

# Chapter 1: The Essentials of Human Communication

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 Identify the forms, benefits, and myths of human communication.
- 1.2 Draw a model of communication that includes sources–receivers, messages, context, channel, noise, and effects; and define each of these elements.
- 1.3 Paraphrase the major principles of human communication.
- 1.4 Explain the role of culture in human communication, the seven ways in which cultures differ from one another, the aim of a cultural perspective; and define *ethnic identity* and *ethnocentrism*.
- 1.5 Define *communication competence* and explain the qualities identified as part of competence.

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

### I. Forms, Benefits, and Myths of Human Communication

#### **Learning Objective 1.1: Identify the forms, benefits, and myths of human communication.**

- **Human communication** consists of the sending and receiving of verbal and nonverbal messages between two or more people.

#### A. Forms of Human Communication

1. **Intrapersonal communication** is the communication you have with yourself—when you talk with, learn about, and judge yourself.
2. **Interpersonal communication** occurs when you interact with a person with whom you have some kind of relationship.
3. **Interviewing** is a form of interpersonal communication that proceeds by question and answer.
4. **Small-group communication** or team communication is communication among groups of around five to ten people and may take place face-to-face or, increasingly, in virtual space.
5. **Public communication** is communication between a speaker and an audience.
6. **Computer-mediated communication** is a general term that includes all forms of communication between people that take place through some kind of computer.
7. **Mass communication** refers to communication from one source to many receivers who may be scattered throughout the world.

#### B. Benefits of Studying Human Communication

- Of all the knowledge and skills you have, those concerning communication are among your most important and useful. Skills you will learn through studying human communication include:
  1. Critical and creative thinking skills
  2. Interaction skills
  3. Relationship skills
  4. Leadership skills

5. Presentation skills
- C. Myths about Human Communication
  - A good way to begin your study of human communication is to examine popular but erroneous beliefs about communication, many of which are contradicted by research and theory. These myths include:
    1. The more you communicate, the better your communication will be.
    2. When two people are in a close relationship, neither person should have to communicate needs and wants explicitly; the other person should know what these are.
    3. Interpersonal or group conflict is a reliable sign that the relationship or group is in trouble.
    4. Like good communicators, leaders are born, not made.
    5. Fear of speaking in public is detrimental and must be eliminated.

## II. Communication Models and Concepts

**Learning Objective 1.2: Draw a model of communication that includes sources—receivers, messages, context, channel, noise, and effects; and define each of these elements.**

- In early **models** (representations) or theories, the communication process was thought to be linear. A more satisfying view, the one held currently, sees communication as a transactional process in which each person serves as both speaker and listener, sending and receiving messages.

### A. Sources—Receivers

1. According to the transactional model, each person involved in communication is both a **source** (speaker) and a **receiver** (listener).
2. When you put your ideas into speech, you are putting them into a code; hence you are **encoding**. When you translate speech you hear or words you read into ideas, you take them out of the code they are in; hence you are **decoding**. Thus, speakers or writers are often referred to as **encoders**, and listeners or readers as **decoders**.

### B. Messages

- Communication **messages** take many forms and are transmitted or received through one or more sensory organs or a combination of them. Three specific types of messages are:
  1. Feedforward Messages
    - a. **Feedforward** is information you provide before sending your primary messages. It reveals something about the messages to come.
      - i. One type of feedforward is **phatic communication**—“small talk” that opens the way for “big talk.”
  2. Feedback Messages
    - a. When you send a message—say, in speaking to another person—you also hear yourself. That is, you get **feedback** from your own messages; you hear what you say, you feel the way you move, you see what you write.
    - b. In addition to self-feedback, you also get feedback from others in various forms, such as a frown or a smile, a retweet, a nod.
  3. Metamessages
    - a. A **metamessage** is a message that refers to another message; it is

communication about communication.

C. Communication Context

- Communication exists in a **context** that determines, to a large extent, the meaning of any verbal or nonverbal message. The same words or behaviors may have totally different meanings when they occur in different contexts. Contexts have at least four aspects:
  1. **Physical context**
  2. **Cultural context**
  3. **Social-psychological context**
  4. **Temporal context**

D. Channel

- The communication **channel** is the vehicle or medium through which messages pass.

Communication rarely takes place over only one channel.

