Interplay

FOURTEENTH EDITION

The Process of Interpersonal Communication

RONALD B. ADLER
LAWRENCE B. ROSENFELD
RUSSELL F. PROCTOR II

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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New York • Oxford
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press in the UK and certain other countries.

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Adler, Ronald B. (Ronald Brian), 1946– author. |
Rosenfeld, Lawrence B., author. | Proctor, Russell F., author.
Title: Interplay: the process of interpersonal communication / Ronald B. Adler, Santa Barbara City College, Lawrence B. Rosenfeld, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Russell F. Proctor II, Northern Kentucky University.
Description: Fourteenth edition. | New York, NY: Oxford University Press, [2018]
Identifiers: LCCN 2017031955 | ISBN 9780190646257 (pbk.) | ISBN 9780190646264 (pbk.)
Subjects: LCSH: Interpersonal communication.
Classification: LCC BF637.C45 A33 2018 | DDC 302.2—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2017031955

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
Printed by LSC Communications, United States of America

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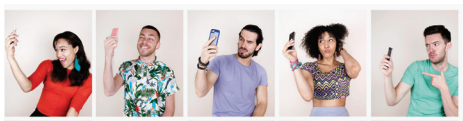

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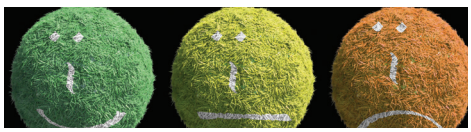

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Preface

A wise editor once told us that any revision to a successful textbook should be both familiar and fresh. It should include plenty of updated material, but it should retain the essence of its time-tested approach. We have worked hard to make sure this edition of *Interplay* achieves those goals.

This new edition builds on the approach that has served students and professors over almost four decades. The accessible writing style is based on the belief that even complicated ideas can be presented in a straightforward way. A variety of thought-provoking photos, sidebars, and cartoons make the subject more interesting and compelling. In terms of its scholarly grounding, *Interplay* cites more than 1,500 sources, nearly a third of which are new to this edition. These citations have a strong *communication* focus, as we continue to spotlight scholarship from our field. Research and theory aren't presented for their own sake, but rather to explain how the process of interpersonal communication operates in everyday life.

NEW IN THIS EDITION

One effective way of incorporating new concepts and research is to offer plenty of cutting-edge material in sidebars. Reviewers tell us these sidebars are essential to *Interplay*'s success, so we've updated them across the board.

- **Focus on Research** boxes—18 of which are new to this edition—cover timely subjects including the pros and cons of communicating via Snapchat, cultural differences in how speakers apologize, the relationship between Instagram and social comparison, the role of punctuation in text messages, relational struggles caused by cell phone use, disclosures between parents and their adult children, and the negative effects of mind-reading expectations.
- **Dark Side of Communication** sidebars address problems including how seemingly harmless labels can cause interpersonal damage, talking frankly about STDs, saying "sorry" too often, the dangers of multitasking, and the harmful effects of "ghosting."
- **Media Clips** use both television shows and films to dramatize how communication concepts operate in everyday life. New TV shows include *black-ish* (co-cultural communication), *This Is Us* (self-concept), *Game of Thrones* (language), *The Americans* (deception), *Speechless* (nonverbal communication), *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* (emotion management), and *Empire* (conflict). New feature films include *Wild* (social needs), *Meet the Patels* (culture), *Trainwreck* (relational dialectics), *Finding Dory* (family), and *Moonlight* (aggressiveness).
- **At Work** boxes help readers apply scholarship to their careers. New topics include letting your voice be heard (literally) on the job, relational repair at work, online relationships with coworkers, and keeping cool under fire.

