EIGHTH EDITION

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

RELATING TO OTHERS

STEVEN A. BEEBE • SUSAN J. BEEBE • MARK V. REDMOND

Interpersonal Communication

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EIGHTH EDITION

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PEARSON

Dedicated to Our Families

Mark and Matthew Beebe
Peggy, Nicholas, and Eric Redmond, and Beth Maroney

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Special Features

#communicationandtechnology

Preface

The world does not revolve around you. This un-profound observation has profound implications for the study of interpersonal communication: **At the heart of quality interpersonal relationships is an emphasis on others.** A focus on others rather than on oneself has been the hallmark of most volunteer, community, and faith movements in the world for millennia. Yet this book is not about religion or philosophy. It's about how to enhance the quality of your interpersonal communication with others.

The importance of being other-oriented was the foundation of the first seven well-received editions of *Interpersonal Communication: Relating to Others*, and it continues to be the central theme of the eighth edition.

What's New in the Eighth Edition
REVEL™

Educational technology designed for the way today's students read, think, and learn

When students are engaged deeply, they learn more effectively and perform better in their courses. This simple fact inspired the creation of REVEL: an immersive learning experience designed for the way today's students read, think, and learn. Built in collaboration with educators and students nationwide, REVEL is the newest, fully digital way to deliver respected Pearson content.

REVEL enlivens course content with media interactives and assessments—integrated directly within the authors' narrative—that provide opportunities for students to read about and practice course material in tandem. This immersive educational technology boosts student engagement, which leads to better understanding of concepts and improved performance throughout the course.

Learn more about REVEL

http://www.pearsonhighered.com/revel/

SPECIAL FEATURES FOR COMMUNICATION STUDENTS
REVEL is a dynamic learning experience that offers students a way to study the content and topics relevant to communication in a whole new way. Rather than simply offering opportunities to read about and study interpersonal communication, REVEL facilitates deep, engaging interactions with the concepts that matter most. For example, in Chapter 5, students are presented with a self-assessment that scores their skill in empathizing with others, allowing them to examine their level of empathy and consider how they could improve on it. Interactive text and figures on topics like "What You Do with Your Communication Time" are designed to capture student's attention and engage them in the text. In addition, students are presented with video examples throughout the book on topics like listening styles, social media, nonverbal communication, perception barriers, and personal space. A wealth of student and instructor resources and interactive materials can be found within REVEL. Some of our favorites include the following:

- **Audio Excerpts**
  Students can listen to audio clips while they read, bringing examples to life in a way that a printed text cannot. Throughout the book, dialogue excerpts highlight effective as well as ineffective ways to communicate. These audio examples reinforce learning and add dimension to the printed text.

- **Self-Assessments**
  Self-assessment instruments allow students to analyze their own communication styles, enabling them to learn and grow over the duration of the course. A variety of self-assessments are offered, including ones on topics such as testing your empathy and strategies for improving intercultural competence.

- **Videos and Video Self-Checks**
  Video clips appear throughout the narrative to boost mastery, and many videos are bundled with correlating self-checks, enabling students to test their knowledge.

- **Interactive Figures**
  Animated figures help students understand hard-to-grasp concepts, such as the model of relational development, through interactive visualizations.

- **Integrated Writing Opportunities**
  To help students connect chapter content with personal meaning, each chapter offers two varieties of writing prompts: the Journal prompt, which elicits free-form, topic-specific responses addressing content at the module level, and the Shared Writing prompt, which encourages students to share and respond to each other's brief responses to high-interest topics in the chapter.`

For more information about all the tools and resources in REVEL and access to your own REVEL account for *Interpersonal Communication: Relating to Others*, Eighth Edition go to www.pearsonhighered.com/revel.

Chapter Updates

In addition to the abundance of in-chapter interactive and media materials you'll find in REVEL, we have worked to retain the strengths of the text that readers seem to value most—an easily accessible style, our other-oriented approach, and a balance of theory and skills. This new edition adds fresh examples and new research throughout. Here are some reasons to give this new edition a close look:

- **Chapter 1**, "*Introduction to Interpersonal Communication*," includes additional discussion, research, and examples about social media. In addition, newly titled **#communicationandtechnology** boxes, which are included in each chapter, discuss the influence of new technology on interpersonal communication.