E. Noise

- **Noise** is anything that interferes with your message. Four types of noise are especially relevant:
  1. **Physical noise**
  2. **Physiological noise**
  3. **Psychological noise**
  4. **Semantic noise**
- A useful concept in understanding noise and its importance in communication is **signal-to-noise ratio**. In this term, the word signal refers to information that you would find useful, and noise refers to information that is useless (to you).

F. Effects

- Communication always has some **effect** on those involved in the communication act.

III. Principles of Communication

**Learning Objective 1.3: Paraphrase the major principles of human communication.**

- Several principles are essential to an understanding of human communication in all its forms. These principles have numerous practical implications to help you increase your own communication effectiveness.

A. Communication Is Purposeful

- You communicate for a purpose; when you speak or write, you are trying to send some message and to accomplish some goal. Although different cultures emphasize different purposes, five general purposes seem relatively common to most, if not all, forms of communication:
  1. to learn
  2. to relate
  3. to help
  4. to influence
  5. to play

B. Communication Takes Place in Varied Forms

- In this text, face-to-face communication and online/social media communication are integrated for a number of important reasons:
  1. It is the way we communicate; we interact face-to-face and online.

2. Contemporary communication can only be understood as a combination of online and offline interaction.
  3. It is part of the skill set that employers expect potential employees to have.
  4. Both forms of communication are vital to developing, maintaining, and even dissolving relationships.
  5. Both forms of communication are important to your achieving your goals.
- C. Communication Is Ambiguous
- **Ambiguity** is the condition in which something can be interpreted in more than one way.
    1. The first type, *language ambiguity*, is created by words that can be interpreted differently.
    2. The second type of ambiguity is *relationship ambiguity*.
- D. Communication Involves Content and Relationship Dimensions
1. Communication exists on at least two levels: a message referring to something external to both speaker and listener or to the relationship between speaker and listener. These two aspects are referred to as **content and relationship dimensions** of communication.
  2. Some research shows that women send more **relationship messages** than men; they talk more about relationships in general and about the present relationship in particular. Men use more **content messages**; they talk more about things external to the relationship.
- E. Communication Is Punctuated
- Communication events are continuous transactions that have no clear-cut beginning or ending. The **punctuation of communication** is the segmenting of this continuous, circular stream of communication into smaller pieces, some of which you label causes (or stimuli) and others effects (or responses).
- F. Communication Is Inevitable, Irreversible, and Unrepeatable
1. **Inevitability**: In interactional situations, communication is always taking place, even when a person may not intend or want to communicate.
  2. **Irreversibility**: Once you say something or click “send” on your e-mail, you cannot “uncommunicate” the message.
  3. **Unrepeatability**: A communication act can never be duplicated, since everyone and everything is constantly changing. As a result, you can never recapture the exact same situation, frame of mind, or relationship dynamics that defined a previous communication act.

#### IV. Culture and Human Communication

**Learning Objective 1.4: Explain the role of culture in human communication, the seven ways in which cultures differ from one another, the aim of a cultural perspective; and define *ethnic identity* and *ethnocentrism*.**

- **Culture** consists of the beliefs, ways of behaving, and artifacts of a group. By definition, culture is transmitted through communication and learning rather than through genes.
- A. The Importance of Culture
- Culture is important for a variety of reasons, including:
    1. Demographic changes
    2. Sensitivity to cultural differences

3. Economic interdependence
  4. Communication technology
  5. Culture-specific nature of communication
- B. The Dimensions of Culture
- Because of its importance in all forms of human communication, culture is given a prominent place in this text; prominent among these discussions are the seven major dimensions of culture:
    1. **Uncertainty avoidance:** The degree to which a culture values predictability.
    2. **Masculinity–femininity:** The extent to which cultures embrace traditionally masculine characteristics (ambition; assertiveness) or traditionally feminine characteristics (caring; nurturing others).
    3. **Power distance:** The way power is distributed throughout the society.
    4. **Individualism–collectivism:** A culture’s emphasis on the importance of the individual or of the group.
    5. **High and low context:** The extent to which information is seen as embedded in the context or tacitly known among members.
    6. **Indulgence and restraint:** The relative emphasis a culture places on the gratification of desires and on enjoying life (indulgent cultures) or on the curbing of these desires (restraint cultures).
    7. **Long- and short-term orientation:** The degree to which a culture teaches an orientation that promotes the importance of future rewards (long-term orientation) or the importance of immediate rewards (short-term orientation).

