed my proposal, and I feel resentful."

The next step is to identify the consequences of the behavior, your interpretation, and your feelings. For instance, "Lee, I see that you rolled your eyes at me when I made my proposal. I get the impression that you've dismissed it, and I'm resentful. I don't feel like discussing the matter any further now."

The final step is to state your intentions, based on the four preceding ingredients of the situation. For example, "Lee, you rolled your eyes at me when I made my proposal. I get the impression that you've dismissed it, and I'm resentful. I don't feel like discussing the matter any further now, and if I see you act this way again I'll probably just leave the room until I calm down."

We admit that following a list of communication behaviors like one this can feel unfamiliar and perhaps overly complex. Fortunately, being responsibly assertive can sometimes be a very simple matter which immediately yields positive results.

In fact, following just one or two steps from the five outlined here may be sufficient to prevent, defuse, or resolve a conflict.

A friend of ours named Gus told us about a time when he was part of an enthusiastic crowd watching a football game at Washington State University. A few rows below him in the stadium sat an elderly woman, and directly in front of her was a man many inches taller and substantially heavier than she was.

The first time the WSU team made a good play, the man leapt to his feet and screamed wildly, blocking the woman's view of the field. As the widespread cheering subsided, but with the man still standing in front of her, the woman calmly but forcefully said, "Sorry sir, but I can't see."

The man grunted roughly in response and kept standing until the rest of the crowd quieted. The next couple of times that WSU managed an impressive play—and this was one of those rare contests in which they did so on several occasions—the man jumped up again, preventing the woman from seeing the action over and over again.

Every time this happened, the woman spoke up, saying "Sir, I really can't see" or "You're blocking my view." According to Gus, the effect of the woman's assertive statements was like a series of weights being placed on the man's shoulders. Eventually, he succumbed to the cumulative weight of her statements—the power of her assertions—and moved to an empty nearby seat.

Of course, not everyone who behaves in ways that we find objectionable will respond as positively as the oafish gentleman did to the elderly woman. Some people in the heat of a disagreement may resist even the mildest and least judgmental statements of assertion. How to deal with people who resist even responsibly assertive communication, along with other strategies to manage conflict in general, will be the subjects of our next section.

Key Takeaway

- Theorists have identified a range of conflict styles available to members of groups, including a five-step assertion approach which may offer the greatest general applicability and prospects for effectiveness because it avoids coercing or judging others.

Exercises

1. Consider the adage "Discretion is the better part of valor." To what degree do you feel it corresponds to what Putnam and Wilson called a "nonconfrontational" style of conflict?
2. Think about a time when you experienced a conflict in a group that was eventually resolved. What style(s), from among those described in this section, did the parties to the conflict exhibit? Do you feel the people chose the best style for the circumstances? Why or why not?
3. What specific statements or questions would you use to attempt to communicate with someone who habitually employs passive aggression

in conflicts? Provide examples of your past experiences with such behavior, if you have them.

4. Take another look at the cartoon in which the woman says "The remark you've just made has hurt me and I'm feeling anger toward you." Does it seem funny to you? If so, what elements of the cartoon and its text amuse you? How would you change the drawing or the words to portray a healthful interaction between people based on responsible assertion?

5.5 Conflict in the Work Environment

Learning Objective

1. Understand evaluations and criticism in the workplace, and discuss several strategies for resolving workplace conflict.

The word "conflict" produces a sense of anxiety for many people, but it is part of the human experience. Just because conflict is universal does not mean that we cannot improve how we handle disagreements, misunderstandings, and struggles to understand or make ourselves understood. As discussed in Chapter 9, Hocker and Wilmot (Hocker, J., & Wilmot, W. (1991). *Interpersonal conflict.* Dubuque, IA: Willam C. Brown) offer us several principles on conflict that have been adapted here for our discussion:

- Conflict is universal.
- Conflict is associated with incompatible goals.
- Conflict is associated with scarce resources.

- Conflict is associated with interference.

- Conflict is not a sign of a poor relationship.

- Conflict cannot be avoided.

- Conflict cannot always be resolved.

- Conflict is not always bad.

Conflict is the physical or psychological struggle associated with the perception of opposing or incompatible goals, desires, demands, wants, or needs McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication.* Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.. When incompatible goals, scarce resources, or interference are present, conflict is a typical result, but it doesn't mean the relationship is poor or failing. All relationships progress through times of conflict and collaboration. How we navigate and negotiate these challenges influences, reinforces, or destroys the relationship. Conflict is universal, but how and when it occurs is open to influence and interpretation. Rather than viewing conflict from a negative frame of reference, view it as an opportunity for clarification, growth, and even reinforcement of the relationship.

Conflict Management Strategies

As professional communicators, we can acknowledge and anticipate that conflict will be present in every context or environment where communication occurs, particularly in groups. To that end, we can predict, anticipate, and formulate strategies to address conflict successfully. How you choose to approach conflict influences its resolution. Joseph DeVito DeVito, J. (2003). *Messages: building*

interpersonal skills. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. offers us several conflict management strategies that we have adapted and expanded for our use.

Avoidance

You may choose to change the subject, leave the room, or not even enter the room in the first place, but the conflict will remain and resurface when you least expect it. Your reluctance to address the conflict directly is a normal response, and one which many cultures prize. In cultures where independence is highly valued, direct confrontation is more common. In cultures where the community is emphasized over the individual, indirect strategies may be more common. Avoidance allows for more time to resolve the problem, but can also increase costs associated with problem in the first place. Your organization or business will have policies and protocols to follow regarding conflict and redress, but it is always wise to consider the position of your conversational partner or opponent and to give them, as well as yourself, time to explore alternatives.

Defensiveness Versus Supportiveness

GibbGibb, J. (1961). Defensive and supportive communication. *Journal of Communication, 11*, 141–148. discussed defensive and supportive communication interactions as part of his analysis of conflict management. *Defensive communication* is characterized by control, evaluation, and judgments, while *supportive communication* focuses on the points and not personalities. When we feel judged or criticized, our ability to listen can be diminished, and we

may only hear the negative message. By choosing to focus on the message instead of the messenger, we keep the discussion supportive and professional.

Face-Detracting and Face-Saving

Communication is not competition. Communication is the sharing of understanding and meaning, but does everyone always share equally? People struggle for control, limit access to resources and information as part of territorial displays, and otherwise use the process of communication to engage in competition. People also use communication for collaboration. Both competition and collaboration can be observed in group communication interactions, but there are two concepts central to both: face-detracting and face-saving strategies.

Face-detracting strategies involve messages or statements that take away from the respect, integrity, or credibility of a person. *Face-saving strategies* protect credibility and separate message from messenger. For example, you might say that "sales were down this quarter," without specifically noting who was responsible. Sales were simply down. If, however, you ask, "How does the sales manager explain the decline in sales?" you have specifically connected an individual with the negative news. While we may want to specifically connect tasks and job responsibilities to individuals and departments, in terms of language each strategy has distinct results.

Face-detracting strategies often produce a defensive communication climate, inhibit listening, and allow for little room for collaboration. To save face is to raise

the issue while preserving a supportive climate, allowing room in the conversation for constructive discussions and problem-solving. By using a face-saving strategy to shift the emphasis from the individual to the issue, we avoid power struggles and personalities, providing each other space to save faceDonohue, W., & Klot, R. (1992). *Managing interpersonal conflict.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage..

In collectivist cultures, where the community well-being is promoted or valued above that of the individual, face-saving strategies are common communicative strategies. Groups are valued, and the role of the individual is de-emphasized. In Japan, for example, to confront someone directly is perceived as humiliation, a great insult. In the United States, greater emphasis is placed on individual performance, and responsibility may be more directly assessed. If our goal is to solve a problem, and preserve the relationship, then consideration of a face-saving strategy should be one option a skilled business communicator considers when addressing negative news or information.

Empathy

Communication involves not only the words we write or speak, but how and when we write or say them. The way we communicate also carries meaning, and empathy for the individual involves attending to this aspect of interaction. *Empathetic listening* involves listening to both the literal and implied meanings within a message. For example, the implied meaning might involve understand what has led this person to feel this way. By paying attention to feelings and

emotions associated with content and information, we can build relationships and address conflict more constructively. In management, negotiating conflict is a common task and empathy is one strategy to consider when attempting to resolve issues. We can also observe that inherent in the group development process is the presence of conflict. It is not a sign of bad things to come, nor a reason to think something is wrong. Conflict is a normal part of communication in general, and group communication in particular. In fact, conflict can be the antidote to groupthink, and help the group members refrain from going along with the flow, even when reason or the available information indicated otherwise.

Gunnysacking

Bach and WydenBach, G., & Wyden, P. (1968). *The intimacy enemy.* New York, NY: Avon. discuss *gunnysacking* (or backpacking) as the imaginary bag we all carry, into which we place unresolved conflicts or grievances over time. If your organization has gone through a merger, and your business has transformed, there may have been conflicts that occurred during the transition. Holding onto the way things used to be can be like a stone in your gunnysack, and influence how you interpret your current context.

People may be aware of similar issues but might not know your history, and cannot see your backpack or its contents. For example, if your previous manager handled issues in one way, and your new manager handles them in a different way, this may cause you some degree of stress and frustration. Your new manager cannot see how the relationship existed in the past, but will still observe

the tension. Bottling up your frustrations only hurts you and can cause your current relationships to suffer. By addressing, or unpacking, the stones you carry, you can better assess the current situation with the current patterns and variables.

We learn from experience, but can distinguish between old wounds and current challenges, and try to focus our energies where they will make the most positive impact.

Managing Your Emotions

Have you ever seen red, or perceived a situation through rage, anger, or frustration? Then you know that you cannot see or think clearly when you are experiencing strong emotions. There will be times in the work environment when emotions run high, and your awareness of them can help you clear your mind and choose to wait until the moment has passes to tackle the challenge.

"Never speak or make a decision in anger" is one common saying that holds true, but not all emotions involve fear, anger, or frustration. A job loss can be a sort of professional death for many, and the sense of loss can be profound. The loss of a colleague to a layoff while retaining your position can bring pain as well as relief, and a sense of survivor's guilt. Emotions can be contagious in the workplace, and fear of the unknown can influence people to act in irrational ways. The wise business communicator can recognize when emotions are on edge in themselves or others, and choose to wait to communicate, problem-solve, or negotiate until after the moment has passed.

Evaluations and Criticism in the Workplace

Guffey Guffey, M. (2008). *Essentials of business communication* (7th ed.).
Mason, OH: Thomson-Wadsworth. pp.320 wisely notes that Xenophon, a Greek
philosopher, once said "The sweetest of all sounds is praise." We have seen
previously that appreciation, respect, inclusion, and belonging are all basic
human needs across all contexts, and are particularly relevant in the workplace.
Efficiency and morale are positively related, and recognition of good work is
important. There may come a time, however, when evaluations involve criticism.
Knowing how to approach this criticism can give you peace of mind to listen
clearly, separating subjective, personal attacks from objective, constructive
requests for improvement. Guffey offers us seven strategies for giving and
receiving evaluations and criticism in the workplace that we have adapted here.

Listen Without Interrupting

If you are on the receiving end of an evaluation, start by listening without
interruption. Interruptions can be internal and external, and warrant further
discussion. If your supervisor starts to discuss a point and you immediately start
debating the point in your mind, you are paying attention to yourself and what
you think they said or are going to say, and not that which is actually
communicated. This gives rise to misunderstandings and will cause you to lose
valuable information you need to understand and address the issue at hand.

External interruptions may involve your attempt to get a word in edgewise, and may change the course of the conversation. Let them speak while you listen, and if you need to take notes to focus your thoughts, take clear notes of what is said, also noting points to revisit later. External interruptions can also take the form of a telephone ringing, a "text message has arrived" chime, or a co-worker dropping by in the middle of the conversation.

As an effective business communicator, you know all too well to consider the context and climate of the communication interaction when approaching the delicate subject of evaluations or criticism. Choose a time and place free from interruption. Choose one outside of the common space where there may be many observers. Turn off your cell phone. Choose face to face communication instead of an impersonal email. By providing a space free of interruption, you are displaying respect for the individual and the information.

Determine the Speaker's Intent

We have discussed previews as a normal part of conversation, and in this context they play an important role. People want to know what is coming and generally dislike surprises, particularly when the context of an evaluation is present. If you are on the receiving end, you may need to ask a clarifying question if it doesn't count as an interruption. You may also need to take notes, and write down questions that come to mind to address when it is your turn to speak. As a manager, be clear and positive in your opening and lead with praise.

You can find one point, even if it is only that the employee consistently shows up to work on time, to highlight before transitioning to a performance issue.

Indicate You Are Listening

In mainstream U.S. culture, eye contact is a signal that you are listening and paying attention to the person speaking. Take notes, nod your head, or lean forward to display interest and listening. Regardless of whether you are the employee receiving the criticism or the supervisor delivering it, displaying of listening behavior engenders a positive climate that helps mitigate the challenge of negative news or constructive criticism.

Paraphrase

Restate the main points to paraphrase what has been discussed. This verbal display allows for clarification and acknowledges receipt of the message.

If you are the employee, summarize the main points and consider steps you will take to correct the situation. If none come to mind, or you are nervous and are having a hard time thinking clearly, state out loud the main point and ask if you can provide solution steps and strategies at a later date. You can request a follow-up meeting if appropriate, or indicate you will respond in writing via email to provide the additional information.

If you are the employer, restate the main points to ensure that the message was received, as not everyone hears everything that is said or discussed the first time

it is presented. Stress can impair listening, and paraphrasing the main points can help address this common response.

If You Agree...

If an apology is well deserved, offer it. Communicate clearly what will change or indicate when you will respond with specific strategies to address the concern. As a manager you will want to formulate a plan that addresses the issue and outlines responsibilities as well as time frames for corrective action. As an employee you will want specific steps you can both agree on that will serve to solve the problem. Clear communication and acceptance of responsibility demonstrates maturity and respect.

If You Disagree...

If you disagree, focus on the points or issue and not personalities. Do not bring up past issues and keep the conversation focused on the task at hand. You may want to suggest, now that you better understand their position, a follow-up meeting to give you time to reflect on the issues. You may want to consider involving a third party, investigating to learn more about the issue, or taking time to cool off.

Do not respond in anger or frustration; instead, always display professionalism. If the criticism is unwarranted, consider that the information they have may be

flawed or biased, and consider ways to learn more about the case to share with them, searching for a mutually beneficial solution.

If other strategies to resolve the conflict fail, consider contacting your Human Resources department to learn more about due process procedures at your workplace. Display respect and never say anything that would reflect poorly on yourself or your organization. Words spoken in anger can have a lasting impact, and are impossible to retrieve or take back.

Learn from the Experience

Every communication interaction provides an opportunity for learning if you choose to see it. Sometimes the lessons are situational, and may not apply in future contexts. Other times the lessons learned may well serve you across your professional career. Taking notes for yourself to clarify your thoughts, much like a journal, serve to document and help you see the situation more clearly.

Recognize that some aspects of communication are intentional, and may communicate meaning, even if it is hard to understand. Also know that some aspects of communication are unintentional, and may not imply meaning or design. People make mistakes. They say things they should not have said. Emotions are revealed that are not always rational, and not always associated with the current context. A challenging morning at home can spill over into the work day and someone's bad mood may have nothing to do with you. Team

members aren't always the same day to day, and the struggles outside of the work environment can impact the group.

Try to distinguish between what you can control and what you cannot, and always choose professionalism.

Key Takeaway

- Conflict is unavoidable and can be opportunity for clarification, growth, and even reinforcement of the relationship.

Exercise

1. Write a description of a situation you recall where you came into conflict with someone else. It may be something that happened years ago, or a current issue that just arose. Using the principles and strategies in this section, describe how the conflict was resolved, or could have been resolved. Discuss your ideas with your classmates.

2. Of the strategies for managing conflict described in this section, which do you think are the most effective? Why? Discuss your opinions with a classmate.

3. Can you think of a time when a conflict led to a new opportunity, better understanding, or other positive result? If not, think of a past conflict and imagine a positive outcome. Write a 2–3 paragraph description of what happened, or what you imagine could happen. Share your results with a classmate.

5.6 Effective Conflict Management Strategies

Learning Objectives

1. List four preventive steps that a group and its members may take to lessen the likelihood of experiencing damaging conflict.

2. Identify measures related to space and time that a group may employ to mediate against potentially destructive conflict

3. Describe steps which members of a group may take to manage conflict when it arises.

4. Explain the "SLACK" method of managing conflict.

I've led a school whose faculty and students examine and discuss and debate every aspect of our law and legal system. And what I've learned most is that no one has a monopoly on truth or wisdom. I've learned that we make progress by listening to each other, across every apparent political or ideological divide.

Elena Kagan

In calm water every ship has a good captain.

Swedish Proverb

To be peaceable is, by definition, to be peaceable in time of conflict.

If group members communicate effectively and show sensitivity to each other's needs and styles, they can often prevent unproductive and destructive conflict from developing. Nevertheless, they should also be prepared to respond in situations when conflict does crop up.

Before considering some strategies for dealing with conflicts, it's worth pointing out that the title of this section refers to "management" of conflict rather than to "resolution." The reason for this choice of terminology is that not all conflict needs to be—or can be—resolved. Still, most conflict needs to be managed to keep it from side-tracking, slowing down, weakening, or eventually destroying a group.

First Things First

We've all heard that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Managing conflict is easiest if we've acquired some tools to prevent it from getting out of hand. One way to gain such tools is to undergo some actual formal training in conflict management. A Google search of educational sites related to "conflict management courses" yields several thousand results from around the United States and elsewhere, including numerous certificate and degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate level. Commercial entities offer hundreds more opportunities for professional development in this realm.

A second, more specific preventive measure is for members of a group to periodically review and reaffirm their commitment to the norms, policies, and

procedures they've set for themselves. In more formal groups, it's a good idea to assign one member to look over the bylaws or constitution every year to see if anything needs to be changed, clarified, or removed in light of altered circumstances. The danger in not paying attention to such details is represented in the story, told by Robert TownsendTownsend, Robert (1970). *Up the organization*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf., of a British civil service job created in 1803 which called for a man to stand on the Cliffs of Dover with a spyglass. The man's role was to ring a bell if he saw Napoleon coming. The job was not abolished until 1945.

A third measure which groups can take to lessen the possibility that damaging conflict will take place within them is to discuss and distinguish between detrimental and beneficial conflict—between that which promotes improvement and that which obstructs progress. The initial "forming" stage of a group, when people are apt to act tentative and be on their best behavior, is probably the best time to set aside some group time to let members share their views, experiences, and expectations with regard to "bad" and "good" conflict. It may be a good idea to ask members of the group to cite specific examples of conflict which they would accept or endorse, and also examples of conflict which they would hope to avoid.

A fourth preventive measure is for the group to explicitly remind its members that "*deviates*" are to be appreciated and respected for the diverse perspectives they can share and the unconventional opinions they may hold. This kind of statement

may give creative members the impression that they have intellectual "free space" for generating and sharing ideas later in the evolution of the group.

Logistical Measures

Proponents of feng shui believe that configurations of furniture affect people's moods and behavior. Employees at the National Observatory in Washington, DC, maintain an atomic clock which keeps precise universal time. You don't need to belong to either of these groups to believe that how a group uses space and time can affect the level and nature of conflict it will experience.

With respect to *proxemics*, for instance, research has demonstrated that conflict between people who disagree with each other is more likely to flare up if they sit directly across from each other than if they are seated side by side.Gordon, J., Mondy, R. W., Sharplin, A., & Premeaux, S. R. (1990). *Management and organizational behavior*. New York: Simon & Schuster, p. 540. Why not, then, purposefully plan where people are going to sit and the angles from which they'll see each other?