- **Chapter 2**, "*Interpersonal Communication and Self*," presents additional research on the material self, attachment styles, and self-disclosure, among other topics. More social media examples have also been added to the chapter.

- **Chapter 3**, "*Interpersonal Communication and Perception*," contains a new discussion on active and passive perception. New research on stereotyping and fundamental attribution error has also been added to the chapter.

- **Chapter 4**, "*Interpersonal Communication and Diversity: Adapting to Others*," includes an expanded discussion on discrimination and new content on the cultural dimensions of happiness.

- **Chapter 5**, "*Listening and Responding Skills*," contains new research on social media and listening goals. The chapter features a new **#communicationandtechnology** box about being "listened to" by our Facebook friends.

A **Relating to Diverse Others** box also explores the updated topic, "Who Listens Better: Men or Women?"

- **Chapter 6**, "*Verbal Communication Skills*," features a new section on how to have a conversation with others. The chapter also includes a new discussion on online relationships.

- **Chapter 7**, " *Nonverbal Communication Skills*," includes new research on how our vocal cues provide clues about our relationships and how physical appearance can influence perception.

- **Chapter 8**, "*Conflict Management Skills*," has been reorganized so that the content on conflict triggers appears before the discussion of conflict as a process. A new **Communication and Emotion** box covering "hot button" issues has also been added. The discussion of power negotiation has been streamlined.

- **Chapter 9**, "*Understanding Interpersonal Relationships*," contains new research on how intimate relationships enhance our self-esteem and confidence, and how our use of Facebook changes as relationships escalate. Additional examples about online dating and speed dating have also been added to the chapter.

- **Chapter 10**, "*Managing Relationship Challenges*," features a new discussion on addressing grief and delivering bad news. Coverage of cyberbullying has been increased, and Facebook surveillance has been added.

- **Chapter 11**, "*Interpersonal Relationships: Friendship and Romance*," includes more social media examples and research. The discussion on romantic relationships, including dating, has been expanded with new examples and research.

- **Chapter 12**, "*Interpersonal Relationships: Family and Workplace*," has additional coverage on the dark side of workplace communication, nontraditional families, and the adoption of communication technology in the workplace. New studies, data, and examples have been added throughout the chapter.

Unique Features

An Other-Oriented Approach

Becoming other-oriented is a collection of skills and principles that are designed to increase your sensitivity to and understanding of others. Being other-oriented doesn't mean you abandon your own thoughts, ignore your feelings, and change your behavior only to please others; that would not only be unethical, it would also be an ineffective approach to developing genuine, honest relationships with others. An other-oriented person is self-aware in addition to being aware of others. True empathy, emotional intelligence, and sensitivity are possible only when we feel secure about our own identities.

Becoming other-oriented is a mindful process of considering the thoughts, needs, feelings, and values of others, rather than focusing exclusively on oneself. This process involves all the classic principles and skills typically taught in interpersonal communication courses—listening, feedback, conflict management skills, and verbal and non-verbal skills—and places additional emphasis on the importance of the perceptions, thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, values, and emotions of others.

BEING OTHER-ORIENTED **Being Other-Oriented** boxes appear throughout the book and connect the other-orientation theme to specific discussions, often presenting thought-provoking questions to get students thinking about how other-oriented their own communication is.

> **BEING Other-ORIENTED**
>
> It's important to know your own preferred listening style, but it's also important to understand the listening style of your communication partner. How can you do this? Look for clues that help you identify your partner's listening style. Relational listeners want to hear stories and anecdotes about others. Analytical listeners will be interested in facts. Critical listeners will be more focused on errors, inconsistencies, and discrepancies when listening. Task-oriented listeners will be focused on verbs; they want to know what to do with the information they hear.

APPLYING AN OTHER-ORIENTATION At the end of each chapter, the summary section **Applying an Other-Orientation** discusses essential applications and specifically applies the other-orientation to the chapter content.

