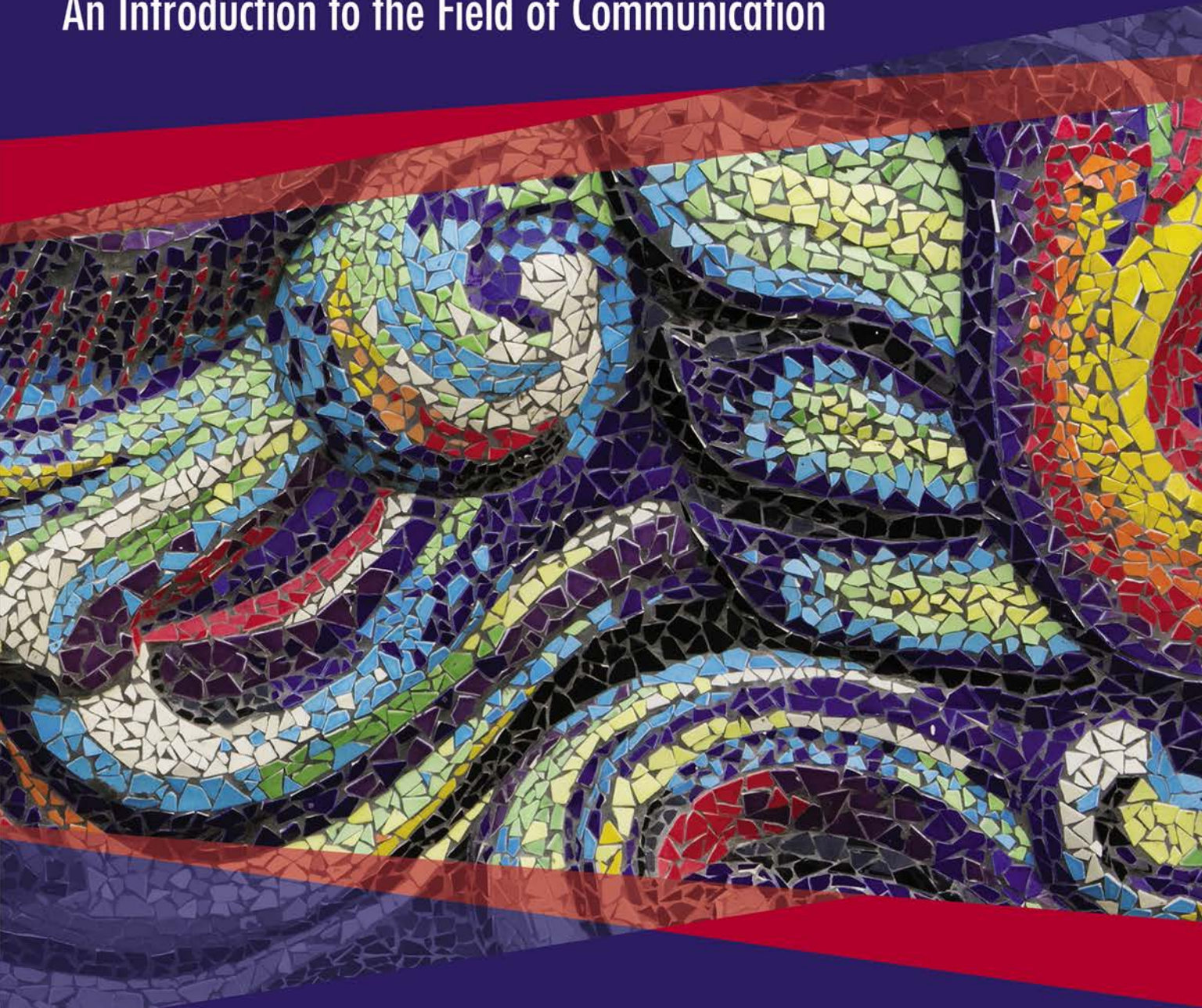


Eighth Edition

# Communication Mosaics

An Introduction to the Field of Communication



*Julia T Wood*



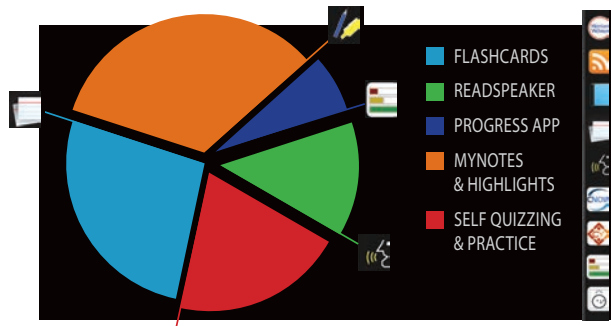
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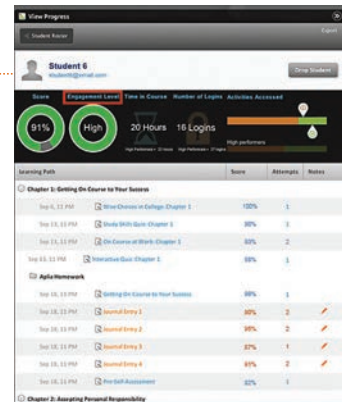


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# Communication Mosaics

An Introduction to the Field of Communication

Eighth Edition

*Julia T. Wood*

Lineberger Distinguished Professor of Humanities, Emerita  
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The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



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Eighth Edition**

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# Preface

I wrote *Communication Mosaics* to support survey courses that introduce students to the field of communication. Unlike other versions of the introductory course, the survey approach usually doesn't include performance assignments such as giving speeches. Instead, the survey course aims to provide a comprehensive view of the communication field, giving attention to topics beyond those that can be covered in performance-oriented introductory classes—such topics include mass communication, organizational communication, and digital communication—and focusing on conceptual understanding of the breadth and importance of communication in many spheres of our lives.