Decisions about when and for how long groups will gather can also affect their level of conflict. Research into human beings' *circadian rhythm*—the 24-hour cycle of energy highs and lows-shows that 3 a.m. and 3 p.m. are the two lowest-energy times. Depending on whether group members clash more or less when their energy level is low, it therefore may or may not be wise to meet at three o'clock in the afternoon.

Whenever people in a group get together, it's natural that the mood and outlook they bring with them will be influenced in part by what's happened to them earlier that day. For any individual, a touchy discussion, a disappointment, or an embarrassing episode might precede the group's interactions. Unfortunate events like these—as well as other powerful experiences, whether positive or not—may consciously or unconsciously color the demeanor of group members at the start of their interaction.

Another time-related conflict management strategy, thus, is to begin a discussion with a "time out" for people to rest and loosen up. We know of college instructors who initiate each of their class sessions with two minutes of silence for this same purpose.

Once Conflict Occurs...

Numerous authorities have offered suggestions on how to manage conflict once it reaches a level where it should not or cannot be allowed to dissipate on its own. Hartley & Dawson, first of all,Hartley, P., & Dawson, M. (2010). *Success in groupwork.* New York: St. Martin's Press. suggested taking the following steps:

1. Make sure the lines of communication are open. If they aren't, open them.
2. Define the issues. Don't allow a nebulous sense of overpowering disagreement to develop. Be specific about what the conflict pertains to.
3. Focus on the task, rather than on personalities. Discourage or deflect comments that question a group member's motives or personal qualities.
4. Proceed according to your established ground rules, policies, procedures, and norms. After all, you established these components of your group's identity precisely to deal with difficult circumstances.

In addition to following rules and procedures peculiar to its own history, a group that's experiencing conflict should strive to maintain civilityMeyer, J.R. Effect of verbal aggressiveness on the perceived importance of secondary goals in messages. *Communication Studies, 55*, 168–184. and follow basic etiquette. As Georges Clemenceau wrote, "Etiquette is nothing but hot air, but that is what our automobiles ride on, and look how it smoothes out the bumps."

Malcolm Gladwell's popular book, *The Tipping Point*, describes how New York City's subway system was revitalized by David Gunn and William Bratton in the 1980s and 90sGladwell, M. (2000). *The tipping point: How little things can make a big difference.* New York: Little, Brown and Company.. Together, Gunn and Bratton launched a campaign to eliminate vandalism, including graffiti on the sides of train cars, and to prosecute "fare-beaters." At the start of the campaign, doubters complained that more serious crime in the subways and streets needed to be attacked first. Gunn and Bratton insisted, however, that setting a broad example of civility would ultimately create an atmosphere in which potential criminals would be less likely to engage in serious criminal acts. After many years of relentlessly enforcing basic laws mandating public decency, not only did graffiti nearly disappear entirely from the subway system, but overall crime in the New York metropolitan area declined substantially.

Hopefully you will never witness vandalism, much less felonious behavior, in a small group. Malicious verbal interchanges, nevertheless, can poison the atmosphere among people and should be prevented if at all possible. As an old Japanese saying puts it, "The one who raises his voice first loses the argument."

It doesn't hurt to calmly and quietly ask that discussion of particularly contentious topics be postponed if comments seem to be in danger of overwhelming the group with negativity.

In addition to reminding people that they should exercise basic politeness, it may be wise at times for someone in the group to ask for a recess in a discussion. Calvin Coolidge said, "I have never been hurt by anything I didn't say," and it may be a good idea in irate moments to silence people briefly to prevent what Adler and RodmanAdler, R.B., & Rodman, G. (2009). *Understanding human communication* (10th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press. referred to as an "*escalatory spiral*" of hurtful conversation.

If the tone of a group discussion permits thoughtful reflection, it can be helpful to separate task and relationship goals and deal with conflict over each kind separately.Fisher, R., & Brown, S. (1988). *Getting Together: Building a relationship that gets to yes.* Boston: Houghton-Mifflin. Using indirect communication, rather than confronting another group member head-on, may also defuse extreme emotions and preserve other people's face.

Here are further techniques for managing conflict in group interactions:

1. "Test the waters" for new ideas without making it seem that you're so attached to them that you'll fight to impose them on others.
2. If an ego clash erupts, see if you can identify something that the disagreeing individuals *can* agree on. Perhaps this will be a superordinate goal. It could also be a common opposing force, since the

idea that "my enemy's enemy is my friend" can serve to bind people together.

3. Employ active listening. Strive to fully understand other people's viewpoints before stating your own.

4. If people's comments meander to topics that aren't germane, steer the discussion back to the key issues under discussion.

5. Frame the situation as a problem to be solved, rather than as a struggle which must be won.

6. Treat everyone as partners on a common quest. Invite continued frank interchanges and assure group members that they may speak out without fear of reprisal.

7. Consider carefully how important it is for you to prevail in a particular conflict or even just to express your views. Ask yourself whether the potential negative consequences of your action will be worth it.

8. Unless a disagreement is over an essential point, consider whether it might be best to "agree to disagree" and move on.

"Going with the Flow"

As we've seen, there is no shortage of specific strategies and techniques for people to choose from when conflict occurs in a group. In fact, it may be overwhelming to try to decide which strategies and techniques to use, at which times and with which people, under which circumstances. Randy Fujishin, a therapist and writer from California, proposed an attitude which might help people deal both with conflict itself and with the feelings of stress it often engenders. He

suggested that we regard conflict as neither a call to battle nor a warning to dissolve or disband a group. Instead, Fujishin proposed that people regard conflict as "an invitation to listen, learn, explore, and growFujishin, R. (1998). *Gifts from the heart: 10 communication skills for developing more loving relationships.* San Francisco: Acada Books.." His advice when conflict takes place is this: "Instead of tensing, relax. Instead of stiffening, bend. Instead of arguing, listen. Instead of pushing or running away, get closer. Flow with the disagreement, situation, or individual for a period to discover where it may lead."

Fujishin also developed what he called the "*SLACK*" method of managing conflict. Although he intended it to be brought to bear primarily on disputes in one-on-one relationships, its components may apply also in group situations. "SLACK" is an acronym standing for "sit, listen, ask, compromise, and kiss." Major emphasis in this method is placed on being receptive to what other parties in a conflict have to say, as well as to their emotional states. Fujishin really does suggest kissing or hugging as the final step in this method, but of course many groups will choose instead to celebrate the achievement of post-conflict reconciliation and progress through words.

Perhaps the central message we can derive from Fujishin's writings on this topic is that, although we should respond to conflict earnestly, we should take a long view and avoid losing our composure in the process of managing it. Even at moments of extreme tension, we can remind ourselves of an ancient saying attributed first to Persian mystics and later cited by such notable figures as Abraham Lincoln: "This too shall pass."Taylor, A. (1968). "This Too Will Pass

(Jason 910Q)". In F. Harkort, K.C. Peeters, & R. Wildhaber. *Volksüberlieferung: Festschrift für Kurt Ranke* (pp. 345–350). Göttingen, German: Schwartz.

Key Takeaway

- Conflict can be managed by implementing a combination of preventive, logistical, and procedural actions, as well as by maintaining composure and perspective.

Exercises

1. What proportion of conflicts within small groups do you feel can actually be resolved rather than merely managed? Provide a rationale and example(s) for your answer.

2. Think about a conflict that you recently observed or took part in. What elements of its timing, location, or physical surroundings do you think contributed to its nature or severity? Which of those elements, if any, do you think someone might have been able to change to lessen the intensity of the conflict?

3. Labor negotiations sometimes include a mandated "cooling-off period." Describe a conflict situation you've witnessed which you believe might have turned out better had such a cooling-off period been incorporated into it. Describe areas of conflict in your life, at school or elsewhere, in which you feel it would be helpful to make use of such a technique?

5.7 Summary

In this chapter we have dealt with managing conflict. We have defined conflict and identified dangers which can arise from it. We have leadership approaches to conflict and reviewed the nature of conflict in the work environment. We have also explored effective conflict management strategies. Conflict is a perennial and nature part of group communication which can be managed effectively if we understand the important concepts and skills shared in this chapter.

Review Questions

Interpretive Questions

1. In what 2–3 ways has your view of conflict changed as a result of reading this chapter?

2. To what degree do you feel that techniques which are effective for managing conflict in small groups can produce positive results within large organizations or between nations? On what evidence or experience do you base your view concerning this question?

Application Questions

1. Think of one of your ongoing relationships in which conflict plays a larger or more harmful part than you would prefer. Which conflict management strategies from this chapter are you willing to put into use in that relationship? Please report back to one or more of your classmates in two weeks concerning the outcome of your plan.

2. Think of a leader you know who you believe manages conflict particularly effectively. Arrange an interview with the person in which you ask him/her

for examples of how s/he used one or more of the strategies mentioned in this chapter. Ask also if the person has further advice for you to use in a conflict situation. Present your instructor with a short written description of the results of your interview.

Influence and Power

By now, you may be wondering about the relationship between influence and power. Research has examined the relationship between the three levels of influence and the six bases of power. Coercive, reward, and legitimate power only influence people at the compliance level. Whereas, informational, expert, and referent power have been shown to influence people at all three levels of influence: compliance, identification, and internalization.[40] When you think about your own interpersonal influencing goals, you really need to consider what level of influence you desire a person's change in thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviors to be. If your goal is just to get the change quickly, then using coercive, reward, and legitimate power may be the best route. If, however, you want to ensure long-term influence, then using informational, expert, and referent power are probably the best routes to use.

Research Spotlight

In 2013, Shireen Abuhatoum and Nina Howe set out to explore how siblings use French and Raven's bases of power in their relationships. Specifically, they examined how older siblings (average age of 7 years old) interacted with their younger siblings (average age was 4 ½ years old). Sibling pairs were recorded

playing at home with a wooden farm set that was provided for the observational study. Each recorded video lasted for 15-minutes. The researchers then coded the children's verbal and nonverbal behaviors. The goal was to see what types of power strategies the siblings employed while playing.

Unsurprisingly, older siblings were more likely to engage in power displays with their younger siblings to get what they wanted. However, younger siblings were more likely to appeal to a third party (usually an adult) to get their way.

The researchers also noted that when it came to getting a desired piece of the farm to play with, older siblings were more likely to use coercive power. Younger siblings were more likely to employ legitimate power as an attempt to achieve a compromise. Abuhatoum, S., & Howe, N. (2013). Power in sibling conflict during early and middle childhood. Social Development, 22(4), 738–754. doi.org/10.1111/sode.12021

Key Takeaways

- Herbert Kelman noted that there are three basic levels of influence: compliance (getting someone to alter behavior), identification (altering someone's behavior because they want to be identified with a person or group), and internalization (influence that occurs because someone wants to be in a relationship with an influencer).
- French and Raven have devised six basic bases of power: informational, coercive, reward, legitimate, expert, and referent. First,

we have informational power, or the power we have over others as we provide them knowledge. Second, we have coercive power, or the ability to punish someone for noncompliance. Third, we have reward power, or the ability to reward someone for compliance. Fourth we have legitimate power, or power someone has because of their position within a culture or a hierarchical structure. Fifth, we have expert power, or power that someone exerts because they are perceived as having specific knowledge or skills. Lastly, we have referent power, or power that occurs because an individual wants to be associated with another person.

Exercises

1. Think of a time when you've been influenced at all three of Kelman's levels of influence. How were each of these situations of influence different from each other? How were the different levels of influence achieved?

2. Think of each of the following situations and which form of power would best be used and why:
   - A mother wants her child to eat his vegetables.
   - A police officer wants to influence people to slow down in residential neighborhoods.
   - The Surgeon General of the United States wants people to become more aware of the problems of transsaturated fats in their diets.
   - A friend wants to influence his best friend to stop doing drugs.

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Chapter 6: Managing Conflict in Teams Productively

6.1 Effective Strategies for Group Creativity

Learning Objectives

1. Define and explain "bisociation."

2. Describe brainstorming and identify criteria for its effective use.

3. Differentiate between neophiles and neophobes.

4. Distinguish between the creative styles of "brooders" and "spawners."

> *Sisters, brothers, mothers, fathers, teachers—everybody*
>
> *starts to douse your imagination and creativity. At a young*
>
> *age it starts, and then all of a sudden you're like a trunk*
>
> *going through an airport, covered in stickers. I think I have*
>
> *spent most of my life pulling off stickers.*
>
> *Kim Basinger*

Human beings are naturally creative from an early age. Think of any four- or five-year-old child you've ever met, and you can verify this for yourself. Here are some examples from journals kept by one of the authors concerning his children's development before age six:

I was reading *Animal Farm* the other day and mentioned that one of the "Seven Commandments" of the animals had to do with the beliefs that the beasts liked anything with four legs or wings. Amelia said, "Oh—then they like airplanes!"

Last night at dinner, Claire looked at the roll-top wooden bread storage compartment over the counter top in our kitchen and said, "That's a garage door where food parks."

When I was explaining that there are only four tastes which human tongues can detect—salty, sweet, sour, and bitter—Claire asked, "What about 'yucky'?"

Last night on the way to folk-dancing, we started talking about vocabulary. For some reason, Amelia created a new word: "trampede". According to her, a "trampede" is a centipede on a trampoline.

Solving problems and making decisions both work best if people in a group are creative; i.e., if they entertain new perspectives and generate new ideas. Can this be a simple matter of having the group's leader tell people "Be creative," though? Probably not. It's like saying, "Don't think of an elephant": it's apt to produce just the opposite effect of the command itself. Still, tools and techniques for encouraging creativity in a group do exist.

A Theory of Creativity

Arthur Koestler, a major intellectual and political force in Europe and the United States throughout most of the 20th century, contended that all creativity comprises a process he called "*bisociation*."Koestler, A. (1964). *The act of creation.* New York: Macmillan. Koestler's seminal book on this topic, titled *The Act of Creation*, put forth a theory that he believed accounted for people's "Aha" reaction of scientific discovery, their "Ha-ha" reaction to jokes, and their "Ah" reaction of mystical or religious insight.

Above all, creativity creates new things—things that weren't there before the creative act took place. In every kind of creative situation, according to Koestler, the result is produced by a meeting of lines of thought that bring together hitherto unconnected ideas and fuse them into something new. If the lines of thought concern devotional matters, mystical insight emerges, and when they concern

more mundane matters the result is apt to be a joke. If they are scientific, the result is a scientific discovery.

The expression "to think outside the box" is often used to refer to creativity. Koestler's view seems to be that creativity consists, instead, of linking existing but separate "boxes" together. One implication of his theory is that, to be creative, a person not only needs to depart from the *status quo* but also needs to be familiar and comfortable with a range of alternatives from a wide variety of fields. Koestler's perspective would seem to be consistent with the association we often make between creativity on the one hand and intelligence and breadth of knowledge on the other.

Overcoming Inertia

At every crossroads on the path that leads to the future,
tradition has placed 10,000 men to guard the past.
Maurice Maeterlinck

When you cannot make up your mind which of two evenly
balanced courses of action you should take, choose the
bolder.
William Joseph Slim

Groups generally comprise a mixture of people when it comes to openness to change. A small fraction of the members may position themselves at one end of the openness continuum or the other. Some of these people, called _neophiles_, will eagerly embrace almost anything novel. Others, known as _neophobes_, will invariably shun what's new and prefer the security of what they know and have done in the past. The majority of people, however, probably don't fit neatly into either of these categories. Instead, they may prefer to produce or experiment with new things under certain circumstances and resist them under others.

It's rarely possible to provoke creativity on the part of an entire group all at once. You needn't agree with Thomas Fuller's aphorism that "a conservative believes nothing should be done for the first time" to realize that some people in groups will hold onto what they're familiar with all the more stubbornly as others begin to waver and experiment with something new.

Brainstorming

In regard to every problem that arises, there are counselors who say, "Do nothing" [and] other counselors who say, "Do everything"…I say to you: "Do something"; and when you have done something, if it works, do it some more; and if it does not work, then do something else.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

One familiar technique that experts in the realm of creative thinking have long recommended is [brainstorming](#). Alex Osborn, an advertising executive, began using the term in the mid-1950s and described the method in detail in his book *Applied Imagination: Principles and Procedures of Creative Problem Solving*. Osborn, A.F. (1963) *Applied imagination: Principles and procedures of creative problem solving* (3rd revised ed.). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

One criterion of proper brainstorming is that it must begin with an unrestricted search for quantity and creativity rather than quality. It should actually solicit and reward craziness and zaniness, in other words.

A second criterion for good brainstorming is that it should encourage and praise "piggybacking" on ideas which have already emerged. A third is that brainstormers should avoid making any judgments until they've generated an extensive list of ideas.

Robert Sutton, a respected organizational consultant, published a book in 2002 called *Weird Ideas That Work*. Sutton, R. (2002). *Weird ideas that work*. New York: Free Press. Among other things, Sutton's book paid tribute to brainstorming.

One of Sutton's central contentions was that excellence arises from "a range of differences"—precisely what brainstorming aims to generate. To illustrate, Sutton declared that such prodigious geniuses as Shakespeare, Einstein, Mozart, Edison, and Picasso were first and foremost productive. In fact, he argued that

these brilliant individuals didn't succeed at a higher rate than anyone else; they just did more.

Mozart, for instance, started composing when he was seven years old and wrote at least 20 pieces of music per year from then until his death at the age of 35. Several of his compositions were routine or even dull, but many were sublime and some are unquestioned masterpieces.

Closer to home, Sutton noted that today's toy business offers examples of the value of starting with lots of ideas and only then selecting quality ones. Skyline, an arm of California's IDEO Corporation, employed just 10 staff members in 1998 but generated 4,000 ideas in that year for new toys.

According to Sutton, those 4,000 ideas boiled down to 230 possibilities worth examining through careful drawings or working prototypes. Of the 230 concepts, 12 were ultimately sold. In other words, the "yield" of saleable products came to only 3/10 of one per cent of the original ideas. Sutton quoted Skyline's founder, Brendan Boyle, as saying, "You can't get any good new ideas without having a lot of dumb, lousy, and crazy ones."

The Ostrich and the Sea Urchin

Now let's take a look at what two animals have to do with ideas in general, and with varied ways of being creative about ideas in specific. The two animals are the ostrich and the sea urchin.

The ostrich's reproductive processes lies at one end of a continuum, the sea urchin's at the other. Like the 350-pound mother which lays it, an ostrich egg is large, imposing, and tough. For 42 days after it's laid, it grows until it weighs more than three pounds. It will then reliably crack open and release a baby ostrich. Unless something highly unexpected happens, its mother will tend it well, and that single baby ostrich will in turn grow up and become a mature ostrich.

A sea urchin differs in almost every respect from an ostrich. The whole animal takes up less space and weighs less than an ostrich egg, for one thing. It has no eyes. It hardly moves all its life. To propagate, an urchin spews a cloud of more than a million miniscule eggs into the ocean. The eggs disperse immediately into the tide pools and reef inlets populated by their spiny parents.

Some of the sea urchin eggs meet sea urchin sperm and combine to form tiny, transparent, free-floating embryos. Eggs remain viable for only 6–8 hours, however, so lots of them die before this happens. Of a one-million-egg cloud, those which are to have a chance of becoming embryos must do so within 48 hours. The odds aren't good.

Then things thin out even more. A Stanford University publication points out that "the young embryo is totally at the mercy of the sea. There are many organisms that will consume the young sea urchin embryo and later the young sea urchin. " Brooders vs spawners. In other words, the overwhelming majority of sea urchin eggs die of loneliness or get eaten.