- **Watch and Discuss** is a new feature in this edition. These thumbnail images point to YouTube videos for viewing in or out of the classroom and are followed by two discussion prompts each. Topics include mean tweets and disinhibition, "vaguebooking" (posting ambiguous messages on Facebook), how your body language can affect the way you feel, listening with empathy, privacy management and cell phones, whether women and men can "just be friends," passive aggressive communication, and "emotional correctness."
- **Assessing Your Communication** instruments in every chapter help students understand and improve how they communicate in important relationships. New instruments in this edition focus on social media use and relational maintenance skills.

We have also made many changes to the text proper to address the latest communication research and changing communication practices. These include the following:

- Chapter 1 includes two new topics: **masspersonal communication**—messages that are personal yet public; and **multimodality**—the ability and willingness to use multiple channels of communication.
- Chapter 2 offers new discussions on **code-switching**, **intersectionality**, and **communicating about disabilities**.
- Chapter 4 has enhanced coverage of **empathy** and the role it plays in helping communicators understand and appreciate each other.
- Chapter 5 offers a new summary of **gender** and **language** usage.
- Chapter 6 adds a review of research on how our own **nonverbal behavior** influences the way we feel.
- Chapter 8 provides new coverage of **self-talk** as a means for managing emotions.
- Chapter 10 updates and extends the discussion of **friendship** and describes the relational value of **singleness**.
- Chapter 11 moves up the topic of **conflict** and describes how **serial arguments** work in interpersonal communication.
- Chapter 12 now concludes the book with coverage of **communication climate**, which includes new and updated material on **confirming messages**, **aggressiveness**, **ostracism**, and the **language of choice**.

DIGITAL AND PRINT ANCILLARY RESOURCES

In addition to the text, a variety of ancillaries provide resources for both instructors and students. Whether you have taught with *Interplay* for many years or are encountering it for the first time, you will note that we use film, television, and other references to popular culture throughout the book to engage students and help them apply concepts. While this has long been a hallmark of our approach and book, we're pleased to now offer featured videos for students and instructors. Short clips from the Media Clip and Watch and Discuss features are now included on the student

website, in the course cartridges for your learning management system, and in OUP's Dashboard system and its integrated ebook.

Online Learning

- **Dashboard** delivers an enhanced ebook and interactive activities and assessments to track student progress in a simple and intuitive online environment. All Dashboard content is engineered to work on mobile devices, including Android and iOS platforms.
  With this edition's Dashboard, professors and students have more interactive and engaging content than ever before. Each chapter includes:
  - Brief audio and video chapter summaries to help students review the basics
  - Flashcards to help students master new vocabulary
  - Interactive drag-and-drop chapter summaries to test whether students know the basics and have the vocabulary in hand
  - Multiple-choice pre- and posttests (20 multiple-choice questions each) to assess students' knowledge and ability to understand and apply information
  - Media Clip and Watch and Discuss video clips with assessments, based on the book's features, to help students apply what they have learned
  - Interactive versions of the book's popular self-assessments to give students immediate feedback on their communication skills and behaviors
- **Course Cartridges for a variety of learning management systems—** including BlackBoard, Canvas, D2L, Moodle, and more—gives you Oxford's quality content in your learning management system in just a few clicks. The course cartridge for *Interplay* includes the test bank and the following resources and activities in every chapter: flashcards, pre- and posttests (20 multiple-choice questions each), audio and video chapter summaries, and **Media Clip** and **Watch and Discuss** video clips with multiple-choice assessments. With no new systems to learn and no access code for students, course cartridges make online assignments easy and accessible to all.