Applying an Other-Orientation
to Listening and Responding Skills

It's impossible to be other-oriented without listening and observing others. Listening to comprehend information, empathize, or critically evaluate what others say is the quintessential other-oriented skill. The following poem by an anonymous author, simply called "Listen," nicely summarizes the reason listening is such an important interpersonal skill.

Listen

When I ask you to listen to me and you start giving advice, you have not done what I asked.
When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way, you are trampling on my feelings.
When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have to do something to solve my problems, you have failed me, strange as that may seem.
Listen! All I asked was that you listen. Not talk or do—just hear

And I can do for myself; I'm not helpless. Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.
When you do something for me that I can and need to do for myself, you contribute to my fear and weakness.
But when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel, no matter how irrational, then I quit trying to convince you and can get about the business of understanding what's behind this irrational feeling.
And when that's clear, the answers are obvious and I don't need advice.
Irrational feelings make sense when we understand what's behind them.
Perhaps that's why prayer works, sometimes, for some people—because God is mute, and doesn't give advice or try to fix things.

A Balance of Principles and Skills

This book provides a clear overview of interpersonal communication theory and principles to help students understand how they communicate, balanced with strategies to help students improve their interpersonal communication skill. Every chapter includes both classic and contemporary research conclusions that document essential interpersonal communication principles. Theory that helps explain the interpersonal communication behavior of others also helps students predict how best to enhance their own interpersonal communication. The research-based skills and practical suggestions throughout will show students how to apply the principles and improve such skills as listening, conflict management, and verbal and nonverbal communication.

An Emphasis on Diversity

Inherent in our other-oriented approach is the understanding that people differ in significant ways, such as culture, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, political perspectives, and other points of view. It is because of these differences that we need skills and principles that allow us to develop links to other people and encourage us to establish meaningful interpersonal relationships with them.

Communication occurs when people find commonalities in meaning that transcend their differences. Using a competency-based approach, this book presents practical,

research-based strategies for increasing understanding when interacting with those who are different from us. Using examples, illustrations, and research conclusions woven throughout each chapter, we identify ways to become other-oriented despite differences we encounter in people of the other gender or of other cultures, ethnicities, or ideologies.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND DIVERSITY: ADAPTING TO OTHERS This in-depth chapter (Chapter 4) not only identifies barriers to competent intercultural communication but also presents strategies to bridge the chasm of differences that still too often divide rather than unite people.

RELATING TO DIVERSE OTHERS This feature, included in every chapter, presents research findings as well as communication strategies for understanding differences.

An Emphasis on Technology

The line between face-to-face and electronically mediated communication has become increasingly blurred as we text, e-mail, and Skype with our friends and share the latest news and views via Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and blogs. This text explores the ever-increasing role of technology in interpersonal communication and the implications of technology for our daily communication and our relationships with others. Throughout the book we have included the latest research findings about how our electronic connections affect our face-to-face interactions.

#communicationandtechnology The **#communicationandtechnology** feature box focuses on research conclusions about the ways in which technology is changing how we relate to and interact with others and offers practical applications relating to the impact of such technologies as Skype, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter on establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships.

An Emphasis on Relationships

As the book's subtitle *Relating to Others* suggests, we highlight the importance of enhancing interpersonal relationships by developing an increased awareness of and sensitivity to how we relate to others. Relationship chapters focus first on fundamental interpersonal theory and skills directly related to relationships and on theories of the stages of relationship development. While we emphasize the positive nature of relationships, we also provide a glimpse into the challenging "dark side" of relating to others, including such issues as deception, jealousy, and the influence of technology on our interactions and communication. A wide range of relationship types is then explored in detail, including relationships with friends, romantic partners, family members, and coworkers, as well as strategies for managing these relationships.

COMMUNICATION AND EMOTION Revised **Communication and Emotion** boxes throughout help students see how emotions affect their relationships with others.

A Partnership with Students and Instructors

To use a music metaphor, we have provided the "notes," but the instructor is the one who makes the music, in concert with the student reader. We provide the melody line, but the instructor adds harmony, texture, and color to make the instructional message sing.