Biologists call animals like ostriches' "brooders" because they create only a few offspring but take care of each one faithfully. Creatures such as sea urchins, which produce vast numbers of candidates for fertilization but don't take care of them and lose most of them to predators, are called "spawners." Brainstorming is clearly a "spawning" process rather than a "brooding" one.

Threats to the Effectiveness of Brainstorming

Although it is meant to generate large quantities of ideas on which to base sound decision-making, brainstorming entails some same challenges. One group of researchersStroebe, W., Diehl, M., & Abakoumkin, G. (1992). The illusion of group effectivity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 18* (5): 643–650. identified three potential weakening factors inherent within brainstorming:

1. *Blocking*. Since only one person at a time in a group can speak, other members may lose the desire to contribute their own ideas or even forget those ideas in the midst of a lively brainstorming session.

2. *Social matching*. Brown, V., & Paulus, P. B. (1996). A simple dynamic model of social factors in group brainstorming. *Small Group Research, 27*, 91–114. People in a group tend to calibrate their own degree of contribution to its activities on the basis of what the other members do. If someone has lots of ideas but sees that the rest of the group is less productive, that person is apt to reduce his or her own creative production.

3. *Illusion of group productivity*. Group members are apt to rate the level of their output as being higher than it actually is. For one thing, members

describe their group as being above average in productivity with respect to other groups. They also overrate their individual contributions; people in one study, for instance, said that they had contributed 36% of their group's ideas when in fact they had offered only 25%.Paulus, P. B., Dzindolet, M. T., Poletes, G., & Camacho, L. M. (1993). Perception of performance in group brainstorming: The illusion of group productivity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 64* (4), 575–586.

Key Takeaways

■ Creativity, which can play a positive role in group decision-making, has been described as a process of combining two disparate elements. It can be stimulated through brainstorming.

Exercises

1. Do you agree with Arthur Koestler that all creativity involves bringing disparate trains of thought together? Provide 2–3 examples which support your answer.
2. Do you consider yourself a "brooder" or a "spawner"? Explain your response to a fellow student, providing examples which support your answer.
3. When was the last time you showed exceptional creativity? What factors in your environment or within you at the time contributed most to that creativity?
4. Think of a neophile and a neophobe whom you've encountered in a group. Describe actions that each person took which illustrate his/her neophilia or neophobia.

6.2 Facilitating the Task-Oriented Group

Learning Objectives

1. Define "group facilitation."

2. Identify five guidelines for facilitating a task-oriented group

3. Distinguish between collaboration and "coliberation"

> *Remember the story that Pope John XXIII told about himself. He admitted, "It often happens that I wake at night and begin to think about a serious problem and decide I must tell the Pope about it. Then I wake up completely and remember that I am the Pope."*
>
> *Glenn van Ekeren*

> *"I'm extraordinarily patient provided I get my own way in the end."*
>
> *Margaret Thatcher*

You've probably experienced being part of groups that pleased and motivated you. One reason you experienced those positive feelings may have been that the groups planned and executed their tasks so smoothly that you were hardly aware the processes were taking place. In this section we'll examine ways in which leaders can contribute to such pleasant, easy experiences.

Just as "facile" in English and "fácil" in Spanish mean "easy," the word "facilitate" itself means "to make something easy" and "*group facilitation*" consists in easing a group's growth and progress. Most student, community, and business groups are task-oriented, so we'll consider here how they can most easily be guided toward accomplishing the tasks they set for themselves. Another section of this book deals specifically with the details of leading meetings, so for now we'll consider broader questions and principles.

If you're in a position to facilitate a group, you need to take that position seriously. Just as Pope John XXIII realized with respect to his authority and responsibility in the Catholic Church, it's best to consider yourself the primary source of direction and the ultimate destination for questions in your group. With those concepts in mind, let's consider five major guidelines you should probably follow in order to facilitate a group whose purposes include achieving tasks.

1. Know the group's members. This means more than just identifying their names and recognizing their faces. If you hope to accomplish anything significant together, you need to be familiar with people's opinions, their needs, their desires, and their personalities.

   Perhaps one member of a group you're leading is particularly time-conscious, another likes to make jokes, and a third prefers to see concepts represented visually. If you take these propensities into account and respond to them as much as possible, you can draw the best cooperative effort from each of the people.

   You may want to keep track of who's done what favors for whom within

the group, too. Like it or not, many people operate at least from time to time on the principle that "I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine."

2. Weigh task and relationship considerations. The word "*equilibristic*" is sometimes applied to the actions of athletes and musicians. It refers to a capability to balance differing and sometimes conflicting forces so as to maintain continuous movement in a chosen direction.

   Although almost any group has some work to do, and all groups comprise people whose welfare needs to be tended to, the effective facilitator realizes that it's impossible to emphasize both those elements to the same degree all the time. If people are disgruntled or frustrated, they can't contribute well to accomplishing a task. Likewise, if people are always contented with one another and their group but can't focus on getting things done, the group will be unable to attain its objectives. To facilitate a group well, thus, requires that you be equilibristic.

3. Understand and anticipate prevalent features of human psychology. Keep in mind that everyone in a group will perceive what the facilitator does in light of his or her own circumstances and wishes.

   Recall also that everyone possesses diverse and numerous capacities for self-justification and self-support. In their book *Mistakes were made (but not by me)*, Carol Tavris and Ellion Aronson referred to studies of married couples' behavior. They indicated that when husbands and wives are asked what proportion of the housework they perform, the totals always exceed 100 percent by a large margin.Tavris, C., & Aronson, E. (2007). *Mistakes were made (but not by me).* Orlando, FL: Harcourt Tavris and

Aronson also described the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, which presents visitors with interactive exhibits portraying categories of people about whom many of us harbor negative preconceptions—including ethnic and racial minorities, obese individuals, people with disabilities, and so on. A video attempts to persuade visitors that they possess prejudices, after which two doors are offered as an exit. One is marked "Prejudiced" and the other is labeled "Unprejudiced." The second door is locked, to make the point that all of us are indeed subject to prejudice.

4. Deal well with disruptions. The playwright Paddy Chayevsky wrote that "life is problems." An effective group facilitator needs to anticipate and skillfully cope with problems as a part of life, whether they're caused by other people's behavior or by physical and logistical factors.

   If you're an adherent of *Theory Y*, you probably believe that people enjoy pursuing their goals energetically, in groups or individually. You also probably believe that people prefer to select times and places along the way to relax and recharge. Unfortunately, interruptions often arise in such a way as to make both these aims difficult to achieve. Think about all the unexpected academic, family, and work-related reasons why you and other students you know have found it challenging to "stay the course" toward your personal and collective goals.

   A group's facilitator, thus, needs to make sure that interruptions and disruptions don't derail it. In fact, he or she might profit from actually celebrating these elements of life, as one Seattle office executive did. According to Dale Turner, the executive's office had a sign on the wall

reading "Don't be irritated by interruptions. They are your reason for being." Turner went on to quote the executive as saying "Happily, I have learned how to sit loose in the saddle of life, and I'm not usually disturbed by interruptions. I have made it a habit through the years to leave a stretch factor in my daily schedule. I start early and have tried not to so crowd my day with appointments that I have no time for the unexpected. I have not seen interruptions as an intrusion."Turner, D. (1991, March 23). Slaves of habit—we lose when there's no room for interruptions in our lives. *Seattle Times*. Retrieved from ProQuest Database.

5. Keep returning to the task. You've probably been part of a group in which the leader or facilitator had what might be called a divergent, rather than a convergent, personality. Perhaps that person had lots of good ideas but seemed to jump around from topic to topic and chore to chore so much that your head spun and you couldn't keep track of what was going on. Maybe the person "missed the forest for the trees" because of dwelling excessively on minutia—small and insignificant details. Or perhaps each time you met with the group its facilitator led a discussion of something valuable and important, but every time it was a different thing.

The organizational theorist Anthony Jay wrote that it's important for leaders to "look for problems through a telescope, not a microscope."Jay, A. (1967). *Management and Machiavelli: An inquiry into the politics of corporate life.* New York: Bantam Books. He also contended that, as far as a leader is concerned, "other people can cope with the waves, it's [the leader's] job to watch the tide." By these comments, Jay meant that the

primary duty of a group facilitator is to maintain an unwavering focus on the group's central tasks, whatever they may be.

The Dalai Lama has written, "Whether you are a spiritual leader or a leader in an organization, it is your job to inspire faith."His Holiness the Dalai Lama & Muyzenberg, L. (2009). *The leader's way: The art of making the right decisions in our careers, our companies, and the world at large.* New York: Broadway Books. Slogans, mottos, mission statements, quotations, logos, and written objectives can all contribute to a facilitator's ability to inspire faith by maintaining a group's focus and resolve to move in a common direction. Busy students and others in our society often need reminders like these to block out the competing stimuli surrounding them and focus their attention. Such mechanisms, however, should not be merely gimmicks, nor should they be used to promote blind faith in the group's facilitator.

Another way to think of how a facilitator should keep bringing the group's attention back to its tasks relates to the process of meditation. Practitioners of meditation know that people's minds are naturally active and tend to move readily from subject to subject. When someone is meditating, they say, thoughts will naturally pop into his or her mind. The way to deal with this phenomenon is to regard the thoughts as clouds drifting across the sky. Rather than trying to banish them, the better approach is to allow them to pass by and dissipate, and then to return to serene contemplation.Rondon, N. (2006, Meditate. *Current Health 2* (32), 20–23. Retrieved from ProQuest Database

Coliberation

Above all, a facilitator's responsibility is to enable members of a group to function together as easily and happily as possible as they pursue their goals. When this happens, the group will achieve a high level of collaboration. In fact, it may rise beyond collaboration to achieve what the author and computer game designer Bernard DeKoven called "*coliberation*." In speaking about meetings, he had this to say: "Good meetings aren't just about work. They're about fun—keeping people charged up. It's more than collaboration, it's 'coliberation'—people freeing each other up to think more creatively."Matson, E. (1996, April-May). The seven sins of deadly meetings. *Fast Company*, 122.

Key Takeaway

- To facilitate a task-oriented group requires several skills and behaviors and can lead to a state of "coliberation."

Exercises

1. Recall a time when you were in a group whose leader stressed either its task or relationship factors too much. How did the members of the group react? Did the leader eventually develop an equilibristic approach?
2. Do you agree with the business executive who said that interruptions are "your reason for being"? In your studies and family life, what measures do you take to ensure that interruptions are beneficial rather than destructive? What further steps do you feel you might take in this direction?

3. Think of someone who effectively facilitated a group you were part of. Did the person perform the job identified by the Dalai Lama—inspiring faith in the group? If so, how?

4. What, if anything, do you feel members of most groups need to be "coliberated" from?

6.3 Summary

In this chapter we have explored problem-solving in groups. We have identified steps which groups can use to attack and solve problems, as well as several methods of reaching decisions. We have considered the nature of group creativity and reviewed how brainstorming may contribute to creative problem-solving and decision-making. Finally, we have identified methods which can be used to facilitate the problem-solving and decision-making behavior or task-oriented groups. Following systematic, sequential processes can help groups communicate in ways which resolve problems and lead to appropriate decisions.

Review Questions

Interpretive Questions

1. In what 2–3 ways has your view of problem-solving or decision-making changed as a result of reading this chapter?

2. Under what circumstances, or with what kinds of group members, do you feel brainstorming is most likely to produce better results than other methods of generating creative ideas?

Application Questions

1. Call the office of a state senator or representative. Ask the person who answers the phone to provide you with a list of five creative ideas the legislator has put forth to solve problems facing his or her constituency. If you wanted to expand on the list, who else would you consult, and what process would you use to generate more ideas?

2. Pick two historical figures who you believe made it easy for people they lived or worked with to achieve shared goals. Find two or three descriptions of episodes in which those figures took action demonstrating that capacity. Identify someone leading a group of which you're now a member and share the information about the historical figures with that person. What is the person's reaction? What do you feel might have made the leader's response more positive?

3. Look up the phrase "group decision support system" on line and locate 4–5 software programs meant to assist groups with decisions. List advantages and disadvantages of each and share your conclusions with your classmates.

Additional Resources

https://www.deepfun.com/coliberation-the-short-form/: Bernard "Bernie" De Koven's blog. A source of provocative ideas on why and how to indulge in creative fun as part of a group.

https://www.co-intelligence.org/I-decisionmakingwithout.html ("How to Make a Decision Without Making a Decision"): An article describing how guided "non-decision-making" can be used by groups to discover what the author refers to as "big obvious truths."

http://www.tobe.net/: The website of Dynamic Facilitation Associates, a non-profit organization dedicated to teaching groups how to create choices through intentional facilitation. One of the site's pages, describes "Co-Counseling" and compassionate communication as further facilitation tools.

6.4 Group Problem-Solving

Learning Objective

1. Identify and describe how to implement seven steps for group problem-solving.

No matter who you are or where you live, problems are an inevitable part of life. This is true for groups as well as for individuals. Some groups—especially work teams—are formed specifically to solve problems. Other groups encounter problems for a wide variety of reasons. Within a family group, a problem might be

that a daughter or son wants to get married and the parents do not approve of the marriage partner. In a work group, a problem might be that some workers are putting in more effort than others, yet achieving poorer results. Regardless of the problem, having the resources of a group can be an advantage, as different people can contribute different ideas for how to reach a satisfactory solution.

Once a group encounters a problem, the questions that come up range from "Where do we start?" to "How do we solve it?" While there are many ways to approach a problem, the American educational philosopher John Dewey's reflective thinking sequence has stood the test of time. This seven step processAdler, R. (1996). *Communicating at work: principles and practices for business and the professions.* Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill. has produced positive results and serves as a handy organizational structure. If you are member of a group that needs to solve a problem and don't know where to start, consider these seven simple stepsMcLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication.* Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.:

1. Define the problem.
2. Analyze the problem.
3. Establish criteria.
4. Consider possible solutions.
5. Decide on a solution.
6. Implement the solution.
7. Follow up on the solution.

Let's discuss each step in detail.

Define the Problem

If you don't know what the problem is, how can you know you've solved it? Defining the problem allows the group to set boundaries of what the problem is and what it is not; and begin to formalize a description or definition of the scope, size, or extent of the challenge the group will address. A problem that is too broadly defined can overwhelm the group. If the problem is too narrowly defined, important information will be missed or ignored.

In the following example, we have a web-based company called Favorites which needs to increase its customer base and ultimately sales. A problem-solving group has been formed, and they start by formulating a working definition of the problem.

- **Too Broad:** "Sales are off, our numbers are down, and we need more customers."

- **More Precise:** "Sales have been slipping incrementally for 6 of the past 9 months and are significantly lower than a seasonally adjusted comparison to last year. Overall this loss represents a 4.5% reduction in sales from the same time last year. However, when we break it down by product category, sales of our non-edible products have seen a modest but steady increase, while sales of edibles account for the drop off and we need to halt the decline."

Analyze the Problem

Now the group analyzes the problem, trying to gather information and learn more. The problem is complex and requires more than one area of expertise. Why do non-edible products continue selling well? What is it about the edibles that is turning customers off? Let's meet our problem-solvers at Favorites.

Kevin is responsible for customer resource management. He is involved with the customer from the point of initial contact through purchase and delivery. Most of the interface is automated in the form of an online "basket model," where photographs and product descriptions are accompanied by "Buy It" buttons. He is available during normal working business hours for live chat and voice interface if needed, and customers are invited to request additional information. Most Favorites customers do not access this service, but Kevin is kept quite busy, as he also handles returns and complaints. Because Kevin believes that superior service retains customers while attracting new ones, he is always interested in better ways to serve the customer. Looking at edibles and non-edibles, he will study the cycle of customer service and see if there are any common points, from the main webpage through the catalog to the purchase process to returns, at which customers abandon the sale. He has existing customer feedback loops with end-of-sale surveys, but most customers decline to take the survey and there is currently no incentive to participate.

Mariah is responsible for products and purchasing. She wants to offer the best products at the lowest price, and to offer new products that are unusual, rare, or exotic. She regularly adds new products to the Favorites catalog and culls

underperformers. Right now she has the data on every product and its sales history, but it is a challenge to represent it. She will analyze current sales data and produce a report that specifically identifies how each product, edible and non-edible, is performing. She wants to highlight "winners" and "losers" but also recognizes that today's "losers" may be the hit of tomorrow. It is hard to predict constantly changing tastes and preferences, but that is part of her job. It's not all science, and it's not all art. She has to have an eye for what will catch on tomorrow while continuing to provide what is hot today.

Suri is responsible for data management at Favorites. She gathers, analyzes, and presents information gathered from the supply chain, sales, and marketing. She works with vendors to make sure products are available when needed, makes sales predictions based on past sales history, and assesses the effectiveness of marketing campaigns.

The problem-solving group members already have certain information on hand. They know that customer retention is one contributing factor. Attracting new customers is a constant goal, but they are aware of the well-known principle that it takes more effort to attract new customers than to keep existing ones. Thus, it is important to ensure a quality customer service experience for existing customers and encourage them to refer friends. The group needs to determine how to promote this favorable customer behavior.

Another contributing factor seems to be that customers often abandon the shopping cart before completing a purchase, especially when purchasing edibles. The group members need to learn more about why this is happening.

Establish Criteria

Establishing the criteria for a solution is the next step. At this point, information is coming in from diverse perspectives, and each group member has contributed information from their perspective, even though there may be several points of overlap.

Kevin: Customers who complete the post-sale survey indicate that they want to know 1) what is the estimated time of delivery, 2) why a specific item was not in stock and when it will be, and 3) why their order sometimes arrives with less than a complete order, with some items back-ordered, without prior notification.

He notes that a very small percentage of customers complete the post-sale survey, and the results are far from scientific. He also notes that it appears the interface is not capable of cross-checking inventory to provide immediate information concerning back orders, so that the customer "buys it" only to learn several days later that it was not in stock. This seems to be especially problematic for edible products, because people may tend to order them for special occasions like birthdays and anniversaries. But we don't really know this for sure because of the low participation in the post-sale survey.

Mariah: There are four edible products that frequently sell out. So far, we haven't been able to boost the appeal of other edibles so that people would order them as a second choice when these sales leaders aren't available. We also have several rare, exotic products that are slow movers. They have potential, but currently are underperformers.

Suri: We know from a zip code analysis that most of our customers are from a few specific geographic areas associated with above-average incomes. We have very few credit cards declined, and the average sale is over $100. Shipping costs represent on average 8% of the total sales cost. We do not have sufficient information to produce a customer profile. There is no specific point in the purchase process where basket abandonment tends to happen; it happens fairly uniformly at all steps.

Consider Possible Solutions to the Problem

The group has listened to each other and now starts to brainstorm ways to address the challenges they have identified while focusing resources on those solutions that are more likely to produce results.

Kevin: Is it possible for our programmers to create a cross-index feature, linking the product desired with a report of how many are in stock? I'd like the customer to know right away whether it is in stock, or how long they may have to wait. As another idea, is it possible to add incentives to the purchase cycle that won't

negatively impact our overall profit? I'm thinking a small volume discount on multiple items, or perhaps free shipping over a specific dollar amount.

Mariah: I recommend we hold a focus group where customers can sample our edible products and tell us what they like best and why. When the best sellers are sold out, could we offer a discount on related products to provide an instant alternative? We might also cull the underperforming products with a liquidation sale to generate interest.