Responses to earlier editions of this book indicate that many faculty appreciate a textbook specifically designed to support a survey approach to the introductory course. Student response to previous editions and 15 years of class testing indicate that students, too, find *Communication Mosaics* useful in giving them an expansive introduction to the communication discipline. In addition to welcoming the approach of this book, faculty and students have been generous in offering suggestions, which I've used to improve this edition.

In the pages that follow, I explain my vision of this book and the features I've woven into it and then call attention to changes I made in preparing the current edition.

## Communication as a Mosaic

As the title of the book suggests, communication is an intricate mosaic composed of parts that are distinct yet interrelated. All of the parts work together to create the whole of communication. This book increases students' awareness of the importance of basic communication skills and processes and shows students how those common elements surface in specific forms and contexts of communication.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I introduces students to the discipline of communication, discusses foundations for the study of communication, and describes careers for people who have strong communication backgrounds and skills. Chapter 1 introduces the book, identifies values of studying communication, defines and models communication, and describes careers for people who have strong academic training in communication. Chapter 2 surveys the discipline's evolution and methods of conducting research so that students understand the long and rich intellectual history of the field. This chapter also highlights the discipline's breadth by identifying its primary areas of research and teaching. Part II consists of six chapters, each of which focuses on one of the basic processes and skills that are central to a range of communication situations and goals. These basic communication skills and processes are:

- ◆ Perceiving and understanding
- ◆ Engaging in verbal communication
- ◆ Engaging in nonverbal communication



- ◆ Listening and responding
- ◆ Creating communication climates
- ◆ Adapting communication to cultures and social communities

These basic skills and processes shape the character and effectiveness of communication in a wide range of settings, although how each functions varies from one context to another. For example, we may use different listening skills when trying to understand a close friend and attending to television news.

Part III shows how the basic communication processes and skills covered in Part II function in seven specific contexts:

- ◆ Communication and personal identity
- ◆ Communication in personal relationships
- ◆ Communication in groups and teams
- ◆ Communication in organizations
- ◆ Public communication
- ◆ Mass media
- ◆ Computer-mediated communication

The MindTap for *Communication Mosaics* includes a chapter-length discussion of how the processes and skills covered in Part II apply to interviewing.

## Features of *Communication Mosaics*

Accenting this book are six features that enhance students' learning and ensure the scholarly integrity of content.

### Accessible, Conversational Style

I write in a conversational style that encourages students to engage the ideas in this book. I refer to myself as “I” rather than “the author,” and I address students as “you” rather than “the student.” I also use informal language, such as contractions, just as people do in everyday conversations. In the opening chapter of the book, I introduce myself to students so they know something about my view of communication and my motivations for writing this book.

Another way in which I've personalized my writing style is by including examples from a range of people. At times, I offer reflections from my own life. In addition, I enlarge the conversation beyond just the reader and me by including in all chapters reflective comments from students at my university and other campuses around the country. To protect privacy, I've changed the names of the students who wrote the commentaries.

Learning about communication should be enjoyable. I don't think textbooks have to be dry or burdened with unnecessary jargon. When it's necessary to use specialized terms, I define them so that students understand what they mean, but I've written this book in an accessible, personal style to make it more interesting to read.

## Foundation in Research and Theory

A textbook is only as good as the research and theory on which it is built. *Communication Mosaics* draws on the impressive body of research and theory developed by scholars of communication as well as scholars in other fields.

*Communication Mosaics* reflects my belief that theory and practice go together. Years ago, renowned scholar Kurt Lewin said, “There is nothing so practical as good theory.” His words remain true today. In this book, I blend theory and practice so that each draws on and enriches the other. Effective practice is theoretically informed: It is based on knowledge of how and why the communication process works and what is likely to result from different kinds of communication. At the same time, effective theories have pragmatic value: They help us understand experiences in our everyday lives. Each chapter in this book is informed by the impressive theories and research generated by scholars of communication and other fields. To ensure that the perspectives and skills in this book reflect current knowledge of effective communication practices, this edition includes more than 200 new references.

## Integrated Attention to Social Diversity

Social diversity is a defining feature of our era. The United States and the world include people of different ages, sexual orientations, gender identities, races, ethnicities, sexes, abilities, spiritual commitments, and economic circumstances.

These differences affect how we communicate. Thus, the idea of universal communication goals and principles must be replaced with understandings of how diverse people use communication to accomplish goals and how they adapt communication to fit a range of contexts. *Communication Mosaics* emphasizes social diversity in three specific ways. First, Chapter 8 offers in-depth coverage of the relationships between communication and culture: how cultural factors influence communication style, how communication shapes culture, and how we adapt our ways of communicating to particular people and contexts. Second, I weave research on social diversity into all chapters of the book. For example, Chapter 10 explains differences in how women and men typically communicate in personal relationships, and Chapter 14 discusses differences in how mass media represent men and women and people of different races. Third, examples in the chapters, as well as photographs, feature a wide range of people and cultural contexts.