For Instructors

- The **Ancillary Resource Center (ARC)** at **www.oup-arc.com** is a convenient, instructor-focused, single destination for resources to accompany *Interplay*. Accessed online through individual user accounts, the ARC provides instructors with up-to-date ancillaries at any time while guaranteeing the security of grade-significant resources. In addition, it allows OUP to keep instructors informed when new content becomes available. The ARC for *Interplay* contains a variety of materials to aid in teaching:
  - An enhanced **Instructor's Manual and Computerized Test Bank** provides teaching tips, exercises, and test questions that will prove useful to both new and veteran instructors. The Instructor's

Manual includes teaching strategies, course outlines, plentiful in-class activities with specific instructions and teaching tips, discussion prompts, and journal prompts. The comprehensive Test Bank offers approximately 100 class-tested exam questions per chapter in multiple-choice, true/false, essay, and matching formats.
  - **Newly revised PowerPoint-based lecture slides** have been redesigned for optimal utility and accessibility.
- ***Now Playing: Instructor's Edition***, an instructor-only online supplement, includes an introduction on how to incorporate film examples in class, sample responses to the numerous discussion questions in the student edition of *Now Playing*, viewing guides, additional films, and references.

Contact your Oxford University Press representative or call (800) 280–0280 for more information on accessing these resources.

For Students

- ***Now Playing: Learning Communication Through Film*** looks at contemporary and classic feature films through the lens of communication principles. *Now Playing* illustrates a variety of both individual scenes and full-length films, highlighting concepts and offering discussion questions for a mass medium that is interactive, familiar, and easily accessible. This resource gives you numerous film examples at your fingertips, saving you valuable preparation time. Contact your Oxford University Press representative or call (800) 280–0280 to package *Now Playing* with your textbook.
- The **companion website** at **www.oup.com/us/interplay** offers a wealth of free and open study resources for students: flashcards, video and audio chapter summaries, interactive self-tests, and **Media Clip** and **Watch and Discuss** video clips with multiple-choice assessments.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The book you are reading wouldn't have been possible without the help of many talented people. We are grateful to the many colleagues whose suggestions have helped make this book a far better one:

Julie Allee
Ivy Tech Community College

Marie Arcidiacono
Los Medanos College–Brentwood Campus

Diane M. Badzinski
Colorado Christian University

Ellen Bland
Central Carolina Community College

Chantele S. Carr
Estrella Mountain College

Audrey Deterding
Northern Arizona University

Liz Edgecomb
Xavier University of Louisiana

Annette N. Hamel
Western Michigan University

Debra Harper-LeBlanc
Lone Star College–North Harris

Daniel Johnson
Southwestern Michigan College

Shyla Lefever
Old Dominion University

Julie Mayberry
North Carolina State University

Bonnie McCracken
SUNY Geneseo

Lucas Messer
Scottsdale Community College

Craig Parmley
Ivy Tech Community College

Karri Pearson
Normandale Community College

Narissra Punyanunt-Carter
Texas Tech University

Leighann Rechtin
Ivy Tech Community College

Heidi Schara
Riverland Community College

Lindsay Timmerman
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee

Interplay continues to benefit from the contributions of these colleagues who helped shape previous editions:

Marcanne Andersen
Tidewater Community College

Angie M. S. Anderson
Anoka-Ramsey Community College

Aurora Auter
University of Southwestern Louisiana

Nancy Bandiera
Charleston Southern University

Sharon Beal
Long Beach City College/ Chapman University

Constance Berman
Berkshire Community College

Heather Bixler
College of the Sequoias

Sandra Bodin-Lerner
Kean University

Colleen Butcher
University of Florida

Leeva Chung
University of San Diego

Kathleen Czech
Point Loma Nazarene University

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University of South Carolina Upstate

Katrina Eicher
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Hocking College

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Darlene J. Geiger
Portland State University