Suri: If we want to know more about our customers, we need to give them an incentive to complete the post-sale survey. How about a five percent off coupon code for the next purchase, to get them to return and to help us better identify our customer base? We may also want to build in a customer referral rewards program, but it all takes better data in to get results out. We should also explore the supply side of the business and see if we can get a more reliable supply of the leading products, and try to get more advantageous discounts from our suppliers, especially in the edible category.

Decide on a Solution

Kevin, Mariah, and Suri may want to implement all of the solution strategies, but they do not have the resources to do them all. They'll complete a *cost/benefit analysis*, which ranks each solution according to its probable impact. The analysis is shown in the table below titled "Cost/Benefit Analysis".

Source	Proposed Solution	Cost	Benefit	Comment
Kevin	Integrate the cross-index feature	High	High	Many of our competitors already have this feature
Kevin	Volume discount	Low	Medium	May increase sales slightly
Kevin	Free shipping	Low	Low	This has a downside in making customers more aware of shipping costs if their order doesn't qualify for free shipping
Mariah	Hold a focus group to taste edible products	High	Medium	Difficult to select participants representative of our customer base
Mariah	Search for alternative products to high performers	Medium	Medium	We can't know for sure which products customers will like best
Mariah	Liquidate underperformers	Low	Low	Might create a "bargain basement" impression inconsistent with our brand
Suri	Incentive for post-sale survey completion	Low	Medium	Make sure the incentive process is easy for the customer
Suri	Incentive for customer referrals	Low	Medium	People may feel uncomfortable referring friends if it is seen as putting them in a marketing role
Suri	Find a more reliable supply of top-selling edibles	Medium	High	We already know customers want these products
Suri	Negotiate better discounts from vendors	Low	High	If we can do this without alienating our best vendors, it will be a win-win

Table: Cost/Benefit Analysis

Now that the options have been presented with their costs and benefits, it is easier for the group to decide which courses of action are likely to yield the best outcomes. The analysis helps the group members to see beyond the immediate cost of implementing a given solution. For example, Kevin's suggestion of offering free shipping won't cost Favorites much money, but it also may not pay off in customer goodwill. And even though Mariah's suggestion of having a focus group might sound like a good idea, it will be expensive and its benefits are questionable.

A careful reading of the analysis indicates that Kevin's best suggestion is to integrate the cross-index feature in the ordering process so that customers can know immediately whether an item is in stock or on back order. Of Mariah's suggestions, searching for alternative products is probably the most likely to benefit Favorites. And Suri's two supply-side suggestions are likely to result in positive outcomes.

Implement the Solution

Kevin is faced with the challenge of designing the computer interface without incurring unacceptable costs. He strongly believes that the interface will pay for itself within the first year—or, to put if more bluntly, that Favorites' declining sales will get worse if the website does not soon have this feature. He asks to meet with top management to get budget approval and secures their agreement, on one condition: He must negotiate a compensation schedule with the Information Technology consultants that includes delayed compensation in the form of bonuses after the feature has been up and running successfully for six months.

Mariah knows that searching for alternative products is a never-ending process, but it takes time and the company needs results. She decides to invest time evaluating products that competing companies currently offer, especially in the edible category, on the theory that customers who find their desired items sold out on the Favorites website may have been buying alternative products elsewhere instead of choosing an alternative from Favorites' product lines.

Suri decides to approach the vendors of the four frequently sold-out products and ask point blank: "What would it take to get you to produce these items more reliably in greater quantities?" By opening the channel of communication with these vendors, she is able to motivate them to make modifications that will improve the reliability and quantity. She also approaches the vendors of the less popular products with a request for better discounts in return for cooperation in developing and test-marketing new products.

Follow up on the Solution

Kevin: After several beta tests, the cross-index feature was implemented and has been in place for 30 days. Now customers see either "In stock" or "Available [mo/da/yr]" in the shopping basket. As expected, Kevin notes a decrease in the number of chat and phone inquiries to the effect of, "Will this item arrive before my wife's birthday?" However, he notes an increase in inquiries asking "Why isn't this item in stock?" It is difficult to tell whether customer satisfaction is higher overall.

Mariah: In exploring the merchandise available from competing merchants, she got several ideas for modifying Favorites' product line to offer more flavors and other variations on popular edibles. Working with vendors, she found that these modifications cost very little. Within the first 30 days of adding these items to the product line, sales are up. Mariah believes these additions also serve to enhance the Favorites brand identity, but she has no data to back this up.

Suri: So far, the vendors supplying the four top-selling edibles have fulfilled their promise of increasing quantity and reliability. However, three of the four items have still sold out, raising the question of whether Favorites needs to bring in one or more additional vendors to produce these items. Of the vendors with which Favorites asked to negotiate better discounts, some refused, and two of these were "stolen" by a competing merchant so that they no longer sell to Favorites. In addition, one of the vendors that agreed to give a better discount was unexpectedly forced to cease operations for several weeks because of a fire.

This scenario allows us to see the problem may have many dimensions, and may have several solutions, but resources can be limited and not every solution is successful. Even though the problem is not immediately resolved, the group problem-solving pattern serves as a useful guide through the problem-solving process.

Key Takeaway

- Group problem-solving can be an orderly process when it is broken down into seven specific stages.

Exercises

1. Think of a problem encountered in the past by a group of which you are a member. How did the group solve the problem? How satisfactory was the solution? Discuss your results with your classmates.
2. Consider again the problem you described in Exercise #1. In view of the seven-step framework, which steps did the group utilize? Would following

the full seven-step framework have been helpful? Discuss your opinion with a classmate.

3. Research one business that you would like to know more about and see if you can learn about how they communicate in groups and teams Compare your results with those of classmates.

4. Think of a decision you will be making some time in the near future. Apply the cost/benefit analysis framework to your decision. Do you find this method helpful? Discuss your results with classmates.

6.5 Group Decision-Making

Learning Objectives

1. Define decision-making and distinguish between decision-making and problem-solving.

2. Describe five methods of group decision-making.

3. Identify six guidelines for consensus decision-making.

4. Define autocratic, democratic, and participative decision-making styles and place them within the Tannenbaum-Schmidt continuum.

Life is the sum of all your choices.

Albert Camus

Simply put, *decision-making* is the process of choosing among options and arriving at a position, judgment, or action. It usually answers a "wh-" question—i.e., what, who, where, or when?—or perhaps a "how" question.

A group may, of course, make a decision in order to solve a problem. For instance, a group of students might discover halfway through a project that some of its members are failing to contribute to the required work. They might then decide to develop a written timeline and a set of deadlines for itself if it believes that action will lead them out of their difficulty.

Not every group decision, however, will be in response to a problem. Many decisions relate to routine *logistical* matters such as when and where to schedule an event or how to reach someone who wasn't able to make it to a meeting. Thus, decision-making differs from problem-solving.

Any decision-making in a group, even about routine topics, is significant. Why? Because decision-making, like problem-solving, results in a change in a group's status, posture, or stature. Such change, in turn, requires energy and attention on the part of a group in order for the group to progress easily into a new reality. Things will be different in the group once a problem has been solved or a decision has been reached, and group members will need to adjust.

Methods of Reaching Decisions

Research does indicate that groups generate more ideas and make more accurate decisions on matters for which a known preferred solution exists, but

they also operate more slowly than individuals.Hoy, W.K., & Miskel, C.G. (1982). *Educational administration: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Random House. Under time pressure and other constraints, some group leaders exercise their power to make a decision *unilaterally*—alone—because they're willing to sacrifice a degree of accuracy for the sake of speed. Sometimes this behavior turns out to be wise; sometimes it doesn't.

Assuming that a group determines that it must reach a decision together on some matter, rather than deferring to the will of a single person, it can proceed according to several methods. Parker and Hoffman Parker, G., & Hoffman, R. (2006). *Meeting excellence: 33 tools to lead meetings that get results.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass., along with Hartley and Dawson Hartley, P., & Dawson, M. (2010). *Success in groupwork.* New York: St. Martin's Press., place decision-making procedures in several categories. Here is a synthesis of their views of how decision-making can take place:

1. "A plop."

   A group may conduct a discussion in which members express views and identify alternatives but then reach no decision and take no action. When people go their own ways after such a "*plop*," things sometimes take care of themselves, and the lack of a decision causes no difficulties. On the other hand, if a group ignores or postpones a decision which really needs attention, its members may confront tougher decisions later—some of which may deal with problems brought about by not addressing a topic when it was at an early stage.

2. Delegation to an expert.

   A group may not be ready to make a decision at a given time, either because it lacks sufficient information or is experiencing unresolved conflict among members with differing views. In such a situation, the group may not want to simply drop the matter and move on. Instead, it may turn to one of its members who everyone feels has the expertise to choose wisely among the alternatives that the group is considering. The group can either ask the expert to come back later with a final proposal or simply allow the person to make the decision alone after having gathered whatever further information he or she feels is necessary.

3. Averaging.

   Group members may shift their individual stances regarding a question by "splitting the difference" to reach a "middle ground." This technique tends to work most easily if numbers are involved. For instance, a group trying to decide how much money to spend on a gift for a departing member might ask everyone for a preferred amount and agree to spend whatever is computed by averaging those amounts.

4. Voting.

   If you need to be quick and definitive in making a decision, voting is probably the best method. Everyone in mainstream American society is familiar with the process, for one thing, and its outcome is inherently clear and obvious. A *majority vote* requires that more than half of a

group's members vote for a proposal, whereas a proposal subject to a *two-thirds vote* will not pass unless twice as many members show support as those who oppose it.

Voting is essentially a win/lose activity. You can probably remember a time when you or someone else in a group composed part of a strong and passionate minority whose desires were thwarted because of the results of a vote. How much commitment did you feel to support the results of that vote?

Voting does offer a quick and simple way to reach decisions, but it works better in some situations than in others. If the members of a group see no other way to overcome a deadlock, for instance, voting may make sense. Likewise, very large groups and those facing serious time constraints may see advantages to voting. Finally, the efficiency of voting is appealing when it comes to making routine or noncontroversial decisions that need only to be officially approved.

5. Consensus.

In consensus decision-making, group members reach a resolution which all of the members can support as being acceptable as a means of accomplishing some mutual goal even though it may not be the preferred choice for everyone. In common use, "consensus" can range in meaning from unanimity to a simple majority vote. In public policy facilitation and multilateral international negotiations, however, the term refers to a general agreement reached after discussions and consultations, usually without voting."consensus". (2002). In *Dictionary*

of Conflict Resolution, Wiley. Retrieved from

http://www.credoreference.com/

Consensus should not be confused with *unanimity*, which means only that no one has explicitly stated objections to a proposal or decision. Although unanimity can certainly convey an accurate perspective of a group's views at times, groupthink also often leads to unanimous decisions. Therefore, it's probably wise to be cautious when a group of diverse people seems to have formed a totally unified block with respect to choices among controversial alternatives.

When a consensus decision is reached through full interchange of views and is then adopted *in good faith* by all parties to a discussion, it can energize and motivate a group. Besides avoiding the win/lose elements intrinsic to voting, it converts each member's investment in a decision into a stake in preserving and promoting the decision after it has been agreed upon.

Guidelines for Seeking Consensus

How can a group actually go about working toward consensus? Here are some guidelines for the process:

First, be sure everyone knows the definition of consensus and is comfortable with observing them. For many group members, this may mean suspending judgment and trying something they've never done before. Remind people that consensus

requires a joint dedication to moving forward toward improvement in and by the group.

Second, endeavor to solicit participation by every member of the group. Even the naturally quietest person should be actively "polled" from time to time for his or her perspectives. In fact, it's a good idea to take special pains to ask for varied viewpoints when discussion seems to be stalled or contentious.

Third, listen honestly and openly to each group member's viewpoints. Attempt to seek and gather information from others. Do your best to subdue your emotions and your tendency to judge and evaluate.

Fourth, be patient. To reach consensus often takes much more time than voting would. A premature "agreement" reached because people give in to speed things up or avoid conflict is likely later to weaken or fall apart.

Fifth, always look for mutually acceptable ways to make it through challenging circumstances. Don't resort to chance mechanisms like flipping a coin, and don't trade decisions arbitrarily just so that things come out equally for people who remain committed to opposing views.

Sixth, resolve gridlock earnestly. Stop and ask, "Have we really identified every possible feasible way that our group might act?" If members of a group simply can't agree on one alternative, see if they can all find and accept a next-best option. Then be sure to request an explicit statement from them that they are prepared to genuinely commit themselves to that option.

One variation on consensus decision-making calls upon a group's leader to ask its members, before initiating a discussion, to agree to a deadline and a "safety valve." The deadline would be a time by which everyone in the group feels they need to have reached a decision. The "safety valve" would be a statement that any member can veto the will of the rest of the group to act in a certain way, but only if he or she takes responsibility for moving the group forward in some other positive direction.

Although consensus entails full participation and assent within a group, it usually can't be reached without guidance from a leader. One college president we knew was a master at escorting his executive team to consensus. Without coercing or rushing them, he would regularly involve them all in discussions and lead their conversations to a point at which everyone was nodding in agreement, or at least conveying acceptance of a decision. Rather than leaving things at that point, however, the president would generally say, "We seem to have reached a decision to do XYZ. Is there anyone who objects?" Once people had this last opportunity to add further comments of their own, the group could move forward with a sense that it had a common vision in mind.

Consensus decision-making is easiest within groups whose members know and respect each other, whose authority is more or less evenly distributed, and whose basic values are shared. Some charitable and religious groups meet these conditions and have long been able to use consensus decision-making as a matter of principle. The Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers, began using consensus as early as the 17th century. Its affiliated international service agency,

the American Friends Service Committee, employs the same approach. The Mennonite Church has also long made use of consensus decision-making.

Decision-Making by Leaders

People in the business world often need to make decisions in groups composed of their associates and employees. Take the case of a hypothetical businessperson, Kerry Cash.

Kerry owns and manages Wenatcheese, a shop which sells gourmet local and imported cheese. Since opening five years ago, the business has overcome the challenge of establishing itself and has built a solid clientele. Sales have tripled. Two full-time and four part-time employees—all productive, reliable, and customer-friendly—have made the store run efficiently and bolstered its reputation.

Now, with Christmas and the New Year coming, Kerry wants to decide, "Shall I open another shop in the spring?" Because the year-end rush is on, there's not a lot of time to weigh pros and cons.

As the diagram indicates, many managers in Kerry's situation employ two means to make decisions like this: intuition and analysis. They'll feel their gut instinct, analyze appropriate financial facts, or do a little bit of both.

Unfortunately, this kind of dualistic decision-making approach restricts an individual leader's options. It doesn't do justice to the complexity of the group

environment. It also fails to fully exploit the power and relevance of other people's knowledge.

Too much feeling may produce arbitrary outcomes. And, as the management theorist Peter Drucker observed, too much fact can create stagnation and "*analysis paralysis*": "(A)n overload of information, that is, anything much beyond what is truly needed, leads to information blackout. It does not enrich, but impoverishes."Drucker, P.F. (1993). *The effective executive.* New York: Harperbusiness.

Fortunately, a couple of authorities wrote an article in 1973 which can help members of groups assess and strengthen the quality of their decision-making Tannenbaum, R., & Schmidt, W. (1973, May-June). How to choose a leadership pattern. *Harvard Business Review,* 3–11. Robert Tannenbaum and Warren Schmidt were those authorities. Their article so appealed to American readers that more than one million reprints eventually sold.

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Chapter 7: Working with Diversity in Small Groups

*We should never denigrate any other culture but rather help
people to understand the relationship between their own
culture and the dominant culture. When you understand
another culture or language, it does not mean that you have
to lose your own culture.*

Edward T. Hall

*I've been traveling all over the world for 25 years,
performing, talking to people, studying their cultures and
musical instruments, and I always come away with more
questions in my head than can be answered.*

Yo-Yo Ma

Getting Started

As a professional in the modern community, you need to be aware that the very
concept of community is undergoing a fundamental transformation. Throughout
the world's history—until recently—a community was defined by its geographic
boundaries. A merchant supplied salt and sugar, and people made what they

needed. The products the merchant sold were often produced locally because the cost of transportation was significant. A transcontinental railroad brought telegraph lines, shipping routes, and brought ports together from coast to coast. Shipping that once took months and years was now measured in days. A modern highway system and cheap oil products allowed for that measurement unit to be reduced to days and minutes. Just in time product delivery reduced storage costs, from renting a warehouse at the port to spoilage in transit. As products sold, bar code and RDIF tagged items instantly updated inventories and initiated orders at factories all over the world.

Communication, both oral and written, linked communities in ways that we failed to recognize until economic turmoil in one place led to job loss, in a matter of days and minutes, thousands of miles away. A system of trade and the circulation of capital and goods that once flowed relatively seamlessly has been challenged by change, misunderstanding, and conflict. People learn of political, economic, and military turmoil that is instantly translated into multiple market impacts. Integrated markets and global networks bind us together in ways we are just now learning to appreciate, anticipate, and understand. Intercultural and international communication are critical areas of study with readily apparent, real-world consequences.

Agrarian, industrial, and information ages gave way to global business, and brought the importance of communication across cultures to the forefront. The Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, Thomas Friedman ((Friedman, T. (2005). *The world is flat: a brief history of the twenty-first century*. New York: Farrar, Straus &

Giroux.)) calls this new world "flat," noting how the integration of markets and community had penetrated the daily lives of nearly everyone on the planet, regardless of language or culture. While the increasing ease of telecommunications and travel have transformed our individual and group interactions, Friedman ((Friedman, T. (2009). *Starred review*. Retrieved April 29, 2009, from Publishers Weekly:

http://www.thomaslfriedman.com/bookshelf/the-world-is-flat)) argues that "the dawning 'flat world' is a jungle pitting 'lions' and 'gazelles,' where 'economic stability is not going to be a feature' and 'the weak will fall farther behind.'"Friedman, T. (2009). *Starred review*. Retrieved April 29, 2009, from Publishers Weekly: *http://www.thomaslfriedman.com/bookshelf/the-world-is-flat* Half of the world's population, who earn less than $2 U.S. a day, felt the impact of a reduction in trade and fluctuations in commodity prices even though they may not have known any of the details. Rice, for example, became an even more valuable commodity than ever, and to the individuals who could not find it, grow it, or earn enough to buy it, the hunger felt was personal and global. International trade took on a new level of importance.

Intercultural and international communication has taken on a new role for students as well as career professionals. Knowing when the European and Asian markets open has become mandatory; so has awareness of multiple time zones and their importance in relation to trade, shipping, and the production cycle. Managing production in China from an office in Chicago has become common. Receiving technical assistance for your computer often means connecting with a well-educated English speaker in New Delhi. We compete with each other via

ELance.com or oDesk.com for contracts and projects, selecting the currency of choice for each bid as we can be located anywhere on the planet. Communities are no longer linked as simply "brother" and "sister" cities in symbolic partnerships. They are linked in the daily trade of goods and services.

In this chapter we explore this dynamic aspect of communication. If the foundation of communication is important, its application in this context is critical. As Europe once formed intercontinental alliances for the trade of metals, leading to the development of a common currency, trade zone, and new concept of nation-state, now North and South America are following with increased integration. Major corporations are no longer affiliated with only one country, or one country's interests, but perceive the integrated market as team members across global trade. "Made in X" is more of a relative statement as products, from cars to appliances to garments, now come with a list of where components were made, assembled, and what percentage corresponds to each nation.

Global business is more than trade between companies located in distinct countries; indeed, that concept is already outdated. Intercultural and international business focuses less on the borders that separate people and more on the communication that brings them together. Business communication values clear, concise interaction that promotes efficiency and effectiveness. Effective teams and groups are the core of this interaction. You may perceive your role as a communicator within a specific city, business or organization, but you need to be aware that your role crosses cultures, languages, value and legal systems, and borders.