## Coverage of Digital Media

Digital media increasingly infuse our lives, and this is reflected throughout this edition of *Communication Mosaics*. Every chapter includes examples and research related to both mass communication and social media we use for social, educational, professional, and political purposes. For example, Chapter 4 notes how language has changed in response to digital technologies. We have coined new words (*hypertext*, *IM*) and developed new meanings for existing words (*mouse*, *cyberspace*, *virtual reality*). Texting and tweeting have led to abbreviated ways of communicating: brb (be right back), h8 (hate), AYT (are you there?), 2G2BT (too good to be true), 9 (parent in room), 99 (parent is no longer watching or no longer in room), and dropping vowels in words (whl = while, nxt = next, tmrw or 2mrw = tomorrow). Chapter 10’s coverage of personal relationships examines how social media affect the ways in which we meet and get to know friends and romantic partners and the means we have for maintaining

long-distance relationships. You will also find a full chapter, Chapter 15, on CMC. In this chapter, I discuss the ways we use CMC—especially social media—and then explore the impact of CMC on how we think, relate, and act in personal, professional, and social contexts. Finally, every chapter in this edition includes a main section in which I discuss relationships between that chapter’s topics and digital media.

I’ve also written digital activities to extend students’ learning online in the Mind-Tap for *Communication Mosaics*—for details, see Resources for Students and Instructors, below.

### Student Commentaries

Woven into each chapter are commentaries from students’ journals and papers. Although students in my classes wrote many of these, students at other universities have also sent me their reflections, many of which are included in this edition. I include student commentaries because in more than 30 years of teaching I’ve learned that students have much to teach each other and their instructors. The commentaries show how different people relate communication principles and research to their own lives. I encourage students who use this edition to send me their comments and reflections so the next edition can reflect their perspectives and experiences too.

### Pedagogical Features

A sixth focus of this book is features that are specifically designed to maximize learning.

**Learning Objectives** Opening each chapter are learning objectives that orient students to the chapter and help them organize how they read and study the material.

**Engage!** Featured in each chapter are “Engage!” boxes that highlight communication research and the role of communication in everyday life. I use these boxes to call students’ attention to particularly interesting aspects of communication in a variety of settings.

**Practical Application** Every chapter in Parts II and III of this edition provides concrete guidelines for communicating effectively (appearing in a highlighted section under the heading “Guidelines for ...”). In addition, each chapter includes “Take Action” exercises that invite students to apply skills and principles as they read about them. Some of these exercises encourage students to practice a particular skill, perhaps by engaging in civic life or service learning. Others invite students to observe how communication concepts and principles discussed in the text show up in everyday interactions. Still others ask students to reflect on the ways in which particular skills, theories, or concepts have shaped who they are and how they communicate. Finally, at the end of each chapter, I include questions that invite students to discuss and reflect on what they’ve learned in the chapter.

**End-of-Chapter Resources** Following each chapter are study resources gathered under the heading Review, Reflect, Extend. These resources include questions that encourage students to reflect on and discuss what they have read and to extend and apply the material presented in the chapter, as well as a list of key concepts (with page references), and further recommended resources, including articles, books, films, and online sites.

**Highlighted Key Terms** Within each chapter, I've boldfaced key terms that students should learn. All boldfaced terms are repeated in the margin of the page on which they first appear and in a list at the end of each chapter to encourage students to check their retention after they have read the chapter. By each term, I've noted the page on which the term first appears and is defined so that students can easily review concepts. Boldfaced terms are also defined in the glossary at the end of the book.

**Experience Communication Case Study** At the end of most chapters, I present a short case study that illustrates how ideas covered in the chapter show up in actual communication. To make the cases engaging and realistic, the MindTap for *Communication Mosaics* also provides videos of the scenarios presented in each case study and questions that ask students to apply chapter theories and principles.

The transcripts at the ends of Chapters 2 and 13, and the online videos available for each, are not case studies. Instead, the scenario for Chapter 2 features Tim Muehlhoff, a professor of communication at Biola University, being interviewed by a student about the relevance of ethics to communication, and the video for Chapter 13 is a speech by Elizabeth Lopez, a student in an introductory public speaking class.

## Changes in This Edition

Teaching at a public university has made me sensitive to the cost of textbooks. I am not willing to publish new editions of my books with only cosmetic changes. Instead, I insist that a new edition offer substantive changes to justify the expense to students. Instructors who are familiar with previous editions of this book will notice significant changes in this edition that are responsive to generous feedback from reviewers, instructors, and students.

### MindTap® for Wood's *Communication Mosaics*, 8th Edition

MindTap for Wood's *Communication Mosaics*, 8th Edition is a personalized teaching experience with relevant assignments that guide students to analyze, apply, and improve thinking, allowing you to measure skills and comprehension with ease. MindTap allows you to set your course, elevate thinking, and promote better outcomes. Learn more in the Student Resources section, below.



### Enhanced Coverage of Computer-Mediated Communication

Faculty who have adopted previous editions of this book will notice that I have updated Chapter 15, Digital Media and the Online World, with material on the ever-changing ways that we use digital media to craft identities; connect with others; and participate in education, work, and political and social organizing. I have also added information on best practices for managing digital media so that they enhance our lives.

In addition to revising Chapter 15, this edition further integrates attention to CMC with a new section in every chapter that focuses specifically on CMC in relation to the chapter's topics.

## Condensed Coverage of the Communication Field

This edition heeds reviewers' suggestion to abridge Chapter 2, which introduces students to the field of communication. I continue to think it is important to discuss the field's origins so that students appreciate the rich intellectual history of the discipline. In this edition, however, my discussion of the field's history and current character is more concise.

## The Latest Research about Human Communication

This edition includes more than 200 new references. The infusion of new research ensures that *Communication Mosaics* reflects up-to-date scholarship. For example, Chapter 12, Communication in Organizations, includes new information on the challenge of negotiating a balance between commitments to work and commitments to other facets of life. Chapter 14, Mass Media, includes recent research that demonstrates bias in mainstream media such as television and films. And, as noted above, I have rewritten Chapter 15, Digital Media and the Online World, to reflect the latest knowledge about how digital media affect our lives, including our communication and how we can best manage their roles in our lives.