Built into the book is a vast array of pedagogical features:

	Learning Objectives	CHAPTER OUTLINE
5.1	Define listening, and describe five elements of the listening process.	Listening Defined
5.2	Identify characteristics of four listening styles.	Listening Styles
5.3	List and describe barriers to effective listening.	Listening Barriers
5.4	Identify and use skills to enhance comprehension, empathy, and critical listening.	Improving Your Listening Skills
5.5	Identify and use skills to effectively and appropriately respond to others.	Improving Your Responding Skills
5.6	Identify and use skills to effectively and appropriately ... others	

Recap

Listening Barriers

Listening Barrier	To Overcome the Barrier
Self-Absorption	Become conscious of the self-focus, and shift attention.
Unchecked Emotions	Use self-talk to manage emotions.
Criticism of the Speaker	Focus on the message, not the messenger.
Differing Speech and Thought Rate	Use the time difference between speech rate and thought rate to mentally summarize the message.
Information Overload	Realize when you or your partner is tired or distracted and not ready to listen.
External Noise	Take charge of the listening environment by eliminating distrac...
Listener Apprehension	Concentrate on the message as you ...

Improving Your Communication Skills

How to Identify Both Major Ideas and Details to Enhance Listening

To become a skilled listener, you must know how to identify both the major ideas and details of a message. How do you do that?

- First, ask yourself, "What is the key idea? What does this person want or expect from me?" Or, "Is there one main idea or are there several ideas jumbled together?" Consider: Is your goal to *remember* the information, *take some action*, *empathize* with the speaker, or *just listen* to reflect and be a sounding board?
- Second, identify the overall emotional tone of the message. Is the speaker calm, angry, happy, peaceful, or upset? Assessing the emotion of the speaker can help you identify the speaker's purpose.
- Third, try to identify the overall organizational pattern. Is the speaker telling a story in chronological order? Is the message organized around general topics? Or is t...

Read each of the following statements. After you have read each statement, cover it with your hand or a piece of paper. First, list as many of the details as you can recall from the message. Second, summarize your understanding of the major idea or key point of the message. As a variation on this activity, rather than reading the statement, have someone read the statement to you, and then identify the details and major idea.

Statement 1: "I'm very confused. I reserved our conference room for 1 P.M. today for an important meeting. We all know that conference space is tight. I reserved the room last week with the administrative assistant. Now I learn that you plan to use the conference room at noon for a two-hour meeting. It's now 11 A.M. We need to solve this problem soon. I have no other opti... hold ...

- **Learning Objectives** appear at the beginning of each chapter and are additionally highlighted in their related sections. Then, using the **learning objectives** as an organizing framework, our **Study Guide** feature at the end of each chapter gives students the opportunity to review, apply, and assess key chapter concepts through critical thinking questions, and classroom and group activities.
- **Chapter-opening sections** highlight the one-to-one correspondence of the learning objectives and chapter outlines.
- Student-friendly **Recap** feature boxes periodically summarize key concepts and terms.
- **Improving Your Communication Skills** boxes throughout offer practical strategies for applying chapter content.
- **Key terms** are defined in a full end-of-book **glossary**. Key term definitions also appear in the margins.

In addition to the learning resources built into the book, we provide a wide array of instructional resources and student supplements.

Resources in Print and Online

Key instructor resources include an Instructor's Manual (ISBN 0-13-420422-0), Test Bank (ISBN 0-13-420419-0), and PowerPoint Presentation Package (ISBN 0-13-420420-4). These supplements are available at www.pearsonhighered.com/irc (access code required). MyTest online test generating software (ISBN 0-13-420417-4) is available at www.pearsonmytest.com (access code required).

For a complete listing of the instructor and student resources available with this text, please visit the Interpersonal Communication e-Catalog page at www.pearsonhighered.com.

Pearson MediaShare

Pearson's comprehensive media upload tool allows students to post video, images, audio, or documents for instructor and peer viewing, time-stamped commenting, and assessment. MediaShare is an easy, mobile way for students and professors to interact and engage with speeches, presentation aids, group projects, and other files. MediaShare gives professors the tools to provide contextual feedback to demonstrate how students can improve their skills.

Structured like a social networking site, MediaShare helps promote a sense of community among students. In face-to-face and online course settings, MediaShare saves instructors valuable time and enriches the student learning experience by providing contextual feedback.