### **In-Text Opportunity for Classroom Discussion**

#### **The Cultural Map: Ambiguity Tolerance**

This map shows countries that have high and low tolerance for ambiguity. Students are asked to examine their own feelings toward ambiguity in a classroom situation.

- C. The Aim of a Cultural Perspective
1. Culture permeates all forms of communication.
  2. Messages that are effective in one culture may prove totally ineffective in another culture.
- D. Ethnic Identity and Ethnocentrism
1. As you learn your culture’s ways, you develop an **ethnic identity**—for example, you self-identity as a member of the group, you embrace (largely) the attitudes and beliefs of the group, and you behave as a member of the group (perhaps celebrating ethnic holidays or preparing ethnic foods).
  2. **Ethnocentrism** is an extreme ethnic identity; it is the tendency to see others and their behaviors through your own cultural filters, and to evaluate the values, beliefs, and behaviors of your own culture as superior to those of other cultures.
- V. Communication Competence
- Learning Objective 1.5: Define *communication competence* and explain the qualities identified as part of competence.**
- Your ability to communicate effectively is your **communication competence**. Major traits of a competent communicator include:

- A. The Competent Communicator Thinks Critically and Mindfully
  - 1. Without critical thinking, there can be no competent exchange of ideas.
  - 2. A special kind of critical thinking is **mindfulness**, a state of awareness in which you are conscious of your reasons for thinking or behaving.
  - 3. The opposite of mindfulness is **mindlessness**, in which you lack conscious awareness of what or how you are thinking.
  - 4. To increase mindfulness, try the following suggestions:
    - a. Create and re-create categories.
    - b. Be open to new information and points of view.
    - c. Beware of relying too heavily on first impressions.
    - d. Think before you act.
- B. The Competent Communicator Makes Reasoned Choices
  - 1. Throughout your communication life and in each communication interaction, you are presented with **choice points**—moments when you have to make a choice as to whom you communicate, what you say, what you do not say, how you phrase what you want to say, and so on.
  - 2. Competence in communication choice making can be viewed as a series of four interrelated characteristics. The competent communication choice maker:
    - a. realizes that each communication situation can be approached in different ways.
    - b. has a large arsenal of available choices.
    - c. can make reasonable predictions as to what choices will work and what choices will not work.
    - d. has the interpersonal, small-group, and public speaking skills for executing these choices effectively.
- C. The Competent Communicator Is an Effective Code Switcher
  - 1. Technically, **code switching** refers to using more than one language in a conversation, often in the same sentence.
  - 2. Code switching also refers to using different language styles depending on the situation, such as speaking differently to children than you would to adults.
- D. The Competent Communicator Is Culturally Aware and Sensitive
  - 1. The term *culture* refers to the lifestyle of a group of people. A group's culture consists of its values, beliefs, artifacts, ways of behaving, and ways of communicating.
  - 2. Culture includes all that members of a social group have produced and developed—their language, ways of thinking, art, laws, and religion.
- E. The Competent Communicator Is Ethical
  - 1. Human communication also involves questions of **ethics**, the study of good and bad, of right and wrong, of moral and immoral. Ethics is concerned with actions, with behaviors; it is concerned with distinguishing between behaviors that are moral (ethical, good, right) and those that are immoral (unethical, bad, wrong).
  - 2. Some people take an **objective view** of ethics and argue that the rightness or wrongness of an act is absolute and exists apart from the values or beliefs of any individual or culture.
  - 3. Others take a **subjective view** of ethics and argue that absolute statements

about right and wrong are too rigid and that the ethics of a message depends on the culture's values and beliefs as well as on the particular circumstances.

## **KEY TERMS**

ambiguity, LO 1.3  
channel, LO 1.2  
choice points, LO 1.5  
code switching, LO 1.5  
communication  
    competence, LO 1.5  
computer-mediated  
    communication, LO 1.1  
content and relationship  
    dimensions, LO 1.3  
context, LO 1.2  
cultural context, LO 1.2  
culture, LO 1.4  
decoders, LO 1.2  
decoding, LO 1.2  
effect, LO 1.2  
encoders, LO 1.2  
encoding, LO 1.2  
ethics, LO 1.5  
ethnic identity, LO 1.4  
ethnocentrism, LO 1.4  
feedback, LO 1.2  
feedforward, LO 1.2  
high and low context,  
    LO 1.4