## Streamlined Presentation

I've worked to avoid the phenomenon of "page creep," which happens when authors add new material to each new edition of a book without condensing or eliminating any of the material in previous editions. Throughout the book, I've reduced the number of features, tightened prose, and eliminated dated research. This edition is slightly shorter than the previous one, yet it includes new information and features to encourage application of concepts and principles.

- ◆ FYI boxes have been renamed Engage! to better promote student interaction with the content. Many Engage! features contain interactive Critical Thinking Questions.
- ◆ Sharpen Your Skill boxes have been renamed Take Action. These exercises now appear in the end-of-chapter section.
- ◆ Critical Thinking Questions have also been added to select photo captions throughout.

## Revised Coverage of Public Speaking

I have recast Chapter 13, Public Communication. As faculty know, it's difficult, if not impossible, to teach public speaking in a single chapter, yet that is all the space allotted in a book that surveys the broad field of communication. To offer students an interesting introduction to public communication, I have rewritten the chapter as an extended example in which a student body president named Harper prepares a speech to give at his graduation. Following Harper through the processes of thinking, research, organization, and practice, allows me to introduce principles of public speaking in an embodied, rather than abstract manner. In addition, adopters of this book have access to five chapters I have written that provide detailed instruction in preparing informative and persuasive speeches. Those additional chapters are available through Cengage Compose, Cengage Learning's customized learning materials program. Contact your local Cengage Learning consultant for more information on Cengage Compose.



## Improved Order of End-of-Chapter Features

To facilitate improved student comprehension, I have reordered the end-of-chapter features as follows:

- Summary
- Experience Communication Case Study
- Key Concepts
- Review, Reflect, Extend
  - Reflect and Discuss
  - Take Action
- Recommended Resources

## New Interior Design

Finally, this edition has a more open, uncluttered design. Previous editions included many photos, cartoons, and in-text feature boxes. A number of students and faculty commented that all of these features made the pages feel crowded. In response, I have included fewer photos, cartoons, and feature boxes in this edition, and I have moved the skill-building exercises to the ends of chapters.

I hope that this edition of *Communication Mosaics* retains the strengths that instructors and students valued in previous editions while also benefiting from generous suggestions for improvement.

## Resources for Students and Instructors

Accompanying this book is an integrated suite of resources to support both students and instructors.

**Please note:** If you want your students to have access to the online resources for this book, you can order them for your course. These resources can be bundled with every new copy of the text or ordered separately. If you do not order them, your students can purchase them directly from [www.cengagebrain.com](http://www.cengagebrain.com). Please consult your local Cengage Learning sales representative or **[www.cengagebrain.com](http://www.cengagebrain.com)** for more information, user names and passwords, examination copies, or a demonstration of these ancillary products.

### Instructor Resources

Instructors who adopt this book can request a number of resources to support their teaching.

- ◆ **The Instructor's Resource Manual** offers guidelines for setting up your course, sample syllabi, chapter-by-chapter outlines of content, suggested topics for lectures and discussion, and a wealth of class-tested exercises and assignments.
- ◆ **Instructor's Web site.** The password-protected instructor's Web site includes electronic access to the Instructor's Resource Manual and downloadable versions of the book's Microsoft® PowerPoint® slides. To gain access to the Web site, simply request a course key by opening the site's home page.

- ◆ **Cognero.** Cognero is Cengage’s full-featured online testing system that allows users to create assessment questions and tests. Instructors have all of the features that are used to from Examview® with a number of valuable enhancements. These include: browser-based application, questions organized in a central database, real-time software and content updates, reordering of questions on a test automatically, feedback attached to questions or answers, and easy integration and exportation to an LMS platform.
- ◆ ***The Teaching Assistant’s Guide to the Basic Course*** is available to instructors who adopt this textbook. Katherine G. Hendrix, who is on the faculty at the University of Memphis, prepared this resource specifically for new instructors. Based on leading communication teacher training programs, this guide discusses some of the general issues that accompany a teaching role and offers specific strategies for managing the first week of classes, leading productive discussions, managing sensitive topics in the classroom, and grading students’ written and oral work.

## Student Resources

Students have the option of utilizing a rich array of resources to enhance and extend their learning while using *Communication Mosaics*.



- ◆ **MindTap for Wood’s *Communication Mosaics*, 8th Edition.** This edition’s pedagogy is built on a strengthened learning architecture, based on skill building, application, and critical thinking, integrated carefully in MindTap—a personalized teaching experience with assignments that guide students to analyze, apply, and improve thinking, allowing instructors to measure skills and outcomes with ease. With MindTap, students are able to use dynamic technological resources, including interactive videos; find high-value gradable activities; and practice in an engaging, personalized online environment. MindApps that are provided support building a speaking outline, practicing, and presenting speeches.
- ◆ ***The Art and Strategy of Service-Learning Presentations, Second Edition*,** is available bundled with *Communication Mosaics*. Authored by Rick Isaacson and Jeff Saperstein of San Francisco State University, this handbook provides guidelines for connecting service-learning work with classroom concepts and advice for working effectively with agencies and organizations.
- ◆ ***A Guide to the Basic Course for ESL Students*** is available bundled with the book. Specifically for communicators whose first language is not English, it features FAQs, helpful URLs, and strategies for managing communication anxiety.



# Acknowledgments

**A**lthough my name is the only one that appears as the author of this book, I could not have written it without the help of many people. I want to take a moment to acknowledge the support and assistance of a number of people who have influenced how I think and write.