7.1 Intercultural Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Define and discuss how to facilitate intercultural communication.

2. Define and discuss the effects of ethnocentrism.

Communication is the sharing of understanding and meaning, Pearson, J., & Nelson, P. (2000). *An introduction to human communication: understanding and sharing*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill. but what is intercultural communication? If you answered, "the sharing of understanding and meaning across cultures," you'd be close, but the definition requires more attention. What is a culture? Where does one culture stop and another start? How are cultures created, maintained, and dissolved? KlopfKlopf, D. (1991). *Intercultural encounters: the fundamentals of intercultural communication* (2nd ed.). Inglewood, CA: Morton Publishing Company. described culture as "that part of the environment made by humans." From the building we erect that represents design values to the fences we install that delineate borders, our environment is a representation of culture, but it is not all that is culture.

Culture involves beliefs, attitudes, values, and traditions that are shared by a group of people. Thus, we must consider more than the clothes we wear, the movies we watch, or the video games we play, all representations of environment, as culture. Culture also involves the psychological aspects of our expectations of the communication context. For example, if we are raised in a

culture where males speak while females are expected to remain silent, the context of the communication interaction governs behavior, itself a representation of culture. From the choice of words (message), to how we communicate (in person, or by email), to how we acknowledge understanding with a nod or a glance (nonverbal feedback), to the internal and external interference, all aspects of communication are influenced by culture.

In defining intercultural communication, we only have eight components of communication to work with, and yet we must bridge divergent cultures with distinct values across languages and time zones to exchange value, a representation of meaning. It may be tempting to consider only the source and receiver within a transaction as a representation of intercultural communication, but if we do that, we miss the other six components—the message, channel, feedback, context, environment, and interference—in every communicative act. Each component influences and is influenced by culture. Is culture context? Environment? Message? Culture is represented in all eight components every time we communicate. All communication is intercultural.

We may be tempted to think of intercultural communication as interaction between two people from different countries. While two distinct national passports may be *artifacts*, or nonverbal representations of communication, what happens when two people from two different parts of the same country communicate? From high and low Germanic dialects, to the perspective of a Southerner versus a Northerner in the United States, to the rural versus urban

dynamic, our geographic, linguistic, educational, sociological, and psychological traits influence our communication.

It is not enough to say that someone from rural Southern Chile and the capital, Santiago, both speak *Castellano* (the Chilean word for the Spanish language), so that communication between them must be *intracultural communication*, or communication within the same culture. What is life like for the rural Southerner? For the city dweller? Were their educational experiences the same? Do they share the same vocabulary? Do they value the same things? To a city dweller, all the sheep look the same. To the rural Southerner, the sheep are distinct, with unique markings; they have value as a food source, a source of wool with which to create sweaters and socks that keep the cold winters at bay, and, in their numbers, they represent wealth. Even if both Chileans speak the same language, their socialization will influence how they communicate and what they value, and their vocabulary will reflect these differences.

Let's take this intra-national comparison one step further. Within the same family, can there be intercultural communication? If all communication is intercultural, then the answer would be yes, but we still have to prove our case. Imagine a three-generation family living in one house. The grandparents may represent another time, and different values, from the grandchildren. The parents may have a different level of education and pursue different careers from the grandparents; the schooling the children are receiving may prepare them for yet another career. From music, to food preferences, to how work is done may vary across time; Elvis Presley may seem like ancient history to the children. The communication

across generations represents intercultural communication, even if only to a limited degree.

But suppose we have a group of students who are all similar in age and educational level. Do gender and the societal expectations of roles influence interaction? Of course. And so we see that, among these students, the boys and girls not only communicate in distinct ways, but not all boys and girls are the same. With a group of sisters, there may be common characteristics, but they will still have differences, and these differences contribute to intercultural communication. We are each shaped by our upbringing and it influences our world view, what we value, and how we interact with each other. We create culture, and it creates us.

Rogers and Steinfatt ((Rogers, E., & Steinfatt, T. (1999). *Intercultural communication*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.)) define intercultural communication as the exchange of information between individuals who are "unalike culturally." If you follow our discussion and its implications, you may arrive at the idea that ultimately we are each a "culture of one"—we are simultaneously a part of community and its culture(s), and separate from it in the unique combination that represents us as an individual. All of us are separated by a matter of degrees from each other even if we were raised on the same street, by parents of similar educational background and profession, and have many other things in common.

Communication with yourself is called *intrapersonal communication*, and it may also be intracultural, as you may only represent one culture, but most people belong to many groups, each with their own culture. Within our imaginary intergenerational home, how many cultures do you think we might find? If we only consider the parents, and consider work one culture, and family another, we now have two. If we were to examine the options more closely, we would find many more groups, and the complexity would grow exponentially. Does a conversation with yourself ever involve competing goals, objectives, needs, wants, or values? How did you learn of those goals, or values? Through communication within and between individuals, they themselves representatives of many cultures. We struggle with the demands of each group, and their expectations, and could consider this internal struggle intercultural conflict, or simply intercultural communication.

Culture is part of the very fabric of our thought, and we cannot separate ourselves from it, even as we leave home, defining ourselves anew in work and achievement. Every business or organization has a culture, and within what may be considered a global culture, there are many subcultures or co-cultures. For example, consider the difference between the sales and accounting departments in a corporation: we can quickly see two distinct groups, with their own symbols, vocabulary, and values. Within each group there may also be smaller groups, and each member of each department comes from a distinct background that in itself influences behavior and interaction.

Intercultural communication is a fascinating area of study within group or organizational communication, and essential to your success. One idea to keep in mind as we examine this topic is the importance of considering multiple points of view. If you tend to dismiss ideas or views that are "unalike culturally," you will find it challenging to learn about diverse cultures. If you cannot learn, how can you grow and be successful?

Ethnocentrism is the tendency to view other cultures as inferior to one's own. Having pride in your culture can be healthy, but history has taught us that having a predisposition to discount other cultures simply because they are different can be hurtful, damaging, and dangerous. Ethnocentrism makes us far less likely to be able to bridge the gap with others and often increases intolerance of difference. Business and industry are no longer regional, and in your career you will necessarily cross borders, languages, and cultures. You will need tolerance, understanding, patience, and openness to difference. A skilled communicator knows that the process of learning is never complete, and being open to new ideas is a key strategy for success.

Key Takeaways

- Intercultural communication is an aspect of all communicative interactions, and attention to your own perspective is key to your effectiveness.
- Ethnocentrism is a major obstacle to intercultural communication.

Exercises

1. Please list five words to describe your dominant culture. Please list five words to describe a culture with which you are not a member, have little or no contact, or have limited knowledge. Now compare and contrast the terms noting their inherent value statements.

2. Identify a country you would like to visit. Research the country and find one interesting business fact and share it with the class.

3. Write a brief summary about a city, region, state, or country you have visited that is not like where you live. Share and compare with classmates.

7.2 How to Understand Intercultural Communication

Learning Objective

1. Describe strategies to understand intercultural communication, prejudice, and ethnocentrism.

The American anthropologist Edward T. Hall is often cited as a pioneer in the field of intercultural communication.Chen, G., & Starosta, W. (2000). *Foundations of intercultural communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. Born in 1914, Hall spent much of his early adulthood in the multicultural setting of the American Southwest, where Native Americans, Spanish-speakers, and descendants of pioneers came together from diverse cultural perspectives. He then traveled the globe during World War II and later served as a State Department official. Where

culture had once been viewed by anthropologists as a single, distinct way of living, Hall saw how the perspective of the individual influences interaction. By focusing on interactions, rather than cultures as separate from individuals, he asked us to evaluate the many cultures we ourselves belong to or are influenced by, as well as those with whom we interact. While his view makes the study of intercultural communication far more complex, it also brings a healthy dose of reality to the discussion. Hall is generally credited with eight contributions to our study of intercultural communication:Chen, G., & Starosta, W. (2000). *Foundations of intercultural communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.,Leeds-Hurwitz, W. (1990). Notes in the history of intercultural communication: the foreign service institute and the mandate for intercultural training. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 76*, 268–281.,McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

1. **Comparing cultures.** Focus on the interactions versus general observations of culture.

2. **Shift to local perspective.** Local level versus global perspective.

3. **You don't have to know everything to know something.** Time, space, gestures, and gender roles can be studied, even if we lack a larger understanding of the entire culture.

4. **There are rules we can learn.** People create rules for themselves in each community that we can learn from, compare, and contrast.

5. **Experience counts.** Personal experience has value in addition to more comprehensive studies of interaction and culture.

6. **Differences in perspective.** Descriptive linguistics serves as a model to understand cultures, and the US Foreign Service adopted it as a base for training.

7. **Application to International Business.** Foreign Service trainings yielded applications to trade and commerce, and became a point of study for business majors.

8. **Integration of the disciplines.** Culture and communication are intertwined, and bring together many academic disciplines.

Hall ((Hall, E. (1966). *The hidden dimension*. N.Y., NY: Doubleday.)) shows us that emphasis on a culture as a whole, and how it operates, may lead us to neglect individual differences. Individuals may hold beliefs or practice customs that do not follow their own cultural norm. When we resort to the mental shortcut of a stereotype, we lose these unique differences. Stereotypes can be defined as a generalization about a group of people that oversimplifies their culture.Rogers, E., & Steinfatt, T. (1999). *Intercultural communication*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

The American psychologist Gordon Allport ((Allport, G. (1958). *The nature of prejudice*. NY: Doubleday.)) explored how, when, and why we formulate or use stereotypes to characterize distinct groups. His results may not surprise you. When we do not have enough contact with people or their cultures to understand them well, we tend to resort to stereotypes.Allport, G. (1958). *The nature of prejudice*. NY: Doubleday.

As Hall ((Hall, E. (1966). *The hidden dimension*. N.Y., NY: Doubleday.)) notes, experience has value. If you do not know a culture, you should consider learning more about it firsthand if possible. The people you interact with may not be representative of the culture as a whole, that is not to say that what you learn lacks validity. Quite the contrary; Hall asserts that you can, in fact, learn something without understanding everything, and given the dynamic nature of communication and culture, who is to say that your lessons will not serve you well? Consider a study abroad experience if that is an option for you, or learn from a classmate who comes from a foreign country or an unfamiliar culture. Be open to new ideas and experiences, and start investigating. Many have gone before you, and today, unlike in generations past, much of the information is accessible. Your experiences will allow you to learn about another culture and yourself, and help you to avoid prejudice.

Prejudice involves a negative preconceived judgment or opinion that guides conduct or social behavior.McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. As an example, imagine two people walking into a room for a job interview. You are tasked to interview both, and having read the previous section, you know that Allport rings true when he says we rely on stereotypes when encountering people or cultures with which we have had little contact. Will the way these candidates dress, their age or gender influence your opinion of them? Will their race or ethnicity be a conscious or subconscious factor in your thinking process? Allport's work would indicate that those factors and more will make you likely to use stereotypes to guide your expectations of them and your subsequent interactions with them.

People who treat other with prejudice often make *assumptions*, or take preconceived ideas for granted without question, about the group or communities. As Gordon Allport illustrated for us, we often assume characteristics about groups with which we have little contact. Sometimes we also *assume similarity*, thinking that people are all basically similar. This denies cultural, racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and many other valuable, insightful differences.

Key Takeaway

- Ethnocentric tendencies, stereotyping, and assumptions of similarity can make it difficult to learn about cultural differences.

Exercises

1. People sometimes assume that learning about other cultures is unnecessary if we simply treat others as we would like to be treated. To test this assumption, try answering the following questions.
   1. When receiving a gift from a friend, should you open it immediately, or wait to open it in private?
   2. When grocery shopping, should you touch fruits and vegetables to evaluate their freshness?
   3. In a conversation with your instructor or your supervisor at work, should you maintain direct eye contact?
      Write down your answers before reading further. Now let's explore how these questions might be answered in various cultures.

4. In Chile, it is good manners to open a gift immediately and express delight and thanks. But in Japan it is a traditional custom to not open a gift in the giver's presence.

5. In the United States, shoppers typically touch, hold, and even smell fruits and vegetables before buying them. But in northern Europe this is strongly frowned upon.

6. In mainstream North American culture, people are expected to look directly at each other when having a conversation. But a cultural norm for many Native Americans involves keeping one's eyes lowered as a sign of respect when speaking to an instructor or supervisor.

   No one can be expected to learn all the "dos and don'ts" of the world's myriad cultures; instead, the key is to keep an open mind, be sensitive to other cultures, and remember that the way you'd like to be treated is not necessarily the way others would appreciate.

2. Please write a short paragraph where your perception of someone was changed once you got to know them. Share and compare with your classmates.

Section Attributions:

Chapter 8: Listening in Small Groups

Your mind is like a parachute. It works best when it's open.

Anonymous

If speaking is silver then listening is gold.

Turkish Proverb

Getting Started

Communicating involves the translation of your thoughts and ideas to words. Speaking or writing involves sharing your perspective with others. Listening, therefore, involves making sense of what is shared with us, and can require all of our attention. A Cuban saying captures it best: "Listening looks easy, but it's not simple. In every head is a world." For us to understand each other we have to listen, and make sense of each other's perspectives. In order for us to work effectively as a group or team, we need to listen to each other, not just hear each

other or wait for our turn to deliver a monologue, make our point, or convince others that we are right. Each group member brings a valuable perspective, indeed a world, to contribute to the team.

When group members interact, do you find yourself getting lost in your own thoughts. While text messages and other distractions can be powerful, the most distracting voice by far is our own internal monologue. If you silently talk to yourself, the action is a reflection of the communication process, but you play the role of audience. In your own head, you may make sense of your words and their meaning. You may have rehearsed your "lines" or what you want to say, and completing miss the turns and contributions in the conversation. Then, when I hear what you said, what you meant may escape me. I might not "get it" because I don't know you, your references, your perspectives, your word choices, your underlying meaning and motivation for speaking in the first place.

In this chapter we'll discuss perspectives, and how people perceive information, as we learn how communication is an imperfect bridge to understanding each other. It requires our constant attention, maintenance, and effort. Listening is anything but simple or easy.

Sometimes people mistake hearing for listening. Hearing involves the physiological process of recognizing sounds. Your ears receive and transmit the information to your brain. Once your brain receives the signals, then it starts to make sense to you. This is the listening stage, where you create meaning based on previous experiences and contextual cues to make sense of the sounds.

Knowing your team involves understanding others, and their perspectives, to see if they understand your words, examples, or the frames of reference you use to communicate your experiences, points and conclusions. Ask yourself when was the last time you had a miscommunication with someone. No doubt it was fairly recently, as it is for most people. It's not people's fault that language, both verbal and nonverbal, is an imperfect system. We can, however, take responsibility for the utility and limitations of language to try to gain a better understanding of how we can communicate more effectively. We can choose to actively listen to each other, and ask clarifying questions instead of rushing to judgment or making statement.

As a communicator, consider both the role of the speaker and the group, and not only what and how you want to communicate but what and how your team needs you to communicate with them in order to present an effective message.

Take, for example, the word "love." Yes, we recognize those four little letters all in a row, but what does it really mean? You can use it to describe the feelings and emotions associated with your mother, a partner, or perhaps your dog. Or you might say you love chocolate cake. Does your use of the word in any given context allow the audience to get any closer to what you mean by this word, "love?" The key here is context, which provides clues to how you mean the word, and what its use means to you. The context allows you to close the gap between your meaning of "love" and what the receiver, or group member, has in their range of understanding of the same word. Your experiences are certainly

different, but through clues, contexts, and attempts to understand each other's perspectives, we can often communicate more effectively.

Let's first follow the advice given by the character Polonius in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "to thine own self be true." This relates to the notion that you need to know yourself, or your perspective, before you can explore ways to know others and communicate more effectively. You will examine how you perceive stimuli, choosing some information over others, organizing the information according to your frame of reference, and interpreting it, deciding what it means to you and whether you should remember it or just ignore it and move on. We can recognize that not everyone tunes into the same music, trends in clothing, or even classes, so experiences or stimuli can have different meanings. Still, we can find common ground and communicate effectively, if we only choose to listen to each other.

8.1 Listening to Understand

Learning Objective

1. Explain the importance of becoming an active listener and reader.

As the popular author and Hollywood entrepreneur Wilson Mizner said, "A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after a while he knows something." Learning to listen to your conversational partner, customer, supplier, or supervisor is an important part of business communication. Too often, instead of listening we mentally rehearse what we want to say. Similarly, when we read, we

are often trying to multitask and therefore cannot read with full attention. Inattentive listening can cause us to miss much of what the speaker is sharing with us.

Communication involves the sharing and understanding of meaning, To fully share and understand, practice *active listening* so that you are fully attentive, fully present in the moment of interaction. Pay attention to both the actual words and for other clues to meaning, such as tone of voice or writing style. Look for opportunities for clarification and feedback when the time comes for you to respond, not before. Remember we hear with our ears, but listen with our brain, and sometimes it is all too easy to tune out the messenger or their message.

Active Listening

You've probably experienced the odd sensation of driving somewhere and, having arrived, have realized you don't remember driving. Your mind may have been filled with other issues and you drove on autopilot. It's dangerous when you drive, and it is dangerous in communication. Choosing to listen or read attentively takes effort. People communicate with words, expressions, and even in silence, and your attention to them will make you a better communicator. From discussions on improving customer service to retaining customers in challenging economic times, the importance of listening comes up frequently as a success strategy.

Here are some tips to facilitate active listening:

- Maintain eye contact with the speaker

- Don't interrupt

- Focus your attention on the message, not your own internal monologue

- Restate the message in your own words and ask if you understood correctly

- Ask clarifying questions to communicate interest and gain insight

When the Going Gets Tough

Our previous tips will serve you well in daily interactions, but suppose you have an especially difficult subject to discuss. In a difficult situation like this, it is worth taking extra effort to create an environment and context that will facilitate positive communication.

Here are some tips that may be helpful:

- **Special time.** To have the difficult conversation, set aside a special time when you will not be disturbed. Close the door and turn off the TV, music player, and instant messaging client.

- **Don't interrupt.** Keep silence while you let the other person "speak their piece." Make an effort to understand and digest the news without mental interruptions.

- **Non-judgmental.** Receive the message without judgment or criticism. Set aside your opinions, attitudes, and beliefs.

- **Acceptance.** Be open to the message being communicated, realizing that acceptance does not necessarily mean you agree with what is being said.

- **Take turns.** Wait until it is your turn to respond, then measure your response in proportion to the message that was delivered to you. Reciprocal turn-taking allows each person have their say.

- **Acknowledge.** Let the other person know that you have listened to the message or read it attentively.

- **Understanding.** Be certain that you understand what your partner is saying. If you don't understand, ask for clarification. Restate the message in your own words.

- **Keep your cool.** Speak your truth without blaming. Use "I" statements (e.g., "I felt concerned when I learned that my department is going to have a layoff") rather than "you" statements (e.g., "You want to get rid of some of our best people").

Finally, recognize that mutual respect and understanding are built one conversation at a time. Trust is difficult to gain and easy to lose. Be patient and keep the channels of communication open, as a solution may develop slowly over the course of many small interactions. Recognize that it is more valuable to maintain the relationship over the long term than to "win" in an individual transaction.

Key Takeaway

Part of being an effective communicator is learning to practice active listening.

Exercises

1. Pair up with a classmate and do a role-play exercise in which one person tries to deliver a message while the other person multitasks and interrupts. Then try it again while the listener practices active listening. How do the two communication experiences compare? Discuss your findings.