individualism–  
    collectivism, LO 1.4  
indulgence and restraint,  
    LO 1.4  
inevitability, LO 1.3  
interpersonal  
    communication, LO 1.1  
interviewing, LO 1.1  
irreversibility, LO 1.3  
long- and short-term  
    orientation, LO 1.4  
masculinity–femininity,  
    LO 1.4  
mass communication,  
    LO 1.1  
messages, LO 1.2  
metamessage, LO 1.2  
mindfulness, LO 1.5  
mindlessness, LO 1.5  
models, LO 1.2  
noise, LO 1.2  
objective view, LO 1.5  
phatic communication,  
    LO 1.2  
physical context, LO 1.2

physical noise, LO 1.2  
physiological noise,  
    LO 1.2  
power distance, LO 1.4  
psychological noise,  
    LO 1.2  
public communication,  
    LO 1.1  
punctuation of  
    communication, LO 1.3  
relationship messages,  
    LO 1.3  
semantic noise, LO 1.2  
signal-to-noise ratio,  
    LO 1.2  
small-group  
    communication, LO 1.1  
social-psychological  
    context, LO 1.2  
subjective view, LO 1.5  
temporal context, LO 1.2  
uncertainty avoidance,  
    LO 1.4  
unrepeatability, LO 1.3

## **LECTURE TOPICS**

### **1. Models of Communication**

- Discuss the text's definition of communication: Communication consists of the sending and receiving of verbal messages between two or more people.
- Discuss the principles of the transactional model of communication and the linear model of communication.
- Examine why the transactional model of communication is more satisfying than the linear model: The transactional model holds that people simultaneously act as senders and receivers of messages and recognizes the interdependence of the elements of the communication process.

### **2. Aspects of Context**

- Discuss the four different aspects of the context in which we communicate: the physical or tangible environment in which the communication takes place, the culture, the timing,

and the relationship and the level of status between the speaker and the listener.

- Examine these four aspects of context and their effects on communication in two or three specific scenarios.

### **3. The Content and Relationship Dimensions of Language**

- Discuss the content dimension of language: *The content dimension of language refers to the behavioral responses expected by a message.*
- Discuss the relationship dimension of language: *The relationship dimension of language refers to the relationship between the persons.*
- Explain why we must understand this principle of communication by analyzing several problems that can result from the failure to distinguish between the content and relationship dimensions of communication.

### **4. Principles of Communication**

- Explain what it means to say that communication is punctuated: *Because communication events are continuous transactions, we segment or punctuate our communication into smaller pieces.*
- Illustrate several ways in which communication is typically punctuated.
- Explain that people often punctuate communication in ways that allow them to look good and that are consistent with their own self-images.

### **5. Communication Competence**

- Define communication competence.
- Examine the qualities identified as part of competence.
- Demonstrate how the competent communicator:
  - thinks critically and mindfully
  - makes reasoned choices
  - is an effective code switcher
  - is culturally aware and sensitive
  - is ethical

## **GROUP IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

### **1. Let's Get Acquainted TABOO Style**

**Description:** This get-acquainted activity works great for an introduction to communication class as it serves three purposes:

- It gets students interacting with each other, which will help reduce their communication anxiety as they communicate during the class.
- It reinforces the critical thinking skills that are required in a communication class.
- It opens up the channels of communication, which leads to a great discussion of the concepts of this chapter.

**Time Frame:** 30–50 minutes

This can be done on the first day of class after the initial welcome/syllabus discussion, or saved

for a separate day. Hand each student an index card/small piece of blank paper and ask the student to anonymously print something interesting or unique about himself or herself. Students should not include any type of physical description. When each student is finished, collect the papers, shuffle them up, and hand them back out in random order. (If a student is handed his or her own, allow him or her to select a different one.) Each student should now have a different student's paper. Now, all students (and the instructor, if he or she wishes to participate) have to get up, walk around the room, and ask questions to each other **without using any of the actual words written on the card** to try and find the person whose card they have. When they find the person, they interview them, finding out basic biographical information about that person. When each person is found and interviewed, the class takes turns introducing the person they interviewed. The class gets to know each other, they used critical thinking skills in determining how to ask questions, and the channels of the communication process have been opened.

## 2. Giving Effective Feedback

**Guidelines:** A useful way to conduct this exercise is first to randomly assign each student in the class one of the scenarios described below. Give students 5 to 10 minutes to write down the kind of feedback they think would be appropriate (positive or negative? person-focused or message focused? immediate or delayed? supportive or critical?) and to write down one or two sentences that specifically illustrate the qualities of feedback they wish to express. [If the course schedule does not allow for class time to do this individual work, it can be assigned as homework.]