I am deeply indebted to the Cengage Learning team. Everyone on that team has been extraordinarily professional and helpful throughout the evolution of this book. Leading the group is Nicole Morinon, senior product manager for speech communication, whose energy, support, and insight seem infinite. In addition to Nicole, I am grateful to other key members of the team: Monica Eckman, product director, and Kate Scheinman, senior content developer editor. Also integral to this edition were Kristin Davis, marketing manager; Colin Solan, product assistant; Jessica Badiner, media developer; Heather Preston, copy editor; Dan Saabye, content production manager; Sumathy Kumaran, project manager; Kathleen Shapiro, proofreader; Farah Fard, IP project manager; Jananie Kulasekaran, image permissions researcher; and Dharanivel Baskar, text permissions researcher.

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The ideas in this book were also influenced by students in my classes and by students at other colleges and universities around the country. They provided insightful feedback and suggestions for ways to improve *Communication Mosaics*. In class discussions, conferences, e-mail, and written comments, students push me to do more and tell me which communication issues are prominent in their lives. Invariably, students teach me at least as much as I teach them. Because students are so thoughtful, I include many of their reflections as Student Voices in this book.

Finally, I thank those with whom I am closest. For more than 40 years, Robert (Robbie) Cox has been my partner in love, life, and work. Robbie is my greatest fan and my most rigorous critic, and both his support and his criticism shape all that I write. Special friends, Ruth, LindaBecker, Shelly, and Robin, sharpen my thinking and writing by testing my ideas against their experiences communicating with others. My sister Carolyn remains one of the most positive, perceptive, and delightful

presences in my life, as do my youngest friends: Michelle, who is 25; Daniel, who is 21; and Harrison, who is 17. These young people continuously remind me of the magic and wonder in human relationships. And of course I must express my appreciation to the four-legged members of our family: our dog, Cassidy, and our cats, Always Rowdy and Rigby. When I am having a bad writing day, these three remind me that playing ball and brushing them are important parts of life.



# 1

## A First Look at Communication

*What we do in life is determined by how we communicate.*

—Tony Robbins

How does communication affect your life?



### Learning Objectives

Topics Covered in This Chapter	After studying this chapter, you should be able to . . .
The Value of Studying Communication	Differentiate among the three beneficial outcomes of studying communication: personal, professional, and civic.
Defining Communication	Discuss the importance of each of the four key terms in the definition of communication.
Models of Communication	Diagram elements in the transactional model of communication from your observation of a specific communication interaction.
Careers in Communication	Identify six careers that value the skills acquired by communication majors.
Digital Media and Communication	Adapt the four key terms in the definition of communication to the context of digital media.



Start with a quick engagement activity and **review** the chapter Learning Objectives.





Read, highlight, and take notes online.

- ◆ At the end of this term, the person you've been dating will graduate and take a job in a city a thousand miles away. You're concerned about sustaining the relationship when you have to communicate across the distance.
- ◆ At work, you're on a team that includes people from Mexico and Germany. You've noticed that in some ways they communicate differently from American-born workers. You aren't sure how to interpret their styles of communicating or how to interact effectively with them.
- ◆ You can't keep up with the e-mail, texts, and posts on your Facebook page. Although you love staying in touch with everyone, you sometimes feel overwhelmed by the sheer amount of communication that pours in.
- ◆ You volunteer at a literacy center where you teach children as well as adults to read. You believe the program would be more effective if the director did more to build a sense of community among volunteers. You want to encourage her to do that without seeming to criticize her.
- ◆ You want to advocate for a proposal to decrease waste that is put in the local landfill, but you don't have formal training in public speaking. You wonder how to organize your ideas to persuade others to support the proposal.

**F**rom the moment we arise until we go to bed, our days are filled with communication challenges and opportunities. Unlike some subjects you study, communication is relevant to every aspect of your life. We communicate with ourselves when we psych ourselves up for big moments and talk ourselves into or out of various courses of action. We communicate with others to build and sustain personal relationships, perform our jobs, advance in our careers, and participate in social and civic activities. Even when we're not around other people, we are involved in communication as we interact with mass media and social media. All facets of our lives involve communication.

Although we communicate continually, we aren't always effective. People who do not have strong communication knowledge and skills are limited in their efforts to achieve personal, social, professional, and civic goals. In contrast, people who communicate well have a strong advantage in all spheres of life. For this reason, learning about communication and developing your skills as a communicator are keys to a successful and fulfilling life.

*Communication Mosaics* is written for anyone who wants to learn about human communication. If you are a communication major, this book and the course it accompanies will give you a firm foundation for advanced study. If you are majoring in another discipline, you will gain a basic understanding of communication, and you will have opportunities to strengthen your skills as a communicator, which will help you throughout life.

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This first chapter provides an overview of the book and the discipline of communication. To open the chapter, I first introduce myself and point out the perspective and features of the book. Second, I describe how communication is related to our personal, social, civic, and professional life. Third, I define communication and discuss progressively sophisticated models of the communication process. Fourth, I identify careers that people with strong backgrounds in communication are qualified to pursue. Finally, we discuss connections between communication and digital media.

## An Introduction to the Author

As an undergraduate, I enrolled in a course much like the one you're taking now. In that course, I became fascinated by the field of communication, and my interest has endured for more than 40 years. Today, I am still captivated by the field—more than ever, in fact. I see communication both as a science that involves skills and knowledge and as an art that reflects human imagination and wisdom. Because communication is central to our lives, it is one of the most dynamic, fastest-growing fields.

When I was a student, I always wondered about the authors of my textbooks. Who were they? Why did they write the books I was assigned to read? Unfortunately, the authors never introduced themselves. I want to start our relationship differently by telling you something about myself. I am a middle-aged, middle-income, European-American woman who has strong spiritual beliefs and a deep commitment to education. For 40 years, I have been married to Robbie (Robert) Cox, a professor and a leader in the national Sierra Club.