2. Select a news article and practice "active reading" by reading the article and summarizing each of its main points in your own words. Write a letter to the editor commenting on the article—you don't have to send it, but you may if you wish.

3. In a half-hour period of time, see if you can count how many times you are interrupted. Share and compare with your classmates.

8.2 Types of Listening

Learning Objectives

1. Identify four preferences and four purposes of listening.

2. Distinguish among the components of the "HURIER model" of listening.

3. Identify foundations for good learning, including the features of "dialogic listening."

4. Identify several kinds of **negative** listening.

I'd invited my wife to accompany me to a professional conference in Portland. Since I was going to be making a presentation there, my colleague and co-presenter Sally was with us for the trip down and back.

Driving along the Interstate, Sally and I talked shop. What about our supervisor? Yak yak yak. What about our faculty union? Yak yak yak. And our plans for next year? Yak yak yak.

After 20 minutes of chatter with Sally, I realized that what we were discussing might not mean much to my wife. Being the considerate guy that I am, I paused and looked over at her.

"Sorry we've been talking so much about work. Thanks for listening."

"I'm not listening," she replied.

—Phil Venditti

Preferences, Purposes, and Types of Listening

People speak for various reasons and with various goals in mind. Likewise, the ways we listen vary according to our preferences and purposes. Several theorists have identified types of listening which can help us understand our own behavior and that of others.

Galanes and AdamsGalanes, G., & Adams, K. (2013). *Effective group discussion: Theory and practice*. New York: McGraw-Hill. wrote that people fall into four possible orientation categories as they listen to one another in groups. *People-oriented listeners*, also known as "relational listeners," direct themselves

toward detecting and preserving positive emotional features of a relationship. For instance, best friends are probably people who practice nonjudgmental listening in an effort to understand and support each other. In a group, people-oriented listeners may share their feelings openly and strive to defuse anger or frustration on the part of other members.

Action-oriented listeners, by comparison, prefer to focus on tasks that they and their fellow communicators have set for themselves. (Think back to chapter 1, where we differentiated between the "task" and "relationship" sides of group interaction). Action-oriented listeners will generally retain and share details and information which they believe will keep a group moving.

Content-oriented listeners are those who care particularly about the specifics of a group's discussions. They tend to seek, provide, and analyze information that has been gathered through research. What they primarily choose to hear and to share with others, thus, is material that they consider to be factual.

Time-oriented listeners concern themselves above all with how a group's activities fit into a calendar or schedule. They may listen and watch especially for signs that other group members want to accelerate the pace of the group's activities. Their preference is usually for short, concise messages rather than extended ones.

In the real world, few people fit neatly and completely into a single category within Galanes and Adams's typology of listeners. Instead, each of us embodies

a mixture of the four preferences depending on the topic a group is dealing with, the developmental stage of the group, and other factors.

Like Galanes and Adams, Waldeck, Kearney, and PlaxWaldeck, J. H., Kearney, P., & Plax, T. (2013). *Business & professional communication in a digital age*. Boston: Wadsworth. proposed four purposes which they believe people have in mind as they listen to others. First, we may want to acquire information. Students listening to class lectures are pursuing this purpose. Second, we may listen in order to screen and evaluate what we hear. For instance, we may have the radio on continuously but listen especially for and to stories and comments which are relevant to our work or study. Third, we may listen recreationally, to relax and enjoy ourselves. Perhaps we listen to music or watch and listen to video images on a mobile device, or we might attend a concert of music we enjoy. Finally, just as Galanes and Adams indicated, we may listen because it helps other people or ourselves from the standpoint of our relationships. When we listen attentively to friends, classmates, or work colleagues, we demonstrate our interest in them and thereby develop positive feelings in them about us.

Beebe and MastersonBeebe, S.A., & Masterson, J.T. (2006). *Communicating in small groups; Principles and practices* (8th ed.). Boston: Pearson. cited Allan Glatthorn and Herbert AdamsGlatthorn, A.A., & Adams, H.R. (1984). *Listening your way to management success*. (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman). as identifying the following three types of listening:

Type one: hearing. This is the simple physical act of having sound waves enter our ears and be transmitted into neural impulses sent to our brain. In 1965, Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel sang in "The Sound of Silence" about "people hearing but not listening," and this is really what Glatthorn and Adams were referring to.

Type two: analyzing. Beyond simply receiving sound waves, listeners may employ critical judgment to ascertain the purpose behind a speaker's message(s). In so doing, they may consider not only the content of the message, but also its stated and unstated intent, its context, and what kind of persuasive strategy the speaker may be using it as part of.

KellyKelly, M.S. (2006). *Communication @ work: Ethical, effective, and expressive communication in the workplace*. Boston: Pearson. offered a helpful elaboration on this type of listening. She suggested that "analyzing" may also involve discriminating—that is, distinguishing—between information and propaganda, research and personal experience, official business and small talk, and simple information and material which requires a listener to take action.

Type three: empathizing. Empathizing requires that a listener not only discern a speaker's intention, but also withhold judgment about that person and see things from his or her perspective. Once this is accomplished, it may be possible to respond to the speaker with acceptance.

The Listening Process

Even though listening is a natural human process, and one in which we spend most of our communication time, it may not occur to us how complex the activity really is. Many authorities have proposed models which comprise what they consider to be steps in the process. We'll consider one such model.

Engleberg & WynnEngleberg, I.N., & Wynn, D. R. (2013). *Working in groups* (6th ed.). Boston: Pearson. described the *HURIER model*, an acronym developed by Judi Brownell. Brownell, J. (2010). *Listening: Attitudes, principles, and skills* (4th ed.). Boston: Pearson Allyn & Bacon. That model proposed that, in listening, people first hear; then understand; next interpret (including the emotional grounds/status of the speaker); evaluate (including whether the message is meant to persuade, and if so whether it should do so); remember; and finally respond. Among the strengths of this model for application to group settings are that its steps take a group's goals into account and that it recognizes both the task and relationship elements of communication.

Foundations for Good Listening

Each of us can probably think of a few people whom we consider to be outstanding listeners. What makes them that way, and what attitudes and behaviors do they display in their listening that we most appreciate? Let's consider some answers that various theorists have offered concerning the strengths of good listeners.

First, the famous educator and philosopher John DeweyDewey, J. (1944).
Democracy and education. New York: Macmillan. exhorted people to show what he called "*intellectual hospitality.*" By this, he meant "an active disposition to welcome points of view hitherto alien." If a person is willing to entertain perspectives outside his or her previous experience, listening can proceed on favorable ground.

Objectivity represents a related initial ingredient in good listening. As RohlanderRohlander, D.G. (2000, February). The well-rounded IE. *IIE Solutions*, 32 (2), 22. wrote, people should be prepared to weigh facts and emotional elements in their listening "on imaginary balanced scales."

Stewart and ThomasStewart, J., & Thomas, M. (1990). Dialogic listening: Sculpting mutual meanings. In J. Stewart (Ed.), *Bridges not walls* (5th ed.) (pp. 192–210). New York: McGraw-Hill. coined the term "*dialogic listening*" to identify what they considered to be ideal listening behavior. They characterized dialogic listeners in these ways:

1. They are "deeply in" the transaction with those with whom they communicate.

2. They deal with present topics and concerns.

3. They consider the speaking and listening process to be a shared enterprise—"ours" rather than "yours" or "mine."

4. They see speaking and listening as being open-ended and playful.

Whatever models they propose, and whatever vocabulary they use, all the authorities who write about listening share the belief that listening needs to be active rather than passive. We'll provide specific steps later in this chapter for how to engage in active, positive listening.

Negative Kinds of Listening

Now for some unfortunate news. There is a rich array of ways to be a bad listener.

Adler and TowneAdler, R.B., & Towne, N. (2002). *Looking out/looking in* (10th ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers. named and described several of these ways. The first is *pseudo-listening*. You've seen this many times in your own life, and probably you've even done it. It's the act of seeming to be listening while your mind is actually somewhere else. When you're pseudo-listening, you may nod your head and emit periodic sounds of approval, just as you would if you were really paying attention, but those actions are for show.

Then there's "*stage-hogging*," also known as "disruptive listening." This is an active behavior—but the action isn't good, since the listener attends only minimally to what the other person is saying and butts in persistently and repeatedly to insert views or express needs of his or her own.

The first panel of a "Far Side" cartoon by Gary Larson shows a man scolding his dog. He starts out by saying, "Okay, Ginger" and then goes on at length. Once or

twice more in the harangue the man says Ginger's name. In the second panel, the "speech balloon" of the master is altered to show what the dog hears: "Blah blah Ginger. Blah blah blah blah blah blah blah GINGER blah blah blah blah…" In this case, the fact that Ginger is a dog means that she can only detect the sound of her own name in her master's speech. *Selective listening* among human beings, on the other hand, consists in listening only to the parts of someone else's communication that are personally important to us—even though we could certainly understand and respond to the rest of it if we chose to.

Insulated listening is, in a way, the reverse of selective listening. In this self-protective behavior, the listener takes in and responds actively to everything the speaker says *except* what's unpleasant to him or her.

Defensive listening is performed by a person when he or she interprets much or most of another person's statements as being personal attacks. A defensive listener is apt to ignore, exclude, or fail to accurately interpret parts of a speaker's comments.

Face-value listening can be described as aural nitpicking. That is to say, the face-value listener pays a great deal of attention to the terminology of someone else's message and very little to the person's intentions or feelings.

Davis, Paleg, & FanningDavis, M., Paleg, K., & Fanning, P. (2004). *How to communicate workbook; Powerful strategies for effective communication at work and home*. New York: MJF Books. identified three further ways to be a bad listener: rehearsing, identifying, and sparring. Rehearsing is the practice of

planning a response to another person's message while the message is still being delivered. Identifying takes place when a large portion of a speaker's message triggers memories of the listener's own experiences and makes the listener want to dive into a story of his or her own. Finally, a listener who engages in sparring attends to messages only long enough to find something to disagree with and then jabs back and forth with the speaker argumentatively.

Key Takeaway

To function well in a group, people should become familiar with both positive and negative purposes and types of listening.

Exercises

1. Do you consider yourself to be primarily a people-oriented, action-oriented, or content-oriented listener? Describe a time when you found yourself listening with an orientation other than your primary one. What caused you to use that orientation? What was the result?

2. Think about a time when you tried unsuccessfully to share an important message with someone. How did the other person respond? What "bad kind(s)" of listening behaviors did the person display?

3. Stewart and Thomas believe that listening should be "open-ended and playful." What does this mean to you? Describe a time when you listened "playfully" and how others around you reacted.

4. Imagine that you're in a group which is assessing its members' performance and that you expect to be criticized because of a mistake you've made. What will you do to avoid defensive listening, sparring, or other bad kinds of listening?

8.3 Group Members and Listening

Learning Objectives

1. Identify seven challenges of listening in a group as opposed to listening to one person.

2. Identify two advantages of group listening as opposed to listening to one person.

3. Identify pros and cons of listening in digital groups.

In the beginning, God made an individual—and then He made a pair. The pair formed a group, and together they begot others and thus the group grew. Unfortunately, working in a group led to friction, and the group disintegrated in conflict. And Cain settled in the land of Nod. There has been trouble with groups ever since.Sharp, D. (2004, February 24). Workgroups that actually work. Business Times, p. 10.

Davis Sharp

I remind myself every morning: Nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I'm going to learn, I must do it by listening.

Larry King

All listening takes energy, concentration, and fortitude. To a degree that will depend on the topic and the listener's individual personality, it also requires self-sacrifice, since at least part of the time that we're listening we may need to stifle the urge to question, correct, interrupt, or even silence a speaker.

Listening in a group is especially portentous. If you do it well, you can learn a great deal, present yourself in a favorable light, and contribute to a positive atmosphere and high level of productivity on the part of the group.

Poor listening in a group, on the other hand, can lead to serious negative consequences. Take the case of a group numbering six members. For every time it has to retrace its ground for five minutes and repeat things because of poor listening, that's 30 minutes of time wasted. Furthermore, misunderstandings among group members can be spread and magnified outside the group to the point that its image and effectiveness are weakened. When we get to a later chapter we'll examine this danger and some of the other things that can go wrong when groups of people take part in formal meetings.

Challenges of Listening in a Group

Although all of us get practice at it for years as students and eventually as employees, listening in a group isn't easy. It presents more of a challenge to each member, in fact, than does listening to one other person at a time. Why? We'll consider seven reasons, all of which stem from the inherent differences between groups and pairs of people.

First, in a typical one-on-one conversation you're probably going to listen about 50% of the time, right? Compare that to your participation in a group, in which you're likely to spend between 65% and 90% of your time listening.Steil, L.K. (1997). Listening training: The key to success in today's organizations. In M. Purdy & D. Borisoff (Eds.), *Listening in everyday life* (pp. 213–237). Landham, MD: University Press of America. If you listen with the same depth of energy and concentration in the group that you do with a single conversation partner, you're going to get tired out a lot more quickly.

Second, unless you know each of the other members of a group very well, you may not adequately gauge their knowledge and perspectives on a given topic before it's discussed. This may make you less likely to be receptive and responsive to their views on a topic, especially a contentious one. You may also have to work harder to understand their viewpoints.

Third, it may be difficult to keep up with changing levels of engagement on the part of other members of your group. People's attention and involvement may fluctuate because they're anxious about the circumstances of a discussion, about a particular message that's being sent, or even about extraneous factors in their lives that come to mind. At some moments in a group's activities, everyone may be attentive and actively involved; at others, they come and go both mentally and physically. Because all the members are rarely simultaneously "firing on all cylinders," you'll need to work particularly hard to distinguish between vital messages and routine, mundane, or irrelevant ones.

Fourth, in a group you have less of an opportunity to influence others' thoughts and actions than you do in one-on-one communication. Deciding when to cease listening and interject your viewpoints so that they'll be most likely to be received positively by the largest possible proportion of group members is hard, especially if conversation is fast and free-wheeling.

Fifth, listening for long periods prevents you from releasing some of your own energy. Because you speak less in a group than in a one-on-one conversation, this build-up of energy may frustrate you and interfere with your ability to process what other people are saying.

Sixth, in a group you have lots of time to daydream. People talk at about 100–150 words per minute, but your mind can process information at up to 600 words a minute.Wolvin, A., & Coakley, C.G. *Listening* (3rd ed.). Dubuque, IA: 1988. You may not be compelled or feel a need to listen actively all the time that a group is interacting, nor do you have to worry about other people's assessment of your behavior if you're not the one speaking at a particular time. Thus, you'll be able to fill in the gap between other people's talking speed and your own thinking speed with thoughts of your choice…or with thoughts that just float into and out of your consciousness. You may even be tempted to surreptitiously glance at reading material unrelated to the group's activities, or to send or receive text messages.

Seventh, it may be harder to listen in a group because of the existence of *social loafing*. This is the tendency for each member to devote less energy to a task

than she or he would alone because it's possible to let others take responsibility for getting things done.

Advantages to Listening in a Group

Now that we've reviewed some of its challenges and pitfalls, we should note that listening in a group offers potential benefits as well. Let's consider two major kinds.

The first big advantage to listening in a group is that it embodies the possibility of taking one of the characteristics that we earlier said could be used negatively—i.e., that you have time and opportunity to think about and react to what you hear—and using it in a positive way. Rather than using that surplus time to daydream or plan a rebuttal to other group members' messages, you can try in your mind to empathetically interpret the messages and decide whether and how to respond in ways that promote the well-being of the speakers and the whole group. Here's an illustration with a cross-cultural dimension (and with the person's name changed):

Yukio Sakai was a young Japanese man enrolled in a college public speaking class. Whatever went on in class, Yukio watched and listened raptly…and silently. Often the instructor posed open-ended questions to the group as a whole, such as, "What do you think John did well in his persuasive speech?" When such questions were posed, almost anyone in class except Yukio would pipe up with an opinion. To a casual observer, Yukio would seem to be "just sitting there."

If the instructor directly asked Yukio one of the questions, however, what usually happened was that he replied without the slightest hesitation. Furthermore, his answers conveyed insight, sound reasoning, and common sense. It would have been a mistake to take his apparent lack of activity at any given moment as a sign of incapacity.

As we discovered earlier in our chapter on intercultural and international group communication, someone from a high power distance culture such as Japan's may not outwardly react to messages from an authority figure such as a college instructor. What appears to be the person's inert passivity, however, could actually be thoughtful analysis and reflection. (Of course, you don't have to be Japanese to practice those good habits).

The second advantage to listening in groups is a product of the fact that there will always be more diverse perspectives and more interaction in a group than in a dyad. People can be fascinating, can't they? And many times the product of discussion among different people, with their different backgrounds and values, is something entirely unexpected. What this means, if you're a curious person at all, is that you should find lots to keep you entertained and educated as you listen to people in a group setting.

Listening in Digital Groups

As we mentioned earlier, digital groups can communicate either synchronously or asynchronously; that is, in real time or with delays between messages. If you use synchronous tools, such as Skype or some other form of audio or video

conferencing, the same challenges and advantages apply to digital groups that we've already presented. The only difference may be that you and the other group participants aren't physically in the same place.

On the other hand, group members who exchange oral messages asynchronously may confront more intense pros and cons.Davis, M., Paleg, K., & Fanning, P. (2004). *How to communicate workbook; Powerful strategies for effective communication at work and home*. New York: MJF Books. The good news is that you'll have even more time than in a face-to-face group discussion to review and think about messages before reacting to them, which may yield wiser and calmer responses. The bad news is that the freshness and spontaneity of listening to each other's comments in real time will be lost, which could tend to homogenize people's attitudes and make it less likely for "aha moments" to take place.

Furthermore, if other group members can't actually see you when you're communicating, you may feign attentiveness or behave in unorthodox ways. One of the authors remembers being part of a group that was conducting a phone interview with a candidate for a job at a university many years ago. When the person in charge of the interview started the exchange by saying, "We know it may be uncomfortable for you to have to do an interview without being able to see us," one of the candidates said, "That's all right. I'm sitting here on my couch naked, anyway."

Key Takeaway

Listening in a group presents significant challenges but can also pay important dividends.

Exercises

1. If you're enrolled in college courses, do a little measuring in one of your next class sessions. Use a stopwatch to measure exactly how long you and one or two other students actually spend speaking during the class period. Ask a classmate to do the same for the instructor. Afterward, compare the measurements. What did you learn from the results?

2. Pick two groups of which you're a member. How would you compare the level of participation of their members in group discussions? How do their members' listening practices compare? In which group do you find it harder to function as a listener? Why?

3. The next time a group you're part of meets, watch and listen for the person who says the least. Does the person appear to be listening? If you feel comfortable doing so, ask the person afterward how much of the time he or she was attending closely to the discussion. Does the person's answer fit with how you'd assessed his or her behavior?

4. "To become a leader, you need to talk; to stay a leader, you need to listen." Do you agree, or not? What examples can you give to support your viewpoint?

8.4 Strategies to Improve Listening in Groups

Learning Objectives

1. Identify physical actions which contribute to good listening.

2. Identify effective pre-listening behaviors.

3. Identify what to do and what to avoid doing when listening in a group.

The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when

one asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer.

Henry David Thoreau

Listening to people keeps them entertained.

Mason Cooley

First Things First

In the last few sections we've established that listening is a vital skill in groups. Now let's review two fundamental points before we discuss specific steps for doing it well.

The first point is that before you can listen, you have to stop talking. This might seem self-evident, but in a culture like that of the United States, in which talking is highly valued, we may tend to overlook it.