After students have had time to consider the scenarios individually, divide the class into groups of five or six. Students in each group should have addressed the same scenario. Give students 10 to 15 minutes to discuss their individual responses with their group members and decide on three or four feedback messages that are most appropriate given the scenario. Have each group report its feedback messages to the rest of the class and tell why the group members think these are appropriate messages. Lead the class in a discussion concerning any differences in opinion regarding what would constitute appropriate feedback in each of the scenarios and why these differences may have occurred (e.g., different cultural expectations, different life experiences, different interpretations of the scenarios, etc.).

### Scenarios for Giving Effective Feedback

- A colleague persists in talking explicitly about sex despite your previous and frequent objections
- A telemarketer—the fifth this evening—asks you to change your long-distance carrier
- A homeless person smiles at you on the street and asks for some change
- Your roommate asks you if she can copy your chemistry homework
- Your younger brother, who has had three minor car wrecks in the last year, asks you if he can borrow your new truck

## 3. Models of Communication

**Description:** Have students, either alone or in groups, construct their own diagrammatic model of the essential elements and processes involved in one of the following situations. Each model's primary function should be to describe what elements are involved and what processes operate in

the specific situation chosen. After students have had a chance to construct their models, have each student or group of students draw their model on the board and explain it. Discussion can then easily be focused on the definitions of terms, the transactional versus the linear points of view, the role of culture, and the principles of communication.

### **Scenarios for Model Construction**

- Sitting silently on the bus trying to decide what you should say in your job interview
- Using the phone to ask someone you've only communicated with on the Internet for a date
- Participating in a small work group to decide how to reduce operating costs
- Talking with someone who speaks a language you don't know and who comes from a culture very different from your own
- Delivering a lecture to a class of college students
- Performing in a movie
- Calling people to try to get them to sign up with your telephone service
- Persuading an angry crowd to disband
- Writing a speech for a political candidate
- Watching television

## **4. Applying Communication Principles**

**Guidelines:** Provide an overhead showing the principles of communication discussed in the text or write the principles on the board. Divide students into groups of three to five. Assign each group one of the scenarios described below. Ask students to discuss how the principles of communication help to explain what is happening in each of the scenarios. Remind them that more than one principle may apply to any of the scenarios (and, in fact, more than one does apply to each!). Have each group report their use of the principles in explaining their scenario to the rest of the class.

After all groups have had a chance to make their reports, ask each group to develop another scenario relevant to their own lives that they can role-play for the class. After each role-play, each group should lead the rest of the class in a discussion of what principles help to explain what is happening in the student-produced scenario.

### **Scenarios for Applying Communication Principles**

- Tanya and her grandmother can't seem to agree on what Tanya should or should not do. Tanya, for example, wants to go away for the weekend with her friends from college. But her grandmother fears she will get in with a bad crowd and end up in trouble; therefore, she refuses to let Tanya go.
- In the heat of an argument, Harry says that he doesn't ever want to see Peggy's family again. "They don't like me and I don't like them," he says. Peggy reciprocates and says she feels the same way about Harry's family. Now, weeks later, a great deal of tension remains between Harry and Peggy, especially when they find themselves with one or both families.
- Grace and Mark are engaged and are currently senior executives at a large advertising agency. Recently, Grace made a presentation that was not received positively by the other

members of the team. Grace feels that Mark—by not defending her proposal—created a negative attitude and actually encouraged others to reject her ideas. Mark says he could not defend her proposal because others in the room would have felt his defense was motivated by their relationship and not by his positive evaluation of her proposal. Therefore, he felt it was better to say nothing.

- Margo has just taken over as vice president in charge of sales at a manufacturing company. She is extremely organized and refuses to waste time on nonessentials. In her staff meeting, she is business only. Several top sales representatives have requested to be assigned to other VPs because they feel Margo works them too hard and doesn't care about them as people.
- Pat and Chris have been together for 30 years. Recently, Pat decided to retire and now spends most days watching television and playing video games. Chris still works as the director of marketing at a large bank. Chris is growing tired of coming home every evening to see Pat sitting on the couch. Chris thinks Pat should start doing some volunteer work and has placed brochures around the house from various nonprofit organizations seeking volunteers. As of yet, Pat has not mentioned the brochures to Chris, and today when Chris got home not a word was exchanged between them.