As is true for all of us, who I am affects what I know and how I think, feel, and communicate. Therefore, some of what you'll read in this book reflects what I have learned in my research, teaching, and life. I grew up in a small rural town in the South. I also grew up in an era marked by movements for civil rights and women's rights, which shaped my values and fueled my commitment to civic engagement. I learned early that my experiences are not the only source of knowledge. I talk with others who have different perspectives than my own and I look to scholars to augment my direct observations and experiences. The hundreds of references at the end of this book have shaped both my understanding of human communication and the way I introduce you to the field.

Other facets of my identity also influence what I know and how I write. My thinking is influenced by my roles as a daughter, sister, romantic partner, friend, aunt, teacher, scholar, and member of civic groups. On a broader level, I am defined by the categories that Western culture uses to classify people—for instance, race, gender, socioeconomic level, and sexual orientation. The groups I belong to have given me certain experiences and insights and, conversely, I lack the experiences and insights that come with membership in other groups. As a woman, I understand discrimination based on sex because I've experienced it multiple times. Being middle class has shielded me from personal experience with hunger, poverty, and bias against the poor; and being heterosexual has spared me from being the direct target of homophobia and understanding how it feels to be marginalized because of my sexual identity. Because Western culture tends to treat whites as the norm, not as a distinct racial category, I was not socialized to think about my race and its meaning. However, critical race theorists have taught me to interrogate whiteness as fully as any other racial category.

Although I can use cultural categories to describe myself, they aren't as clear or definitive as we sometimes think. For instance, the category "woman" isn't as homogenous as the single noun suggests. Women differ from one another because of race-ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability and disability, and a range of other factors. Likewise, a particular race is not a homogenous category. Members of any race differ greatly as a result of factors such as ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, spiritual and religious values, abilities and disabilities, and so forth. The same is true of people we can place in any category—they are alike in the particular way that defines the category, yet they are also different from one another in many ways.

Like me, your experiences and group memberships have shaped your identity and your perspectives. How are you similar to and different from others who belong to the same culturally defined groups in which you place yourself? If you are a man, for instance, how is your identity as a man influenced by your racial and ethnic background, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, spiritual commitments, and so forth? What insights do your experiences and identity facilitate and hamper?

Although our identities limit what we personally know and experience, they don't completely prevent us from gaining insight into people and situations that are different from our own. As I mentioned before, critical race theorists have taught me to think analytically about whiteness as a racial category. Mass media and computer-mediated communication (CMC) give me knowledge of diverse people and situations all over the world. All of these resources allow me—and you, if you choose—to move beyond the limits of personal identity and experience to appreciate and participate in the larger world. What we learn by studying and interacting with people from different cultures and social communities expands our appreciation of the richness and complexity of humanity. In addition, interacting with people whose lives and communication differ from our own enlarges our repertoires of communication skills.

## The Value of Studying Communication

Communication is one of the most popular undergraduate majors (McKinney, 2006; Schmitt, 2014). One reason for this popularity is the relevance of communication knowledge and skills to success in all aspects of life. In order to advance in professional life, you'll need to know how to present your ideas effectively, build good relationships with colleagues, monitor your perceptions, manage conflicts constructively, and listen thoughtfully. To have healthy, enduring personal relationships, you'll need to know how to communicate support, deal with conflicts, and understand communication styles that are different from your own. To be an engaged citizen, you'll need critical thinking skills and the verbal ability to express your own points of view. In short, communication skills are vital to personal and professional well-being and to the health of our communities and society.

Because you've been communicating all your life, you might ask why you need to study communication formally. One reason is that formal study can improve skill. Some people have a natural talent for music or athletics. Yet they can become even better musicians or athletes if they take voice lessons or study theories of offensive and defensive play. Likewise, even if you communicate well now, learning about communication can make you more effective.

### Personal Life

We develop our personal identities through the process of interacting with others (Mead, 1934). In our earliest years, our parents told us who we were: "You're smart," "You're so strong," "You're such a clown." We first see ourselves through the eyes of others, so their messages form the foundations of our self-concepts. Later, we interact with teachers, friends, romantic partners, and co-workers who communicate their views of us. In addition, we learn who we are and how others perceive us as we engage mass communication and social media.

The profound connection between communication and identity is dramatically evident in children who are deprived of human contact. Case studies of children who

**ENGAGE!****Ghadya Ka Bacha**


Ghadya Ka Bacha, or the “wolf boy,” was found in 1954 outside a hospital in Balrampur, India. He had callused knees and hands, as if he moved on all fours, and he had scars on his neck, suggesting he had been dragged about by animals.

Ramu, which was the name the hospital staff gave the child, showed no interest in others but became very excited once when he saw wolves on a visit to a zoo. Ramu lapped his milk instead of drinking as we do, and he tore apart his food.

Most doctors who examined Ramu concluded that he had been socialized by wolves and therefore acted like a wolf, not a person (Shattuck, 1980).



© Hulton Archive/Getty Images

 **MindTap** In this photo, Ramu is eating raw meat. What do Ramu’s behaviors suggest about how we develop self-concepts? Would you define Ramu as a human or a wolf?

have been isolated from others for a long time show that they have no concept of themselves as humans, and their mental and psychological development is severely hindered by lack of language. The ENGAGE! box on this page presents a dramatic example of what can happen when human infants are deprived of interaction with other humans. A large body of research shows that social isolation is as dangerous to health as high blood pressure, smoking, obesity, or alcoholism (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010).