The second point, though less obvious, is just as important. It is that both senders and receivers—both speakers and listeners—are responsible for effective listening. Listening actually transcends the mere reception of messages by listeners and imposes obligations on both senders and receivers in what Waldeck, Kearney, and PlaxWaldeck, J. H., Kearney, P., & Plax, T. (2013). *Business & professional communication in a digital age*. Boston: Wadsworth. called "*sender-receiver reciprocity*."

Senders should choose their messages according to the context or occasion. Furthermore, they should consider what media they will use to communicate them—for instance, face-to-face interaction or synchronous or asynchronous transmissions—and be mindful of the implications of their selection.

Image from http://www.public-domain-image.com

For their part, receivers must make an effort to listen, be prepared to provide feedback, and manage their responses to ensure relevance and civility. They should also practice what Beebe, Beebe, and IvyBeebe, S.A., Beebe, S.J., & Ivy, D.K. (2007). *Communication: Principles for a lifetime* (3rd ed.). Boston: Pearson. labeled "*social decentering*"—i.e., "stepping away from your own thoughts and attempting to experience the thoughts of others."

The Physical Side of Listening

As we've already pointed out, good listening is an active process. As such, it requires energy. In fact, listening is work—and not just mental work, either. To do the work of listening, which generally consumes the majority of your time whenever you interact with a group, you should be sure you're physically primed and ready to go. To confirm that your body is really prepared for high-quality listening, you should first check your posture. Assuming that you're seated, sit up straight and lean slightly forward. Not only does good posture allow you to remain relaxed and alert, but it makes it more likely that other people will see you as competent and confident.Burgoon, J.K., & Saine, T.J. (1978). *The unspoken dialogue: An introduction to nonverbal communication*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Next, notice your breathing. Be sure you're inhaling and exhaling deeply. Also, identify any aches or pains that may interfere with your ability to take in other people's messages. See if you can shift into a position which will allow you to remain comfortable and attentive throughout the communication process.

Pre-listening

How much time and effort you put into getting ready to listen will depend among other things on what kind of group you're in, how well you and the other members know each other, and what topics you're dealing with. Sometimes you're talking about light or superficial matters—like "Where shall we get together after we complete our project?"—and you can just dive into a conversation without any particular thought to getting ready to listen.

There will be occasions, however, when you ought to stop, consider, and plan your listening carefully. Let's say you're in a student government group considering requests for activity fee money, for instance, or a screening committee involved in hiring a new person to join your business. In cases like these, when careful, accurate listening will be at a premium, you should probably take some or all of these preparatory steps:

Assign listening tasks to people. Because social loafing is more likely when members aren't held accountable for their behavior,Thompson, L. (2008). *Organizational behavior today*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education. you may want to ask individuals to listen for different kinds of information or divide a long period of listening into segments, each of which has a designated "major listener."

Confirm (or reconfirm) your group's norms with respect to listening. Remind yourselves about how you plan to take turns speaking.

Identify any potential contextual barriers to listening.Kelly, M.S. (2006). *Communication @ work: Ethical, effective, and expressive communication in the workplace*. Boston: Pearson. Such barriers may include the location in which you're communicating, the cultural identity of group members, and the mixture of genders represented in the group.

Remind the members of the group that they should recognize their own biases, including their tendency to interpret information in the light of their beliefs.Hybels, S., & Weaver, R.L. (1998). *Communicating effectively* (5th ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill. Perhaps note that each group members is tuned in to a special mental radio station, "*WII-FM*," which stands for "What's in it for me?"

Decide whether it's all right for group members to take notes or make audio recordings during the upcoming communication. If it is, decide whether you'd like to name one or more members "primary note-takers" or recorders.

Determine how often and when you plan to take breaks. Remember that "the mind can absorb only what the seat can endure." Even though parts of a lengthy discussion may be engrossing, when the time for a scheduled break comes your listening ability will probably be rejuvenated if you pause at least long enough for people to stand and stretch for 30–60 seconds before proceeding.

Listening Itself

All right. Let's say the members of your group have physically and mentally readied themselves to listen, and you've begun a discussion. What do you need to do as the process unfolds? Here are some important dos and don'ts:

In listening, do…

1. Determine your purpose in listening, and keep it in mind. Thinking back to earlier in this chapter, are you listening to acquire information, to evaluate messages, to relax and enjoy ourselves, or to demonstrate empathy?

2. Identify the levels at which group members are communicating their messages—e.g., emotional, political, or intellectual.

3. Assess the relative significance of people's comments and listen for main ideas rather than trying to take in everything on an equal plane. To help you do this, you may want from time to time to mentally summarize the message(s) you're listening to.

4. When possible and appropriate, urge other members of the group to speak, especially those who are less dominant. Say things like "Please go on"; "Tell me more"; "Care to expand on that?" Remember that each person has a unique perspective that can add to the group's ability to consider ideas and make decisions.

5. "Listen with your eyes." Observe people's body language and other nonverbal cues carefully, since those physical manifestations may add to or sometimes contradict their spoken words.

6. Show interest in others' messages through your own nonverbal actions. Establish and maintain eye contact. Smile. Adopt an open posture. Avoid fidgeting or slouching.

7. Use "*interactive questioning*". Lumsden, G., & Lumsden, D. (2004). *Communicating in groups and teams; Sharing leadership* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson. Ask open-minded and open-ended questions to clarify ideas & information; to probe a speaker's reasoning and evidence; and to expand incomplete information. Use and ask for examples so that the speaker can connect your questions with his or her own world of experiences.

8. Use tentative clarifying/confirming statements: e.g., "It sounds like…"; "You seem to think that…"; "As I get it, you…"

9. Make polite, "targeted" interruptions Lumsden, G., & Lumsden, D. (2004). *Communicating in groups and teams; Sharing leadership* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson. to get answers to pressing questions, or if you'd like establish your place in line to speak next. Be judicious and infrequent with interruptions, however.

10. Paraphrase. Don't just see if you can accurately reflect what a person is saying; see if you can determine if your understanding of the person's "inner world" is accurate and whether you see things as the other person is experiencing them at the moment.

11. Respond after listening, sincerely and constructively. Focus on content, ideas, & analysis rather than on personal matters.

12. Allow for, and be careful how you interpret, silence. Keep in mind that people may have many reasons, positive or otherwise, for not speaking at a particular time.

In listening, don't…

1. Let listening be a dead end, in which you receive messages and don't react at all.

2. Allow the listening behavior of others to sway your own. If they're inattentive, don't lose your own focus; if they're especially positive or negative, don't lose your objectivity or critical ability.

3. Cut off or put down a speaker.

4. Interrupt excessively.

5. Pose "*counterfeit questions*"—belligerent statements masquerading as questions simply because they end with question marks.

6. Allow the tone of someone's message, or how agreeable you find the person to be, to color your interpretation or reactions to it.

7. Express your interpretations of other people's messages excessively. Why not? First of all, your interpretation may be wrong. Second, even if you're right, you may arouse a defensive reaction that in turn leads to unproductive argumentation.

No matter how often you listen to people, and no matter how many groups you may be part of, each new listening situation will be unique. It's your responsibility, shared with your fellow group members, to see that in each new conversation or discussion you exercise proper practices and skills in your listening.

Key Takeaway

To listen well in a group, it's important to prepare properly and heed several dos and don'ts.

Exercises

1. Observe a televised, recorded, or live group discussion. Identify the listening processes which furthered understanding and those which impeded it. What suggestions would you make to the members of the group to improve their listening? Which person in the discussion listened most effectively, and how did she or he accomplish that?

2. Visit the website of the International Listening Association (http://www.listen.org) and read an article in one of the Association's online publications. What discoveries did you make in your reading? How will you apply the discoveries to your future group interactions?

3. Who's the best listener you know? What does the person do (or not do) that makes him/her so effective? Give an example of how the person has listened well.

8.5 Summary

We discussed many ways to gain a better understanding of your group members. To begin, it is important to understand yourself: your attitudes, beliefs, and values. It is also helpful to understand the processes that influence perception and listening. There are many individual differences in the ways people perceive

things. Demographic traits such as age, gender, and employment can determine people's interests, needs, and goals. Effective communication involves recognizing these differences in perception and practicing fairness in delivering your message to your group or team. Finally, an important dimension of group communication is the ability to receive messages from others through active listening.

Chapter Review Questions

1. Interpretive Questions
    1. How does listening limit or expand our view?
    2. How does our internal monologue influence our listening?
    3. In what ways, if any, are all group members the same?
2. Application Questions
    1. What are some of the ways people demonstrate listening among people you know? Identify a target sample size (20 is a good number), and ask members of your family, friends, and peers about they know someone is listening to them. Compare your results with those of your classmates.
    2. What impact does technology and specifically the cell phone have on listening? Investigate the issue and share your findings.
    3. Investigate two ways to learn more about your group members and share them with your classmates.

Additional Resources

Explore the website of the National Association for Self-Esteem. http://www.self-esteem-nase.org/

Visit About.com to read an article by Kendra Van Wagner on the Gestalt Laws of Perceptual Organization.

http://psychology.about.com/od/sensationandperception/ss/gestaltlaws.htm

Philosophe.com offers a collection of articles about understanding your audience when you design a website.

http://philosophe.com/understanding_users/

Read more about active listening on this MindTools page. http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkll/ActiveListening.htm

A collection of articles and other resources to assist in improving listening and other communication skills.
http://conflict911.com/resources/Communication/Listening

Section Attributions:

Chapter 9: Leadership

"Earn your leadership every day."

- Michael Jordan.

9.1 Leadership and Small Group Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the various perspectives on how and why people become leaders.
2. Compare and contrast various leadership styles.
3. Discuss the types of power that a leader may tap into.

Leadership is one of the most studied aspects of group communication. Scholars in business, communication, psychology, and many other fields have written extensively about the qualities of leaders, theories of leadership, and how to build leadership skills. It's important to point out that although a group may have only one official leader, other group members play important leadership roles. Making this distinction also helps us differentiate between leaders and leadership (Hargie, 2011). The leader is a group role that is associated with a

high-status position and may be formally or informally recognized by group members. Leadership is a complex of beliefs, communication patterns, and behaviors that influence the functioning of a group and move a group toward the completion of its task. A person in the role of leader may provide no or poor leadership. Likewise, a person who is not recognized as a "leader" in title can provide excellent leadership. In the remainder of this section, we will discuss some approaches to the study of leadership, leadership styles, and leadership and group dynamics.

Why and How People Become Leaders

Throughout human history, some people have grown into, taken, or been given positions as leaders. Many early leaders were believed to be divine in some way. In some indigenous cultures, shamans are considered leaders because they are believed to be bridges that can connect the spiritual and physical realms. Many early kings, queens, and military leaders were said to be approved by a god to lead the people. Today, many leaders are elected or appointed to positions of power, but most of them have already accumulated much experience in leadership roles. Some leaders are well respected, some are feared, some are hated, and many elicit some combination of these reactions. This brief overview illustrates the centrality of leadership throughout human history, but it wasn't until the last hundred years that leadership became an object of systematic study.

Before we move onto specific approaches to studying leadership, let's distinguish between designated and emergent leaders. In general, some people gravitate more toward leadership roles than others, and some leaders are designated while other are emergent (Hargie, 2011). Designated leaders are officially recognized in their leadership role and may be appointed or elected by people inside or outside the group. Designated leaders can be especially successful when they are sought out by others to fulfill and are then accepted in leadership roles. On the other hand, some people seek out leadership positions not because they possess leadership skills and have been successful leaders in the past but because they have a drive to hold and wield power. Many groups are initially leaderless and must either designate a leader or wait for one to emerge organically. Emergent leaders gain status and respect through engagement with the group and its task and are turned to by others as a resource when leadership is needed. Emergent leaders may play an important role when a designated leader unexpectedly leaves. We will now turn our attention to three common perspectives on why some people are more likely to be designated leaders than others and how leaders emerge in the absence of or in addition to a designated leader.

Figure: A group leader may be formally designated by someone inside or outside the group or may emerge naturally during early group meetings. New City Church – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Leaders Emerge Because of Their Traits

The trait approach to studying leadership distinguishes leaders from followers based on traits, or personal characteristics (Pavitt, 1999). Some traits that leaders, in general, share are related to physical appearance, communication ability, intelligence, and personality (Cragan & Wright, 1991). In terms of physical appearance, designated leaders tend to be taller and more attractive than other group members. This could be because we consciously and/or subconsciously associate a larger size (in terms of height and build, but not body fat) with strength and strength with good leadership. As far as communication abilities,

leaders speak more fluently, have a more confident tone, and communicate more often than other group members. Leaders are also moderately more intelligent than other group members, which is attractive because leaders need good problem-solving skills. Interestingly, group members are not as likely to designate or recognize an emergent leader that they perceive to be exceedingly more intelligent than them. Last, leaders are usually more extroverted, assertive, and persistent than other group members. These personality traits help get these group members noticed by others, and expressivity is often seen as attractive and as a sign of communication competence.

The trait approach to studying leaders has provided some useful information regarding how people view ideal leaders, but it has not provided much insight into why some people become and are more successful leaders than others. The list of ideal traits is not final, because excellent leaders can have few, if any, of these traits and poor leaders can possess many. Additionally, these traits are difficult to change or control without much time and effort. Because these traits are enduring, there isn't much room for people to learn and develop leadership skills, which makes this approach less desirable for communication scholars who view leadership as a communication competence. Rather than viewing these traits as a guide for what to look for when choosing your next leader, view them as traits that are made meaningful through context and communication behaviors.

Leaders Emerge Because of the Situation

The emergent approach to studying leadership considers how leaders emerge in groups that are initially leaderless and how situational contexts affect this process (Pavitt, 1999). The situational context that surrounds a group influences what type of leader is best. Situations may be highly structured, highly unstructured, or anywhere in between (Cragan & Wright, 1991). Research has found that leaders with a high task orientation are likely to emerge in both highly structured contexts like a group that works to maintain a completely automated factory unit and highly unstructured contexts like a group that is responding to a crisis. Relational-oriented leaders are more likely to emerge in semistructured contexts that are less formal and in groups composed of people who have specific knowledge and are therefore be trusted to do much of their work independently (Fiedler, 1967). For example, a group of local business owners who form a group for professional networking would likely prefer a leader with a relational-oriented style, since these group members are likely already leaders in their own right and therefore might resent a person who takes a rigid task-oriented style over a more collegial style.

Leaders emerge differently in different groups, but there are two stages common to each scenario (Bormann & Bormann, 1988). The first stage only covers a brief period, perhaps no longer than a portion of one meeting. During this first stage, about half of the group's members are eliminated from the possibility of being the group's leader. Remember that this is an informal and implicit process—not like people being picked for a kickball team or intentionally vetted. But there are

some communicative behaviors that influence who makes the cut to the next stage of informal leader consideration. People will likely be eliminated as leader candidates if they do not actively contribute to initial group interactions, if they contribute but communicate poorly, if they contribute but appear too rigid or inflexible in their beliefs, or if they seem uninformed about the task of the group.

The second stage of leader emergence is where a more or less pronounced struggle for leadership begins. In one scenario, a leader candidate picks up an ally in the group who acts as a supporter or lieutenant, reinforcing the ideas and contributions of the candidate. If there are no other leader candidates or the others fail to pick up a supporter, the candidate with the supporter will likely become the leader. In a second scenario, there are two leader candidates who both pick up supporters and who are both qualified leaders. This leads to a more intense and potentially prolonged struggle that can actually be uncomfortable for other group members. Although the two leader candidates don't overtly fight with each other or say, "I should be leader, not you!" they both take strong stances in regards to the group's purpose and try to influence the structure, procedures, and trajectory for the group. Group members not involved in this struggle may not know who to listen to, which can lead to low task and social cohesion and may cause a group to fail. In some cases, one candidate-supporter team will retreat, leaving a clear leader to step up. But the candidate who retreated will still enjoy a relatively high status in the group and be respected for vying for leadership. The second-place candidate may become a nuisance for the new emergent leader, questioning his or her decisions. Rather than excluding or punishing the

second-place candidate, the new leader should give him or her responsibilities within the group to make use of the group member's respected status.

Leaders Emerge Based on Communication Skill and Competence

This final approach to the study of leadership is considered a functional approach, because it focuses on how particular communication behaviors function to create the conditions of leadership. This last approach is the most useful for communication scholars and for people who want to improve their leadership skills, because leadership behaviors (which are learnable and adaptable) rather than traits or situations (which are often beyond our control) are the primary focus of study. As we've already learned, any group member can exhibit leadership behaviors, not just a designated or emergent leader. Therefore leadership behaviors are important for all of us to understand even if we don't anticipate serving in leadership positions (Cragan & Wright, 1991).

The communication behaviors that facilitate effective leadership encompass three main areas of group communication including task, procedural, and relational functions. Although any group member can perform leadership behaviors, groups usually have patterns of and expectations for behaviors once they get to the norming and performing stages of group development. Many groups only meet one or two times, and in these cases it is likely that a designated leader will perform many of the functions to get the group started and then step in to facilitate as needed.

Leadership behaviors that contribute to a group's task-related functions include providing, seeking, and evaluating information. Leaders may want to be cautious about contributing ideas before soliciting ideas from group members, since the leader's contribution may sway or influence others in the group, therefore diminishing the importance of varying perspectives. Likewise a leader may want to solicit evaluation of ideas from members before providing his or her own judgment. In group situations where creativity is needed to generate ideas or solutions to a problem, the task leader may be wise to facilitate brainstorming and discussion.

Figure: A group leader with high communication competence can facilitate brainstorming and group discussion to enhance the creativity and quality of group members' ideas. Luca Mascaro – Brainstorming – CC BY-SA 2.0.

This can allow the leader to keep his or her eye on the "big picture" and challenge group members to make their ideas more concrete or discuss their implications beyond the group without adding his or her own opinion. To review, some of the key leadership behaviors that contribute to the task-related functions of a group include the following (Cragan & Wright, 1991):

- Contributing ideas

- Seeking ideas

- Evaluating ideas

- Seeking idea evaluation

- Visualizing abstract ideas

- Generalizing from specific ideas

Leadership behaviors that contribute to a group's procedural-related functions help guide the group as it proceeds from idea generation to implementation. Some leaders are better at facilitating and managing ideas than they are at managing the administrative functions of a group. So while a group leader may help establish the goals of the group and set the agenda, another group member with more experience in group operations may step in to periodically revisit and assess progress toward completion of goals and compare the group's performance against its agenda. It's also important to check in between idea-generating sessions to clarify, summarize, and gauge the agreement level of group members. A very skilled and experienced leader may take primary responsibility for all these behaviors, but it's often beneficial to share them with group members to avoid becoming overburdened. To review, some of the key leadership behaviors that contribute to the procedural functions of a group include the following (Cragan & Wright, 1991):

- Goal setting

- Agenda making

- Clarifying

- Summarizing

- Verbalizing consensus

- Generalizing from specific ideas

Leadership behaviors that contribute to a group's relational functions include creating a participative and inclusive climate, establishing norms of reflection and self-analysis, and managing conflict. By encouraging participation among group members, a leader can help quell people who try to monopolize discussion and create an overall climate of openness and equality. Leaders want to make sure that people don't feel personally judged for their ideas and that criticism remains idea centered, not person centered. A safe and positive climate typically leads to higher-quality idea generation and decision making. Leaders also encourage group members to metacommunicate, or talk about the group's communication. This can help the group identify and begin to address any interpersonal or communication issues before they escalate and divert the group away from accomplishing its goal. A group with a well-established participative and inclusive climate will be better prepared to handle conflict when it emerges. Remember that conflict when handled competently can enhance group performance. Leaders may even instigate productive conflict by playing devil's advocate or facilitating civil debate of ideas. To review, some of the key leadership behaviors that contribute to the relational functions of a group include the following (Cragan & Wright, 1991):

- Regulating participation

- Climate making

- Instigating group self-analysis

- Resolving conflict

- Instigating productive conflict

Leadership Styles

Given the large amount of research done on leadership, it is not surprising that there are several different ways to define or categorize leadership styles. In general, effective leaders do not fit solely into one style in any of the following classifications. Instead, they are able to adapt their leadership style to fit the relational and situational context (Wood, 1977). One common way to study leadership style is to make a distinction among autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leaders (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). These leadership styles can be described as follows:

- Autocratic leaders set policies and make decisions primarily on their own, taking advantage of the power present in their title or status to set the agenda for the group.
- Democratic leaders facilitate group discussion and like to take input from all members before making a decision.
- Laissez-faire leaders take a "hands-off" approach, preferring to give group members freedom to reach and implement their own decisions.