- Use MediaShare to assign or view speeches, outlines, presentation aids, video-based assignments, role-plays, group projects, and more in a variety of formats including video, Word, PowerPoint, and Excel.

- Assess students using customizable, Pearson-provided rubrics or create your own around classroom goals, learning outcomes, or department initiatives.

- Set up assignments for students with options for full-class viewing and commenting, private comments between you and the student, peer groups for reviewing, or as collaborative group assignments.

- Record video directly from a tablet, phone, or other webcam (including a batch upload option for instructors) and tag submissions to a specific student or assignment.

- Set up Learning Objectives tied to specific assignments, rubrics, or quiz questions to track student progress.

- Embed video from YouTube to incorporate current events into the classroom experience.

- Set up quiz questions on video assignments to ensure students master concepts and interact and engage with the media.

- Sync slides to media submissions for more robust presentation options.

- Import grades into most learning management systems.

- Ensure a secure learning environment for instructors and students through robust privacy settings.

- Upload videos, comment on submissions, and grade directly from our new MediaShare app, available free from the iTunes store and GooglePlay; search for Pearson MediaShare.

Pearson MediaShare is available as a standalone product, as part of MyCommunicationLab, or in a package with REVEL.

Acknowledgments

This book is not only a collaboration among the three of us, but also a collaboration with a host of others. Without the research conclusions of the talented, creative scholars who have studied interpersonal communication and published their results, a book of this scope would not be possible. We also thank our students, who are a constant source of questions, ideas, inspiration, and challenges that enrich our teaching and writing.

We are especially thankful for the continuing outstanding editorial support and leadership that kept our multi-author team collaborating with aplomb. Publisher for *Communication*, Karon Bowers, who has worked with us for more than a decade, continues to be a source of inspiration and unwavering support. Our talented development editor, Ellen Keohane, provided the perfect balance of attention to details while also helping us keep the larger issues and goals in focus. We also appreciate the dozens of gifted interpersonal communication instructors and scholars who read the manuscript and offered suggestions that have made this a better book. We thank the following people for sharing their information, ideas, and ingenuity with us as they reviewed this edition or previous editions of the book.

Eighth Edition Reviewers

Paula Casey, *Colorado Mesa University*; Linda Kalfayan, *SUNY Westchester Community College*; Christa Tess Kalk, *Minneapolis Community and Technical College*; Jeffrey Lawrence, *Ivy Tech Community College*; Narissra Punyanunt-Carter, *Texas Tech University*; Elizabeth Ribarsky, *University of Illinois, Springfield*; Dennis Sutton, *Grand Rapids Community College*; Lindsay Timmerman, *University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee*; Zuoming Wang, *University of North Texas*; Michael Wittig, *Waukesha County Technical College*; Denise Woolsey, *Yavapai College*.

Reviewers of Previous Editions

Rebecca Anderson, *Johnson County Community College*; Leonard Barchak, *McNeese University*; Cameron Smith Basquiat, *Community College of Southern Nevada*; Judyth Betz-Gonzales, *Delta College*; Marion Boyer, *Kalamazoo Community College*; Mark Bruner, *University of Alaska–Anchorage*; Scott E. Caplan, *University of Delaware*; Carolyn Clark, *Salt Lake Community College*; Norman Clark, *Appalachian State University*; Carolyn P. DeLeCour, *Palo Alto College*; Carol Z. Dolphin, *University of Wisconsin–Waukesha*; Terrence Doyle, *Northern Virginia Community College*; Rebecca E. Dunn, *Westmoreland County Community College*; Reginald E. Ecarma, *Campbellsville University*; David L. Edwards, *South Central Technical College*; Janie Harden Fritz, *Duquesne University*; Neva Gronert, *Arapahoe Community College*;

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We are blessed with the support and ideas of our many colleagues and friends, as well as the ongoing love and encouragement given to us by our families:

From Sue and Steve: We thank Thompson Biggers, a valued friend and colleague who helped conceptualize this book. Mary Jeanette Smythe, Tom Willett, Tim Mottet, and Diana Ivy are long-time educators and friends who inspired us with their knowledge and gift of friendship. Phil Salem, Lee Williams, Cathy Fleuriet, and Maureen Keeley are friends and colleagues at Texas State University who have positively influenced our work. John Masterson, a valued friend and colleague, also greatly influenced our teaching and writing about interpersonal communication. Special thanks go to the late Michael Argyle at Oxford University, Oxford, England, who sponsored Steve as a Visiting Scholar at Oxford's Wolfson College and generously shared his research findings. Thanks, too, to Peter and Jill Collett, friends and colleagues from Oxford, for their assistance, support, and friendship. Thane McCollough, now president of Gonzaga University, also provided valuable support for this project.

We have outstanding support from many people. Sue Hall, senior administrative assistant in the Department of

Communication Studies at Texas State, continues to be an invaluable assistant and friend. Bob Hanna and Chelsea Stockton are also valued colleagues and staff members who provided skilled support. We thank our good friend Kosta Tovstiadi for his skillful research assistance in helping us secure the most contemporary research we could find about interpersonal communication.

We want especially to thank our parents, Russell and Muriel Beebe, who are beginning their seventy-fifth year of marriage, and Jane and the late Herb Dye, who were married for more than sixty years. These humble, loving, and dedicated parental mentors were our first and finest teachers of interpersonal communication. We also thank our son Mark, who continues to teach us that the power of love can overcome life's challenges, and our son Matt, who teaches us about the importance of finding music and beauty in days filled with both sunshine and clouds.

From Mark: I have used the textbook for many years in teaching the introduction to interpersonal communication course at Iowa State and I owe a debt to hundreds of students, both for their feedback on the text and for teaching me through their own interpersonal experiences. For example, it was my students who first introduced me to the term and meaning of "friends with benefits." My Iowa State colleagues Denise Vrchota, Tina Coffelt, Stacy Tye-Williams, Racheal Ruble, Todd Jenks, and David Vogel continue to provide their support, encouragement, and friendship. I would also like to acknowledge and thank a group of colleagues I met years ago when we were all graduate students at the University of Denver and with whom I have developed lifelong treasured friendships: Rich Arthur, John Masterson, Diane Ritzdorf, Marc Routhier, the late Jim Tolhuizen, and especially Phil Backlund at Central Washington University.

I am particularly thankful to my parents, the late Jack and Alice Redmond; my brother, Jack; and my sisters, Ruthann, Mary Lynn, and Tina, who helped shape a family environment that planted the seeds for studying and appreciating interpersonal communication. Those seeds have been nurtured into a full-grown fascination with how communication shapes our lives and personal development by my wife, Peggy; my daughter, Beth; my son Nicholas and his wife, Kimberlee; and my son Eric and his wife, Amy. On a practical level, I owe a lot of my understanding of the Internet and Facebook to my kids.

Steven A. Beebe
Susan J. Beebe
Mark V. Redmond

About the Authors

Steven A. Beebe is Regents' and University Distinguished Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Texas State University. He served as Chair of his department at Texas State for twenty-eight years and concurrently as Associate Dean for twenty-five years. Steve is the author or co-author of twelve widely used communication books, most of which have been through multiple editions (including Russian and Chinese editions), as well as numerous articles, book chapters, and conference presentations. He has been a Visiting Scholar at both Oxford University and Cambridge University in England. He made international headlines when conducting research at Oxford; he discovered a manuscript that was the partial opening chapter of a book that was to be co-authored with J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis called *Language and Human Nature.* Steve has traveled widely in Europe and Asia, and has played a leadership role in establishing new communication curricula in Russian universities. He has received his university's highest awards for research and twice for service, has been recognized as Honors Professor of the year, and was named Outstanding Communication Professor by the National Speaker's Association. In 2013 he served as President of the National Communication Association, the largest professional communication association in the world. His passions include his family and a lifelong love of music; he is a pianist and organist and a struggling cellist.