Substantial research shows that communicating with others promotes personal health, whereas social isolation is linked to stress, disease, and early death (Fackelmann, 2006; Kupfer, First, & Regier, 2002; McClure, 1997). College students who are in committed relationships have fewer mental health problems and are less likely to be obese (Braithwaite, Delevi, & Fincham, 2010). Heart disease is more common among people who lack strong interpersonal relationships (Ornish, 1998), and cancer patients who are married live longer than single cancer patients (“Cancer,” 2009). Clearly, healthy interaction with others is important to our physical and mental well-being.

## Personal Relationships

Daniel Goleman, author of *Social Intelligence* (2007), says humans are “wired to connect” (p. 4). And communication—verbal and nonverbal, face to face or mediated—is the primary way that we connect with others. For that reason, effective communication is the heart of personal relationships. We build connections with others by revealing our private identities, asking questions, working out problems, listening, remembering shared history, and making plans for the future. To learn more about Daniel Goleman’s work, go to the online resources for this chapter.

A primary distinction between relationships that endure and those that collapse is effective communication. Couples who learn how to discuss their thoughts and feelings,

listen mindfully, adapt to each other, and manage conflict constructively tend to sustain intimacy over time. Friends also rely on good communication to keep in touch, provide support, and listen sensitively, and families that practice good communication are more cohesive and stable (Galvin, Braithwaite, & Bylund, 2015). Communication in personal relationships does a lot more than solve problems or allow partners to make personal disclosures. For most of us, everyday talk and nonverbal interaction are the essence of relationships (Schmidt & Uecker, 2007; Wood & Duck, 2006a,b). Although dramatic moments affect relationships, it is our unremarkable, everyday interaction that sustains the daily rhythms of our intimate connections (Duck & McMahon, 2012; Goleman, 2011; Wood & Duck, 2006a,b). Partners weave their lives together through small talk about mutual friends, daily events, and other mundane topics. Couples involved in long-distance romances miss being able to share small talk.

In addition to studying how communication enhances relationships, interpersonal communication scholars investigate the role of communication in destructive relationship patterns such as abuse and violence. Teresa Sabourin and Glen Stamp (1995) have identified strong links between verbal behaviors and reciprocal violence between spouses. Other communication scholars (Lloyd & Emery, 2000; Wood, 2001b, 2004b) have documented a range of social and interpersonal influences on violence between intimates.

Sandy's comment is the first of many student voices you'll encounter in this book. In my classes, students teach me and each other by sharing their insights, experiences, and questions. Because I believe students have much to teach us, I've included reflections written by students at my university and other campuses. As you read these, you will probably identify with some, disagree with others, and be puzzled by still others. Whether you agree, disagree, or are perplexed, I think you will find that the student voices expand the text and spark thought and discussion in your class and elsewhere. I also welcome your comments about issues that strike you as you read this book. You may send them to me in care of Cengage Learning, 20 Channel Center Street, Boston, MA 02210.



*When my boyfriend moved away, the hardest part wasn't missing the big moments. It was not talking about little stuff or just being together. It was like we weren't part of each other's life when we didn't talk about all the little things that happened or how we felt or whatever.*

## Professional Life

Communication skills are critical for success in professional life. The value of communication is clearly apparent in professions such as teaching, law, sales, and counseling, where talking and listening are central to effectiveness.

In other fields, the importance of communication may be less obvious, but it is nonetheless present. Leaders at organizations such as *The New York Times*, FedEx, and GlaxoSmithKline list communication as vital to their organizations' success (O'Hair & Eadie, 2009). Health-care professionals rely on communication skills to talk with patients about medical problems and courses of treatment and to gain cooperation from colleagues, patients, and families for continued care. Doctors who do not listen well are less effective in treating patients, and they're more likely to be sued than doctors who do listen well (Beckman, 2003; Levine, 2004; Milia, 2003). Further, good communication between doctors and patients and among medical staff is related



to effective treatment of patients (Rosenbaum, 2011; Salas & Frush, 2012). The pivotal role of communication in healthcare makes it unsurprising that an increasing number of medical schools base admissions, in part, on applicants' communication skills, especially their ability to work in teams (Harris, 2011).

It's not surprising that most employers list communication skills as one of the top qualities in job candidates (Hart Research, 2013; Rhodes, 2010; Selingo, 2012). Even highly technical jobs require communication skills. Specialists have to be able to listen carefully to their clients and customers in order to understand their needs and goals. Specialists also need to be skilled in explaining technical ideas to people who lack their expertise. Ann Darling and Deanna Dannels (2003) asked engineers whether communication skills were important to their professional effectiveness. The engineers reported that their success on the job depended on listening well, presenting ideas clearly, and negotiating effectively with others. Fully 75 percent of the engineers said that communication skills had consequences for their career advancement. Sean, an older, returning student, makes this observation about the relevance of communication skills to his professional success:



Slobodan Vasic/Stockphoto.com

Communication skills are critical for career success.

### Sean

*I'm taking this course because I need communication skills to do my job. I didn't think I would when I majored in computer science and went into technology development. But after two years, another guy and I decided to launch our own technical support company. We had trouble getting investors to provide start-up capital, because neither of us knew how to give an effective presentation. We had the tech skills but not the communication ones. Finally, we got our company launched and discovered that we didn't know much about how to supervise and lead either. Neither of us had ever taken courses in how to motivate and support people who work for you. So I'm taking this course as a night student, and I think it will make a major difference in how I do my job and whether our company succeeds.*

## Civic Life

Communication skills are vital to the health of our society. From painting on the walls of caves to telling stories in village squares to interacting on the Internet, people have found ways to communicate with each other to organize and improve their common social world (Keith, 2009). To be effective, citizens in a democracy must be able to express ideas and evaluate the ethical and logical strength of communication by public figures. To make informed judgments, voters need to listen critically to candidates' arguments and responses to questions. We also need to listen critically to proposals about goals for our communities, the institutions at which we work, and the organizations on which we depend for services.