While this is a frequently cited model of leadership styles, we will focus in more detail on a model that was developed a few years after this one. I choose to focus on this later model because it offers some more specifics in terms of the communicative elements of each leadership style. The four leadership styles used in this model are directive, participative, supportive, and achievement oriented (House & Mitchell, 1974).

Directive Leaders

Directive leaders help provide psychological structure for their group members by clearly communicating expectations, keeping a schedule and agenda, providing specific guidance as group members work toward the completion of their task, and taking the lead on setting and communicating group rules and procedures. Although this is most similar to the autocratic leadership style mentioned before, it is more nuanced and flexible. The originators of this model note that a leader can be directive without being seen as authoritarian. To do this, directive leaders must be good motivators who encourage productivity through positive reinforcement or reward rather than through the threat of punishment.

Figure: Directive leaders provide structure and clear expectations for their group. To be effective they must be skilled motivators. The Open University – Speaker – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

A directive leadership style is effective in groups that do not have a history and may require direction to get started on their task. It can also be the most appropriate method during crisis situations in which decisions must be made under time constraints or other extraordinary pressures. When groups have an established history and are composed of people with unique skills and expertise, a directive approach may be seen as "micromanaging." In these groups, a more participative style may be the best option.

Participative Leaders

Participative leaders work to include group members in the decision-making process by soliciting and considering their opinions and suggestions. When group members feel included, their personal goals are more likely to align with the group and organization's goals, which can help productivity. This style of leadership can also aid in group member socialization, as the members feel like they get to help establish group norms and rules, which affects cohesion and climate. When group members participate more, they buy into the group's norms and goals more, which can increase conformity pressures for incoming group members. As we learned earlier, this is good to a point, but it can become negative when the pressures lead to unethical group member behavior. In addition to consulting group members for help with decision making, participative leaders also grant group members more freedom to work independently. This can lead group members to feel trusted and respected for their skills, which can increase their effort and output.

The participative method of leadership is similar to the democratic style discussed earlier, and it is a style of leadership practiced in many organizations that have established work groups that meet consistently over long periods of time. US companies began to adopt a more participative and less directive style of management in the 1980s after organizational scholars researched teamwork and efficiency in Japanese corporations. Japanese managers included employees in decision making, which blurred the line between the leader and other group members and enhanced productivity. These small groups were called quality circles, because they focused on group interaction intended to improve quality and productivity (Cragan & Wright, 1991).

Supportive Leaders

Supportive leaders show concern for their followers' needs and emotions. They want to support group members' welfare through a positive and friendly group climate. These leaders are good at reducing the stress and frustration of the group, which helps create a positive climate and can help increase group members' positive feelings about the task and other group members. As we will learn later, some group roles function to maintain the relational climate of the group, and several group members often perform these role behaviors. With a supportive leader as a model, such behaviors would likely be performed as part of established group norms, which can do much to enhance social cohesion. Supportive leaders do not provide unconditionally positive praise. They also

competently provide constructive criticism in order to challenge and enhance group members' contributions.

A supportive leadership style is more likely in groups that are primarily relational rather than task focused. For example, support groups and therapy groups benefit from a supportive leader. While maintaining positive relationships is an important part of any group's functioning, most task-oriented groups need to spend more time on task than social functions in order to efficiently work toward the completion of their task. Skilled directive or participative leaders of task-oriented groups would be wise to employ supportive leadership behaviors when group members experience emotional stress to prevent relational stress from negatively impacting the group's climate and cohesion.

Transformational Leader

Transformational leaders can inspire followers to act toward a greater good beyond their self-interest. They put their ego aside. They are more concerned with everyone's collective knowledge, skills, and talents becoming a team more than the sum of the parts. Dr. Martin Luther King and Caesar Chavez were the two most outstanding transformational leaders of all time; both men had a shared vision and higher goals. They were role models, coaches, and mentors and encouraged the followers to develop their skills. Both men had their followers questioning the existing norms and practices and looking for opportunities and solutions. Both men were complex, dynamic, and ambiguous. Also, the

transformational leader sees a potential development level that a group can achieve.

Transactional Leader

A transactional leader is a short-term fix. It's about the here and now, ensuring the work gets completed. It's not about a long-term solution to a problem. The leader works with rewards when the job is well done. When the job is not completed, there are consequences. The leader is about following the rules and is motivated by what's in it for them.

Achievement-Oriented Leaders

Achievement-oriented leaders strive for excellence and set challenging goals, constantly seeking improvement and exhibiting confidence that group members can meet their high expectations. These leaders often engage in systematic social comparison, keeping tabs on other similar high-performing groups to assess their expectations and the group's progress. This type of leadership is similar to what other scholars call transformational or visionary leadership and is often associated with leaders like former Apple CEO Steve Jobs, talk show host and television network CEO Oprah Winfrey, former president Bill Clinton, and business magnate turned philanthropist Warren Buffett. Achievement-oriented leaders are likely less common than the other styles, as this style requires a high level of skill and commitment on the part of the leader and the group. Although rare, these leaders can be found at all levels of groups ranging from local school

boards to *Fortune* 500 companies. Certain group dynamics must be in place in order to accommodate this leadership style. Groups for which an achievement-oriented leadership style would be effective are typically intentionally created and are made up of members who are skilled and competent in regards to the group's task. In many cases, the leader is specifically chosen because of his or her reputation and expertise, and even though the group members may not have a history of working with the leader, the members and leader must have a high degree of mutual respect.

"Getting Plugged In": Steve Jobs as an Achievement-Oriented Leader

"Where can you find a leader with Jobs' willingness to fail, his sheer tenacity, persistence, and resiliency, his grandiose ego, his overwhelming belief in himself?" (Deutschman, 2012) This closing line of an article following the death of Steve Jobs clearly illustrates the larger-than-life personality and extraordinary drive of achievement-oriented leaders. Jobs, who founded Apple Computers, was widely recognized as a visionary with a brilliant mind during his early years at the helm of Apple (from 1976 to 1985), but he hadn't yet gained respect as a business leader. Jobs left the company and later returned in 1997. After his return, Apple reached its height under his leadership, which was now enhanced by business knowledge and skills he gained during his time away from the company. The fact that Jobs was able to largely teach himself the ins and outs of business practices is a quality of achievement-oriented leaders, who are

constantly self-reflective and evaluate their skills and performance, making adaptations as necessary.

Achievement-oriented leaders also often possess good instincts, allowing them to make decisions quickly while acknowledging the potential for failure but also showing a resiliency that allows them to bounce back from mistakes and come back stronger. Rather than bringing in panels of experts, presenting ideas to focus groups for feedback, or putting a new product through market research and testing, Jobs relied on his instincts, which led to some embarrassing failures and some remarkable successes that overshadowed the failures. Although Jobs made unilateral decisions, he relied heavily on the creative and technical expertise of others who worked for him and were able to make his creative, innovative, and some say genius ideas reality. As do other achievement-oriented leaders, Jobs held his group members to exceptionally high standards and fostered a culture that mirrored his own perfectionism. Constant comparisons to other technological innovators like Bill Gates, CEO of Microsoft, pushed Jobs and those who worked for him to work tirelessly to produce the "next big thing." Achievement-oriented leaders like Jobs have been described as maniacal, intense, workaholics, perfectionists, risk takers, narcissists, innovative, and visionary. These descriptors carry positive and negative connotations but often yield amazing results when possessed by a leader, the likes of which only seldom come around.

1. Do you think Jobs could have been as successful had he employed one of the other leadership styles? Why or why not? How might the

achievement-oriented leadership style be well suited for a technology company like Apple or the technology field in general?

2. In what circumstances would you like to work for an achievement-oriented leader, and why? In what circumstances would you prefer not to work with an achievement-oriented leader, and why?

3. Do some research on another achievement-oriented leader. Discuss how that leader's traits are similar to and/or different from those of Steve Jobs.

Leadership and Power

Leaders help move group members toward the completion of their goal using various motivational strategies. The types of power leaders draw on to motivate have long been a topic of small group study. A leader may possess or draw on any of the following five types of power to varying degrees: legitimate, expert, referent, information, and reward/coercive (French Jr. & Raven, 1959). Effective leaders do not need to possess all five types of power. Instead, competent leaders know how to draw on other group members who may be better able to exercise a type of power in a given situation.

Legitimate Power

The very title of *leader* brings with it legitimate power, which is power that flows from the officially recognized position, status, or title of a group member. For example, the leader of the "Social Media Relations Department" of a retail chain receives legitimate power through the title "director of social media relations." It is

important to note though that being designated as someone with status or a position of power doesn't mean that the group members respect or recognize that power. Even with a title, leaders must still earn the ability to provide leadership. Of the five types of power, however, the leader alone is most likely to possess legitimate power.

Expert Power

Expert power comes from knowledge, skill, or expertise that a group member possesses and other group members do not. For example, even though all the workers in the Social Media Relations Department have experience with computers, the information technology (IT) officer has expert power when it comes to computer networking and programming. Because of this, even though the director may have a higher status, she or he must defer to the IT officer when the office network crashes. A leader who has legitimate and expert power may be able to take a central role in setting the group's direction, contributing to problem solving, and helping the group achieve its goal. In groups with a designated leader who relies primarily on legitimate power, a member with a significant amount of expert power may emerge as an unofficial secondary leader.

Figure: A group member with expertise in an area relevant to the group's task may draw on expert power to lead the group. For example, a transplant surgeon may lead a team of other doctors and nurses during the surgery while a critical care nurse may take the lead during postsurgery recovery. UCD School of Medicine – Surgery Image 2 – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Referent Power

Referent power comes from the attractiveness, likeability, and charisma of the group member. As we learned earlier, more physically attractive people and more outgoing people are often chosen as leaders. This could be due to their referent power. Referent power also derives from a person's reputation. A group member may have referent power if he or she is well respected outside of the group for previous accomplishments or even because he or she is known as a dependable

and capable group member. Like legitimate power, the fact that a person possesses referent power doesn't mean he or she has the talent, skill, or other characteristic needed to actually lead the group. A person could just be likable but have no relevant knowledge about the group's task or leadership experience. Some groups actually desire this type of leader, especially if the person is meant to attract external attention and serve as more of a "figurehead" than a regularly functioning group member. For example, a group formed to raise funds for a science and nature museum may choose a former mayor, local celebrity, or NASA astronaut as their leader because of his or her referent power. In this situation it would probably be best for the group to have a secondary leader who attends to task and problem-solving functions within the group.

Information Power

Information power comes from a person's ability to access information that comes through informal channels and well-established social and professional networks. We have already learned that information networks are an important part of a group's structure and can affect a group's access to various resources. When a group member is said to have "know how," they possess information power. The knowledge may not always be official, but it helps the group solve problems and get things done. Individuals develop information power through years of interacting with others, making connections, and building and maintaining interpersonal and instrumental relationships. For example, the group formed to raise funds for the science and nature museum may need to draw on informal information networks to get leads on potential donors, to get information

about what local science teachers would recommend for exhibits, or to book a band willing to perform for free at a fundraising concert.

Reward and Coercive Power

The final two types of power, reward and coercive, are related. Reward power comes from the ability of a group member to provide a positive incentive as a compliance-gaining strategy, and coercive power comes from the ability of a group member to provide a negative incentive. These two types of power can be difficult for leaders and other group members to manage, because their use can lead to interpersonal conflict. Reward power can be used by nearly any group member if he or she gives another group member positive feedback on an idea, an appreciation card for hard work, or a pat on the back. Because of limited resources, many leaders are frustrated by their inability to give worthwhile tangible rewards to group members such as prizes, bonuses, or raises. Additionally, the use of reward power may seem corny or paternalistic to some or may arouse accusations of favoritism or jealousy among group members who don't receive the award.

Coercive power, since it entails punishment or negative incentive, can lead to interpersonal conflict and a negative group climate if it is overused or used improperly. While any leader or group member could make threats to others, leaders with legitimate power are typically in the best position to use coercive power. In such cases, coercive power may manifest in loss of pay and/or privileges, being excluded from the group, or being fired (if the group work is job

related). In many volunteer groups or groups that lack formal rules and procedures, leaders have a more difficult time using coercive power, since they can't issue official punishments. Instead, coercive power will likely take the form of interpersonal punishments such as ignoring group members or excluding them from group activities.

"Getting Real": Leadership as the Foundation of a Career

As we've already learned, leaders share traits, some more innate and naturally tapped into than others. Successful leaders also develop and refine leadership skills and behaviors that they are not "born with." Since much of leadership is skill and behavior based, it is never too early to start developing yourself as a leader. Whether you are planning to start your first career path fresh out of college, you've returned to college in order to switch career paths, or you're in college to help you advance more quickly in your current career path, you should have already been working on your leadership skills for years; it's not something you want to start your first day on the new job. Since leaders must be able to draw from a wealth of personal experience in order to solve problems, relate to others, and motivate others to achieve a task, you should start to seek out leadership positions in school and/or community groups. Since you may not yet be sure of your exact career path, try to get a variety of positions over a few years that are generally transferrable to professional contexts. In these roles, work on building a reputation as an ethical leader and as a leader who takes responsibility rather than playing the "blame game." Leaders still have to be good team players and often have to take on roles and

responsibilities that other group members do not want. Instead of complaining or expecting recognition for your "extra work," accept these responsibilities enthusiastically and be prepared for your hard work to go unnoticed. Much of what a good leader does occurs in the background and isn't publicly praised or acknowledged. Even when the group succeeds because of your hard work as the leader, you still have to be willing to share that praise with others who helped, because even though you may have worked the hardest, you didn't do it alone.

As you build up your experience and reputation as a leader, be prepared for your workload to grow and your interpersonal communication competence to become more important. Once you're in your career path, you can draw on this previous leadership experience and volunteer or step up when the need arises, which can help you get noticed. Of course, you have to be able to follow through on your commitment, which takes discipline and dedication. While you may be excited to prove your leadership chops in your new career path, I caution you about taking on too much too fast. It's easy for a young and/or new member of a work team to become overcommitted, as more experienced group members are excited to have a person to share some of their work responsibilities with. Hopefully, your previous leadership experience will give you confidence that your group members will notice. People are attracted to confidence and want to follow people who exhibit it. Aside from confidence, good leaders also develop dynamism, which is a set of communication behaviors that conveys enthusiasm and creates an energetic

and positive climate. Once confidence and dynamism have attracted a good team of people, good leaders facilitate quality interaction among group members, build cohesion, and capitalize on the synergy of group communication in order to come up with forward-thinking solutions to problems. Good leaders also continue to build skills in order to become better leaders. Leaders are excellent observers of human behavior and are able to assess situations using contextual clues and nonverbal communication. They can then use this knowledge to adapt their communication to the situation. Leaders also have a high degree of emotional intelligence, which allows them to better sense, understand, and respond to others' emotions and to have more control over their own displays of emotions. Last, good leaders further their careers by being reflexive and regularly evaluating their strengths and weaknesses as a leader. Since our perceptions are often skewed, it's also good to have colleagues and mentors/supervisors give you formal evaluations of your job performance, making explicit comments about leadership behaviors. As you can see, the work of a leader only grows more complex as one moves further along a career path. But with the skills gained through many years of increasingly challenging leadership roles, a leader can adapt to and manage this increasing complexity.

1. What leadership positions have you had so far? In what ways might they prepare you for more complex and career-specific leadership positions you may have later?

2. What communication competencies do you think are most important for a leader to have and why? How do you rate in terms of the competencies you ranked as most important?

3. Who do you know who would be able to give you constructive feedback on your leadership skills? What do you think this person would say? (You may want to consider actually asking the person for feedback).

Key Takeaways

- Leaders fulfill a group role that is associated with status and power within the group that may be formally or informally recognized by people inside and/or outside of the group. While there are usually only one or two official leaders within a group, all group members can perform leadership functions, which are a complex of beliefs, communication patterns, and behaviors that influence the functioning of a group and move a group toward the completion of its tasks.

- There are many perspectives on how and why people become leaders:
  - Designated leaders are officially recognized in their leadership role and may be appointed or elected.
  - Emergent leaders gain status and respect through engagement with the group and its task and are turned to by others as a resource when leadership is needed.
  - The trait approach to studying leadership distinguishes leaders from followers based on traits or personal characteristics, such as

physical appearance, communication ability, intelligence, and personality. While this approach is useful for understanding how people conceptualize ideal leaders, it doesn't offer communication scholars much insight into how leadership can be studied and developed as a skill.

- Situational context also affects how leaders emerge. Different leadership styles and skills are needed based on the level of structure surrounding a group and on how group interactions play out in initial meetings and whether or not a leadership struggle occurs.

- Leaders also emerge based on communication skill and competence, as certain communication behaviors function to create the conditions of leadership. This approach is most useful to communication scholars, because in it leadership is seen as a set of communication behaviors that are learnable and adaptable rather than traits or situational factors, which are often beyond our control.

- Leaders can adopt a directive, participative, supportive, or achievement-oriented style.

  - Directive leaders help provide psychological structure for their group members by clearly communicating expectations, keeping a schedule and agenda, providing specific guidance as group members work toward the completion of their task, and taking the lead on setting and communicating group rules and procedures.

- Participative leaders work to include group members in the decision-making process by soliciting and considering their opinions and suggestions.
- Supportive leaders show concern for their followers' needs and emotions.
- Achievement-oriented leaders strive for excellence and set challenging goals, constantly seeking improvement and exhibiting confidence that group members can meet their high expectations.
- Leaders and other group members move their groups toward success and/or the completion of their task by tapping into various types of power.
  - Legitimate power flows from the officially recognized power, status, or title of a group member.
  - Expert power comes from knowledge, skill, or expertise that a group member possesses and other group members do not.
  - Referent power comes from the attractiveness, likeability, and charisma of the group member.
  - Information power comes from a person's ability to access information that comes through informal channels and well-established social and professional networks.
  - Reward power comes from the ability of a group member to provide a positive incentive as a compliance-gaining strategy, and coercive power comes from the ability of a group member to provide a negative incentive (punishment).

Exercises

1. In what situations would a designated leader be better than an emergent leader, and vice versa? Why?

2. Think of a leader that you currently work with or have worked with who made a strong (positive or negative) impression on you. Which leadership style did he or she use most frequently? Cite specific communication behaviors to back up your analysis.

3. Getting integrated: Teachers are often viewed as leaders in academic contexts along with bosses/managers in professional, politicians/elected officials in civic, and parents in personal contexts. For each of these leaders and contexts, identify some important leadership qualities that each should possess, and discuss some of the influences in each context that may affect the leader and his or her leadership style.

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