## 5. Understanding Cultural Beliefs

**Guidelines:** Have students first write their answers individually to the topics indicated below. After students have written their individual answers, have them work in dyads to determine how same or different their beliefs are pertaining to the topics given. Dyads can then report to the rest of the class which belief systems were similar, which were different, and possible explanations why. This exercise is particularly revealing if there are class members from differing cultures and/or countries.

### Topics for Understanding Cultural Beliefs

- The importance of friendship
- The importance of family
- The meaning of and means of success (the qualities that make for success)
- Appropriate gender roles (what constitutes femininity/masculinity)
- Intercultural interactions (friendships and romance with those of other religions, races, or nationalities)
- The meaning of life (major goal in life, this life versus an afterlife)
- Time (the importance of being on time, the value of time, wasting time, adherence to the social timetable of your peers—doing what they do at about the same age)

## 6. Respect for Values

**Directions:** First, have students read the story below. Then, ask each student to rank the five characters listed from #1 (best) to #5 (worst). They should use their own value systems to make these rankings. (Remind them that rank order means no two characters can share the same number.) Once everyone has completed their individual rankings, divide students into groups and have them share their responses with one another and create a new ranking for each character **by group consensus**. Then have the groups share their group rankings and corresponding reasoning

with the class.

## STORY

Five people live in an extremely isolated part of the world. Lois is a girl in her early twenties. Mary is Lois's mother. Cal is an older man; Drew is a nondescript hunter, and Paul is a handsome young man.

Lois, walking along the river, sees Paul on the other side. They shout to one another their introductions, and over a period of time, a friendship develops. Eventually, they fall in love and plan to marry, except for the fact that there is no way to get across the river. It is swift and rocky. There are also deadly man-eating fish in the river.

Lois tells her mother about her desire to marry Paul, but Mary tells her daughter that she doesn't want to get involved with the decision or with working out a way to get Lois across the river.

Lois decides to ask Cal if he would take her across the river to Paul. Cal thinks for a minute and tells Lois, "I'll take you across the river, but first, you'll have to go to bed with me."

Lois is upset and again seeks Mary's advice, but Mary responds, "Don't ask me what to do." After thinking it over, Lois gives in to Cal's demand.

The next day, Cal takes Lois across the treacherous river where Paul is waiting. Since Lois is an open person, she soon reveals to Paul the conditions involved in getting across the river. Paul is irate and leaves her on the bank of the river and disappears. As Lois wanders along the riverbank, she comes across Drew, who has a shelter and some meat from an animal he has killed. Drew tells Lois that he knows that they don't love one another, but they do need each another. He tells her that if she were pregnant, he would marry her. So Lois agrees to live with Drew.

Character	Your Ranking	Group Ranking
Lois		
Mary		
Drew		
Cal		
Paul		

## HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

### 1. Communication Inventory

The text suggests that a variety of communication forms exist. Create a list in which you describe specific forms of communication that you have recently experienced; exemplify each of the following forms: intrapersonal communication, interpersonal communication, interviewing, small group communication, public communication, mediated communication.

*Students' answers should reflect an understanding of the following definitions:*

*People practice intrapersonal communication when they do things such as write in a private diary, rehearse to themselves what they are going to say at an important meeting, or mull over which classes they want to take next semester. Interpersonal communication includes acts such as talking with your teacher about a grade, asking someone to go out on a date, and talking to a*

parent about how you are doing in school. *Interviewing is a specialized kind of interpersonal communication that requires the asking and answering of questions. Examples include employment selection meetings and counseling sessions. Working on a committee to create an honors code for your university requires participation in small group communication. If you are selected to present the committee's plan to a student assembly, then you will engage in public communication. Examples of mediated communication include talking on the telephone, sending and receiving e-mail, and participating in online chat groups.*

## **2. Informal Essay**

Write a short reflection on ethnocentrism and why it should be avoided. Begin by defining the following terms: ethnic identity, ethnocentrism, and cultural perspective. Go on to examine your own ethnic identity. What are some of its customs, traditions, artifacts? What attitudes and beliefs do you embrace due to your membership in this culture? How might these aspects of your ethnic identity affect your communication?