Debra Gonsher
Bronx Community College

Em Griffin
Wheaton College

Lowell Habel
Chapman University

Gail Hankins
Wake Technical College

Meredith Harrigan
SUNY Geneseo

Kristin Haun
University of Tennessee

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Radford University

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Our thanks to Rachel Reznik (Elmhurst College) and Jessica Kratzer (Northern Kentucky University), who served as Contributing Editors on this edition and made numerous helpful additions to the text. We salute the team of talented and congenial professionals at Oxford University Press, led and inspired by John Challice. We thank Toni Magyar, our hands-on Editor; Michele Laseau, Art Director; Barbara Mathieu, Senior Production Editor; Lisa Grzan, Production Manager; Theresa Stockton, Production Team Lead; Paul Longo, Assistant Editor; and Allegra Howard, Katlin Kocher, and Alyssa Quinones, Editorial Assistants. We're also grateful for the oversight of Editorial Director Patrick Lynch and Director of Development Thom Holmes. Our Developmental Editor, Lauren Mine, deserves special acknowledgment: A full account of her contributions would require a book of its own. Our thanks also go to James Fraleigh for his copyediting talents and to Colleen Dunham for crafting the useful indexes. Sandy Cooke of OUP Canada tracked down images from films and television. Sherri Adler chose the evocative photos that help make *Interplay* unique.

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Interplay

1

Interpersonal Process

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1.1 Recognize the needs that communication satisfies.

1.2 Explain the interpersonal communication process: its transactional nature, governing principles, and characteristics.

1.3 Identify characteristics of effective communication and competent communicators.

1.4 Describe the advantages and drawbacks of various social media communication channels in relation to face-to-face communication.

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EVERYONE COMMUNICATES. Students and professors, parents and children, employers and employees, friends, strangers, and enemies—all communicate. We have been communicating with others from earliest childhood and will almost certainly keep doing so until we die.

Why study an activity you've done your entire life? First, studying interpersonal communication will give you a new look at a familiar topic. For instance, you may not have realized that you can't *not* communicate or that more communication doesn't always improve relationships—topics that you'll read about in a few pages. In this sense, exploring human communication is like studying anatomy or botany—everyday objects and processes take on new meaning.

A second, more compelling reason is that we all could stand to be more effective communicators. A nationwide survey identified "lack of effective communication" as the leading cause of relational breakups, ahead of money, relatives or in-laws, sexual problems, previous relationships, or children (National Communication Association, 1999). Ineffective communication is also a major problem in the workplace, as 62 percent of surveyed executives indicated in another study (American Management Association, 2012). Perhaps that's why parents identify communication as the most important skill set their children need to succeed in life (Goo, 2015).

Pause now to make a mental list of communication problems you have encountered. You'll probably see that no matter how successful your relationships are at home, with friends, at school, and at work, there is plenty of room for improvement in your everyday life. The information that follows will help you communicate better with some of the people who matter most to you.

WHY WE COMMUNICATE

Research demonstrating the importance of communication has been around longer than you might think. Frederick II, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire from 1220 to 1250, carried out language deprivation experiments. A medieval historian described a dramatically inhumane one:

> He bade foster mothers and nurses to suckle the children, to bathe and wash them, but in no way to prattle with them, for he wanted to learn whether they would speak the Hebrew language, which was the oldest, or Greek, or Latin, or Arabic, or perhaps the language of their parents, of whom they had been born. But he labored in vain because all the children died. For they could not live without the petting and joyful faces and loving words of their foster mothers. (Ross & McLaughlin, 1949, p. 366)

Contemporary researchers have found less barbaric ways to investigate the importance of communication. In one classic study of isolation, five participants were paid to remain alone in a locked room. One lasted for 8 days. Three held out for 2 days, one commenting, "Never again." The fifth participant lasted only 2 hours (Schachter, 1959).

Real-life experiences also demonstrate our strong need for contact. Reflecting on his seven years as a hostage in Lebanon, former news

correspondent Terry Anderson said point-blank, "I would rather have had the worst companion than no companion at all" (Gawande, 2009).

You might claim that solitude would be a welcome relief at times. It's true that all of us need time by ourselves, often more than we get. On the other hand, each of us has a point beyond which solitude becomes painful. In other words, we all need people. We all need to communicate.