Susan J. Beebe's professional interests and expertise encompass both oral and written communication. Sue has co-authored three books and has published a number of articles and teaching materials in both English and communication studies. She has received the Texas State University Presidential Awards for Excellence in Teaching and in Service and the College of Liberal Arts Awards for Excellence in Scholarly/ Creative Activities, in Teaching, and in Service. After serving as Director of Lower-Division Studies in English for eleven years, Sue retired in 2014 from the Department of English at Texas State. An active volunteer in the community of San Marcos, Texas, Sue was the founding coordinator of the San Marcos Volunteers in Public Schools Program and has served on the San Marcos School Board and the Education Foundation Board. In 1993 she was named the statewide Friend of Education by the Texas Classroom Teachers' Association; in 2000 the San Marcos school district presented her with its Lifetime Achievement Award. Sue enjoys reading, traveling, and caring for the Beebe family cats, Luke and Bouncer. Sue and Steve have two sons: Mark, a graduate of Rice University; and Matt, a graduate of Southwestern University and a middle school teacher in nearby Austin.

Mark V. Redmond is an Associate Professor of Communication Studies at Iowa State University. In 2012 he received the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences award for Outstanding Achievement in Teaching. Besides this book, Mark has authored an introductory text on communication theory and research, edited an upper-level text in interpersonal communication, and co-authored a public speaking text. His research focuses on social decentering (taking into account another person's thoughts, feelings, perspectives, etc.), one of the themes incorporated in this text. His research studies include expectations associated with male–female relationships, social decentering's impact in marriage, initial interactions between strangers, adaptation in interpersonal interactions, and intercultural communication competence. He is a Cyclone sports fan with an avocation for playing basketball at least three times a week (despite an aging hook shot). An unaccomplished piano and guitar player, he loves composing and writing songs and vows to someday complete the musical he's been working on for twenty years. Mark and his wife Peggy have three children: Beth, a graduate of the University of Iowa and Mount Mercy University; Nicholas, a graduate of Iowa State University and McCormick Theological Seminary; and Eric, a graduate of Iowa State University and Northwest Missouri State University.

Chapter 1
Introduction to Interpersonal Communication

"Communication is to a relationship what breathing is to maintaining life."

Virginia Satir

Learning Objectives	CHAPTER OUTLINE
1.1 Compare and contrast definitions of communication, human communication, and interpersonal communication.	Interpersonal Communication Defined
1.2 Explain why it is useful to study interpersonal communication.	Interpersonal Communication's Importance to Your Life
1.3 Describe the key components of the communication process, including communication as action, interaction, and transaction.	Interpersonal Communication and the Communication Process
1.4 Discuss five principles of interpersonal communication.	Interpersonal Communication Principles
1.5 Discuss the role of electronically mediated communication in developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships.	Interpersonal Communication and Social Media
1.6 Identify strategies that can improve your communication competence.	Interpersonal Communication Competence

Interpersonal communication is like breathing; it is a requirement for life. And, like breathing, interpersonal communication is inescapable. Unless you live in isolation, you communicate interpersonally every day. Listening to your roommate, talking to a teacher, texting a friend, and talking to your parents or your spouse in person or via Skype are all examples of interpersonal communication. Like many people, you probably use a wide range of social media applications to develop, maintain, and redefine *social* relationships with others. You may find yourself seamlessly toggling between e-conversations and "realspace" interactions. Research suggests that online conversations mirror the same kinds of topics and issues that occur during face-to-face (FtF) interactions.[1] You may well be one of a growing number of people who turn to online dating sites to seek and develop relationships. More than 40 million Americans look for love online, which is rapidly becoming a primary means of establishing relationships with others.[2]

Whether on- or offline, it is impossible *not* to communicate with others.[3] Even before we are born, we respond to movement and sound, and we continue to communicate until we draw our last breath. Without interpersonal communication, a special form of human communication that occurs as we manage our relationships, people suffer and even die. Recluses, hermits, and people isolated in solitary confinement dream and hallucinate about talking with others face to face.