*Students' answers should reflect an understanding of the following concepts:*

*Ethnocentrism is the tendency to see your culture as superior and use it as a benchmark in measuring other cultures. It should be avoided because it causes you to see distortions of other cultures through the filters of your own culture.*

*Ethnic identity is the self-identity you have as a member of a culture, including the attitudes and beliefs that you embrace.*

*Culture permeates all forms of communication. It influences what you say to yourself and when you talk to others. It influences how you interact in groups. It influences your topics of conversation and the strategies used in conversation. A cultural perspective helps a person to distinguish what is universal and what is relative. A cultural perspective is necessary for communication effectiveness in a wide variety of situations.*

## **3. Conceptual Skit**

Choose one of the following scenarios and compose the script for a 3- to 5-minute skit in which you demonstrate an effective means of handling its communication challenges. Be sure your script clearly addresses the concepts indicated in the brackets.

- You've gone out with someone three times and you'd like to invite your date to meet your parents, but you aren't sure how your date will perceive this information. *What do you say? In what context?* [Reducing Message Ambiguity]
- One of your friends frequently belittles you, though always in a playful way. But, it's embarrassing and you're determined to stop the behavior but not lose the friendship. *What do you say? Through what channel?* [Content and Relationship Dimensions of Messages]
- Without thinking, you make some culturally insensitive remarks and immediately notice lots of nonverbal negative feedback. You want to explain that you're really not the kind of person who normally talks this way. *What do you say? In what context?* [Irreversibility]
- Your friends are extremely ethnocentric, never acknowledging that other cultures have

any value. You want to show them that their ethnocentrism is getting in the way of learning and profiting from the contributions of other cultures. *What do you say? Through what channel? In what context?* [Ethnocentrism]

#### **4. Informal Essay**

Explain what is meant by the principle “Communication is inevitable, irreversible, and unrepeatable.” Give an example to illustrate your answer.

*Students’ answers should reflect an understanding of each of the following points: First, communication is inevitable; that is, in interactional situations it is always taking place, even when a person may not intend or want to communicate. Second, once you communicate something, you cannot uncommunicate it. At best, you can only try to reduce the effects of your message. Third, you cannot duplicate a message exactly as you first communicated it; this is because everyone and everything is constantly changing. Students should illustrate this principle with an example from their personal experience.*

#### **5. Noise Inventory**

Give examples of the types of noise described in the text. Write your description of each type of noise in the form of a text message to a friend.

*Students’ answers should reflect the following definitions of the types of noise: Physical noise includes examples such as a room being too hot or too cold, or a faulty audio system in an auditorium; physiological noise includes examples such as being unable to hear because of a sinus infection, or being unable to concentrate because one is hungry or sleepy; psychological noise includes examples such as not believing a speaker is credible, or an unwillingness to listen to a position different from one’s own; semantic noise includes examples such as not being able to understand a doctor’s jargon, or confusion concerning the meaning of a local idiom or slang term.*

### **REVEL WRITING EXERCISES**

#### **Journal Writing**

##### **1.1 Journal: Communication Choice Point: Choices and Human Communication.**

Throughout this book you’ll find marginal items labeled Communication Choice Points. These items are designed to encourage you to apply the material discussed in the text to specific communication situations by first analyzing your available choices and then making a communication decision.

**1.2 Journal: Communication Choice Point: Giving Feedforward.** The grades were just posted for a course, and you see that your dorm mate failed. You got an A. Your dorm mate asks you about the grades. You feel you want to preface your remarks. What kind of feedforward (verbal and nonverbal) might you give?

**1.3 Journal: Communication Choice Point: Relationship Ambiguity.** You’ve been dating Jessie on and off for the past six months. Today Jessie asks you to come to dinner and meet Mom

and Dad and the grandparents. You're not sure what this means, what message Jessie's trying to send. What options do you have for disambiguating this dinner invitation message? What would you say?

**1.4 Journal: Communication Choice Point: Conflicting Cultural Beliefs.** You're talking with new work colleagues, and one of the cultural practices you find unethical is discussed with approval; your colleagues argue that each culture has a right to its own practices and beliefs. Given your own beliefs about this issue and about cultural diversity and cultural sensitivity, what are some of the things you can say to be honest with yourself and yet not jeopardize your new position?

**1.5 Journal: Communication Choice Point: Cultural Insensitivity.** You post a remark on your friend's Facebook wall that you now realize can be seen as culturally insensitive. You don't want anyone to see you as prejudiced and you want to remain friends. You need to say something. What are your options for communicating your feelings? What would you do?

### **Shared Writing**

**Shared Writing: Communication Competence.** Now that you've read a bit about communication and especially communication competence, how would you describe your current level of communication competence? What do you do especially well? What could you improve?