After spending a year alone in space, astronaut Scott Kelly described his biggest challenge: "I think the hardest part is being isolated in a physical sense from people on the ground that are important to you." ***How satisfied are you with the amount and quality of personal contact in your life? What would be the ideal amount of contact?***

PHYSICAL NEEDS

Communication is so important that its presence or absence affects health. People who process a negative experience by talking about it report improved life satisfaction, as well as enhanced mental and physical health, compared with those who only think privately about it (Francis, 2003; Sousa, 2002). Research conducted with police officers found that being able to talk easily with colleagues and supervisors about work-related trauma was linked to greater physical and mental health (Stephens & Long, 2000). And a broader study of over 3,500 adults revealed that as little as 10 minutes of talking a day, face to face or by phone, improves memory and boosts intellectual function (Ybarra et al., 2008).

In extreme cases, communication can even become a matter of life or death. As a Navy pilot, U.S. Senator John McCain was shot down over North Vietnam and held as a prisoner of war (POW) for six years, often in solitary confinement. POWs in his camp set up codes to send messages by tapping on walls to laboriously spell out words. McCain describes the importance of maintaining contact with one another despite serious risks:

> The punishment for communicating could be severe, and a few POWs, having been caught and beaten for their efforts, had their spirits broken as their bodies were battered. Terrified of a return trip to the punishment room, they would lie still in their cells when their comrades tried to tap them up on the wall. Very few would remain uncommunicative for long. To suffer all this alone was less tolerable than torture. Withdrawing in silence from the fellowship of other Americans . . . was to us the approach of death. (McCain, 1999, p. 12)

Communication isn't a necessity just for prisoners of war. Evidence gathered by a host of researchers (e.g., Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010; Parker-Pope, 2010; Yang et al., 2016) has shown that interpersonal communication is vital among civilians as well. For example:

- A meta-analysis of nearly 150 studies involving a total of over 300,000 participants found that socially connected people—those with strong networks of family and friends—live an average of 3.7 years longer than those who are socially isolated.

Media Clip

Solitude and Connection: *Wild*

Striving to escape grief and a life plagued by personal mistakes, Cheryl Strayed (Reese Witherspoon) embarks on a solitary thousand-mile trek along the rugged Pacific Crest Trail.

In the wilderness, Strayed spends much of her time reflecting on the past and pondering her options for the future. In her self-enforced solitude, she also discovers the value of human connection. She eagerly seeks out encounters with other hikers to alleviate loneliness, satisfy practical needs for food and water, and answer questions about her own identity. Both solitude and communication help her come to terms with who she is and who she wants to become.

Strayed's journey illustrates many of the reasons we communicate. Not far into her adventure she exclaims to herself, "I like talking to people. Listening to people . . . that's a hobby of mine I hadn't even realized I had."

In her wilderness quest, Strayed learns a lesson that applies to us all: Solitude and reflection can prepare us to embark on healthier relationships.

- People with strong relationships have significantly lower risks of coronary disease, hypertension, and obesity than do people with less social integration.
- Divorced, separated, or widowed people are 5 to 10 times more likely to need hospitalization for mental illnesses than their married counterparts. Happily married people also have lower incidences of pneumonia, surgery, and cancer than single people. (It's important to note that the *quality* of the relationship is more important than the institution of marriage in these studies.)

Such research demonstrates the importance of meaningful personal relationships and explains why social scientists conclude that communication is indispensable for health. Not everyone needs the same amount of contact, and the quality of communication is almost certainly as important as the quantity. Nonetheless, the point remains: Personal communication is essential for our well-being.

IDENTITY NEEDS

Communication does more than enable us to survive. It is the primary way we learn who we are (Harwood, 2005). As you'll read in Chapter 3, our sense of identity comes from the ways we interact with other people. Are we smart or stupid, attractive or ugly, skillful or inept? The answers to these questions don't come from looking in the mirror. The reactions of others shape who we are.