Civic engagement is more than paying attention to politics and voting. It is also working with others—formally and informally, in small and large groups—to identify needs of communities and society and then to find ways of meeting those needs. John Dewey, a distinguished American philosopher, believed that democracy and communication are intricately connected. He argued that while democracy depends on citizens' voting, it is more basic and important that citizens interact. Dewey insisted


 ENGAGE!

## Bowling Together?

When Robert Putnam published *Bowling Alone* in 2000, it caused quite a stir. In it, he claimed that Americans are increasingly disconnected from one another and their communities. Putnam, a professor of public policy at Harvard, amassed evidence showing that Americans at the end of the 20th century were 25 to 50 percent less connected to others than they had been in the late 1960s.

Because he believed that diversity is a strength and that working together makes individuals and the country stronger, Putnam wanted to know what could bring us back together. Working with Lewis Feldstein, who has devoted his life to civic activism, Putnam began searching for examples of people who were connecting with each other to work on community and collective projects.

In *Better Together* (2003) Putnam and Feldstein present 12 stories of diverse people who are working together to build and strengthen their communities. Although the 12 examples are diverse—ranging from Philadelphia's Experience Corps, in which volunteers tutor children from impoverished backgrounds, to UPS: Diversity and Cohesion, which has changed the UPS company from one run almost exclusively by white males to one in which minorities and women have a strong presence in management—they have one thing in common: building and using social capital. The people involved in these efforts realize that they need to build networks of relationships and then draw on those networks to reach goals that are not attainable by individuals working (or bowling) alone.

To promote civic engagement, Putnam, Feldstein, and others established a Better Together initiative at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. If you'd like to learn more about building and using social capital, go to the Better Together website by going to the book's online resources for this chapter.



**MindTap** To what extent do you agree with Putnam's claim that people are increasingly disconnected from one another?

that it's vital that citizens talk and listen to each other—they must share ideas, question each other's positions, debate and argue, and collaborate to build communities that are stronger than any individual could build. Without sustained, vigorous communication among citizens, democracy fails. To learn more about John Dewey and his philosophy, go to the book's online resources for this chapter.

Communication skills are especially important for effective interaction in an era of globalization, where we have daily encounters with people of different races, genders, sexual orientations, and traditions. Diversity in the United States, as elsewhere, is the norm. In 2000, 64 percent of Americans were Caucasian, but the prediction is that there will be no single majority race by 2043 (Cooper, 2012; Milbank, 2014). We live, work, and socialize with people who communicate differently than we do. Friendships and workplace relationships between people with different cultural backgrounds enlarge perspective and appreciation of the range of human values and viewpoints. Scott Page (2008), a professor of complex systems, points out that people with greatly different backgrounds and perspectives make for more productive, creative organizations. In much the same way that the health and evolution of a species depends on a rich genetic mixture, the well-being of human societies depends on diversity.

A recent survey shows that nearly half of first-year students at colleges and universities think that learning about other cultures is essential or very important (Hoover, 2010). Colleges and universities provide superb opportunities to get to know diverse people and to learn about their experiences, values, and cultural traditions.

The number of students from countries other than the United States who enroll in U.S. colleges and universities is at its all-time high (McMurtrie, 2011).

### Luanne

*I used to feel it was hard to talk with people who weren't raised in the United States like I was. Sometimes it seems that they have a totally different way of talking than I do, and we don't understand each other naturally. But I've been trying to learn to understand people from other places, and it really is making me realize how many different ways of communicating people have. With so many cultures now part of this country, nobody can get by without learning how to relate to people from other cultures.*

### David

*As an African-American male, I sometimes feel as though I am a dash of pepper on top of a mountain of salt. I have attended many classes where I was the only African American out of 50 or even 100 students. In these classes, the feeling of judgment is cast down upon me for being different. Usually what I learn about is not "people," like the course says, but white people. Until I took a communication course, the only classes that included research and information on African Americans were in the African-American curriculum. This bothered me because white Americans are not the entire world.*

Luanne was a student in one of my courses, and David wrote to me after taking a basic communication course at a college in the western United States. Luanne's reflection shows that she is aware of the importance of understanding the communication of people from cultures that differ from her own. David's comment illustrates the importance of weaving diversity into the study of communication. Communication, then, is important for personal, relationship, professional, and civic life. Because communication is a cornerstone of the human experience, your decision to study it will serve you well.

## Defining Communication

We've been using the word *communication* for many pages, but we haven't yet defined it clearly. **Communication** is a systemic process in which people interact with and through symbols to create and interpret meanings. Let's unpack this definition by explaining its four key terms.

**communication** A systemic process in which people interact with and through symbols to create and interpret meanings.

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## U.S. Demographics in the 21st Century

The United States is home to a wide range of people with diverse ethnic, racial, cultural, and geographic backgrounds. And the proportions of different groups are changing. Currently, one in three U.S. residents is a minority. By 2043, non-Hispanic whites will be a minority. The following shifts in the ethnic makeup of the United States are predicted to take place between 2010 and 2050 ("Demographics," 2009; Milbank, 2014; "Quick Facts, 2011"):

	2010 (%)	2050 (%)
Black	12.6	13.0
Asians	4.8	8.0
White, non-Hispanic	63.7	46.0
Hispanics & Latino/a	16.3	30.0
Other	3.0	5.0

*Numbers do not total 100 percent because some respondents marked multiple categories.*



**MindTap** How do you think the predicted demographic changes might affect facets of culture such as personal relationships and work?