Deprived of communication with others, we would have no sense of identity. Consider the case of the famous "Wild Boy of Aveyron," who spent his early childhood without any apparent human contact. The boy was discovered in January 1800 while digging for vegetables in a French village garden. He could not speak, and he showed no behaviors one would expect in a social human. More significant than this absence of social skills was his lack of any identity as a human being. As author Roger Shattuck (1980) put it, "The boy had no human sense of being in the world. He had no sense of himself as a person related to other persons" (p. 37). Only after the influence of a loving "mother" did the boy begin to behave as a human.

Contemporary accounts support the essential role communication plays in shaping identity. In some cases, feral children—those raised with limited or no human contact—have demonstrated communication patterns similar to those of animals they grew up around (Newton, 2002). They do not appear to have developed a sense of themselves as humans before interacting with other people. Similarly, *Dani's Story* (Lierow, 2011) tells of an abandoned child who was rescued by a loving family and taught to communicate. After considerable time and investment, she was ultimately able to say of herself, "I pretty."

Each of us enters the world with little or no sense of identity. We gain an idea of who we are from the way others define us. As we explain in Chapter 3, the messages we receive in early childhood are the strongest identity shapers, but the influence of others continues throughout life.

SOCIAL NEEDS

Some social scientists have argued that besides helping define who we are, communication is the principal way relationships are created. For example, Julie Yingling (1994) asserts that children "talk friendships into existence." The same can be said for adult relationships: It's impossible to imagine how they could exist without communication. These relationships satisfy a variety of social needs, such as giving and receiving affection, having fun, helping others and being helped, and developing a sense of self-worth (Rubin et al., 1988). Because relationships with others are vital, some theorists have gone so far as to argue that communication is the primary goal of human existence. One anthropologist (Goldschmidt, 1990) calls the drive for meeting social needs through communication "the human career."

There's a strong link between the quality of communication and the success of relationships. For example, children who grow up in strong conversation-oriented families report having more satisfying same-sex friendships and romantic relationships when they become adults (Koesten, 2004). Women in one study reported that "socializing" contributed more to a satisfying life than virtually any other activity, including relaxing, shopping, eating, exercise, television, or prayer (Kahneman et al., 2004).

DARK SIDE OF COMMUNICATION

Loneliness and the Internet: A Delicate Balance

It's Friday night and you have no plans. You don't want to spend the evening by yourself, but it feels like a chore to go out and socialize. Instead, you decide to stay in and interact with others online—perhaps with friends, or maybe with strangers. Is that a good way to meet your social needs? The simple answer is "occasionally, but not regularly."

Research about online communication and loneliness presents a mixed bag. Connecting with others online can help alleviate lonely feelings (Lee et al., 2013), particularly for those who find it challenging to get out and about (Cotten et al., 2013). On the other hand, there's a correlation between loneliness and what social scientists call a *preference for online social interaction* (Chung, 2013). The cause-effect relationship isn't always clear, but research shows that lonely people prefer to interact with others online, which can lead to problematic internet use, which can create a greater sense of loneliness (Kim et al., 2009; Tokunaga, 2016).

The key to healthy communication lies in a principle we discuss frequently in this book: all things in moderation. When online communication complements and reinforces in-person relationships, it can be a wonderful tool for meeting social needs. When it mostly or completely replaces face-to-face interaction, there may be cause for concern. The Assessing Your Communication box on page 24 can help you determine whether your online and in-person communication are in balance.

Despite knowing that communication is crucial to social satisfaction, evidence suggests that many people aren't very successful at managing their interpersonal relationships. For example, one-third of Americans say they've never interacted with their neighbors, up from one-fifth who said the same just a few decades ago (Poon, 2015). Research also shows that the number of friendships is in decline. One survey (McPherson et al., 2006) reported that in 1985, Americans had an average of 2.94 close friends. Twenty years later, that number had dropped to 2.08. It's worth noting that in this same study, more-educated Americans reported having larger and more diverse networks. In other words, higher education can enhance your relational life as well as your intellect.

PRACTICAL NEEDS

Along with satisfying physical, identity, and social needs, communication is essential in dealing with more practical matters. It's the tool that lets us tell the hairstylist to take just a little off the sides, direct the doctor to where it hurts, and inform the plumber that the broken pipe needs attention *now*!

Beyond these obvious needs, a wealth of research demonstrates that communication is an essential ingredient for success in virtually every career. (See the At Work box on page 9.) On-the-job communication skills can even make the difference between life and death for doctors, nurses, and other medical practitioners. Researchers discovered that "communication failures" in hospitals and doctors' offices were linked to more than 1,700 U.S. deaths in a recent five-year period (Bailey, 2016). Studies also show a significant difference between the communication skills of physicians who had no malpractice claims against them and doctors with previous claims (Carroll, 2015).

Communication is just as important outside of work. For example, married couples who are effective communicators report happier relationships than less skillful husbands and wives (Ridley et al., 2001)—a finding that has been supported across cultures (Rehman & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2007). And the effects of work–family conflict—a common occurrence that negatively affects marital satisfaction—can be mitigated with constructive communication (Carroll et al., 2013). In school, grade-point averages of college students are related positively to their communication competence (Hawken et al., 1991). In addition, school adjustment, dropout rate, and overall school achievement are highly related to students' having strong, supportive relationships (Heard, 2007).

Psychologist Abraham Maslow (1968) suggests that human needs fall into five categories, each of which must be satisfied before we concern ourselves with the next one. As you read about each need, think about the ways in which communication is often necessary to satisfy it. The most basic needs are *physical*: sufficient air, water, food, and rest and the ability to reproduce as a species. The second category of Maslow's needs involves *safety*: protection from threats to our well-being. Beyond physical and safety concerns are the *social* needs described earlier. Next, Maslow suggests that each of us has the need for *self-esteem*: the desire to believe that

@work Communication and Career Advancement

No matter the field, research supports what experienced workers already know—that communication skills are crucial in finding and succeeding in a job. A survey of business leaders rated abilities in spoken and written communication as the most important skills for college graduates to possess (Supiano, 2013). In a later study with similar results, employers told college students that oral communication skills, and particularly interpersonal communication, are essential for workplace success (Coffelt et al., 2016). It's no wonder that job ads ask for competence in "oral and written communication" more than any other skill set—by a wide margin (Anderson & Gantz, 2013).

Once you're hired, the need for communication skills is important in virtually every career. Engineers spend the bulk of their working lives speaking and listening, mostly in one-on-one and small-group settings (Darling & Dannels, 2003). Accounting professionals spend 80 percent of their time on the job communicating with others, individually and in groups (Nellermoe et al., 1999). Oral and written communication skills are also vital in the computer industry, according to Silicon Valley employers (Stevens, 2005). Writing in *The Scientist* magazine, a commentator echoed this sentiment: "If I give any advice, it is that you can never do enough training around your overall communication skills" (Richman, 2002).

we are worthwhile, valuable people. The final category of needs involves *self-actualization*: the desire to develop our potential to the maximum, to become the best person we can be.

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

So far, we have talked about communication as if its meaning were perfectly clear. In fact, scholars have debated the definition of communication for years (Littlejohn, 2008). Despite their many disagreements, most would concur that at its essence, **communication** is about using messages to generate meanings (Korn et al., 2000). Notice how this basic definition holds true across a variety of contexts—public speaking, small groups, mass media, and so forth. The goal of this section is to explain how messages and meanings are created in interpersonal communication and to describe the many factors involved in this complex process.

EARLY MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

As the old saying goes, "A picture is worth a thousand words." With that principle in mind, social scientists of the 1950s created models of the communication process. These early, simplistic models characterized communication as a one-way, linear event—something that a sender "does" by encoding a message and delivering it to a passive receiver who decodes it. This one-way process resembles an archer (the sender) shooting an arrow (the message) at a target (the receiver). For some examples of