Human communication is at the core of our existence. Most people spend between 80 and 90 percent of their waking hours communicating with others.[4] Think of the number of times you communicated with someone today, as you worked, ate, studied, shopped, or experienced your other daily activities. The younger you are, the more likely you communicated via text message today. Young adults ages 18 to 24 send an average of 110 text messages a day—20 times more than someone 65 years old.[5] It is through these interactions with others, both on and offline, that we develop interpersonal relationships.[6]

Because relationships are so important to our lives, later chapters will focus on the communication skills and principles that explain and predict how we develop, sustain, and sometimes end relationships. We'll explore such questions as the following:

- Why do we like some people and not others?
- How can we interpret other people's unspoken messages with greater accuracy?
- Why do some relationships blossom and others deteriorate?
- How can we better manage disagreements with others?
- How does social media influence making, maintaining, and ending relationships?

As we address essential questions about how you relate to others, we will emphasize the importance of being **other-oriented**. Being other-oriented requires awareness of the thoughts, needs, experiences, personality, emotions, motives, desires, culture, and goals of your communication partners while still maintaining your own integrity. Becoming other-oriented is not a single skill, but a collection of skills and principles that are designed to increase your sensitivity to and understanding of others. In general, research has found that we are becoming less empathic and other-oriented.[7]

This chapter charts the course ahead, addressing key questions about what interpersonal communication is and why it is important. We will begin by seeing how our understanding of the interpersonal communication process has evolved. And we will conclude by examining how we initiate and sustain relationships through interpersonal communication.

other-oriented

To be aware of the thoughts, needs, experiences, personality, emotions, motives, desires, culture, and goals of your communication partners while still maintaining your own integrity.

Interpersonal Communication Defined

1.1   **Compare and contrast definitions of communication, human communication, and interpersonal communication.**

To understand interpersonal communication, we must begin by understanding how it relates to two broader categories: communication in general and human communication. Scholars have attempted to arrive at a general definition of communication for

decades, yet experts cannot agree on a single one. One research team counted more than 126 published definitions.[8] In the broadest sense, **communication** is the process of acting on information.[9] Someone does or says something, and others think or do something in response to the action or the words as they understand them.

To refine our broad definition, we can say that **human communication** is the process of making sense out of the world and sharing that sense with others by creating meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbal messages.[10] We learn about the world by listening, observing, tasting, touching, and smelling; then we share our conclusions with others. Human communication encompasses many media: speeches, e-mail, songs, radio and television broadcasts, podcasts, online discussion groups, letters, books, articles, poems, and advertisements.

Interpersonal communication is *a distinctive, transactional form of human communication involving mutual influence, usually for the purpose of managing relationships*. The three essential elements of this definition differentiate the unique nature of interpersonal communication from other forms of human communication.[11]

Interpersonal Communication Is a Distinctive Form of Communication

For years, many scholars defined interpersonal communication simply as communication that occurs when two people interact face to face. This limited definition suggests that if two people are interacting, they are engaging in interpersonal communication. Today, interpersonal communication is defined not only by the number of people who communicate, but also by the quality of the communication. Interpersonal communication occurs when you treat the other person as a unique human being.[12]

Increasingly, people are relating via Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Vine, Pinterest, Google+, and Skype. Research confirms that many of us think of the various electronic means we use to connect to others as natural ways to establish and maintain relationships.[13] With a smartphone in our pocket, we are almost always within easy reach of our friends, family, and colleagues. Although sometimes our tweets and Facebook posts more closely resemble mass communication (sending a message to a large group of people at the same time), we nonetheless also use social media to enrich personal relationships with individuals.[14]

INTERPERSONAL VERSUS IMPERSONAL COMMUNICATION Think of all human communication, whether mediated or face-to-face, as ranging on a continuum from impersonal to interpersonal communication. **Impersonal communication** occurs when you treat others as objects or respond to their roles rather than to who they are as unique persons. When you ask a server in a restaurant for a glass of water, you are interacting with the role, not necessarily with the individual. You're having an impersonal conversation rather than an interpersonal one.

I–IT AND I–THOU RELATIONSHIPS Philosopher Martin Buber influenced our thinking about the distinctiveness of interpersonal communication when he described communication as consisting of two different qualities of relationships: an "I–It" relationship or an "I–Thou" relationship.[15] He described an "I–It" relationship as an impersonal one, in which the other person is viewed as an "It" rather than as an authentic, genuine person. For every communication transaction to be a personal, intimate dialogue would be unrealistic and inappropriate. It's possible to go through an entire day communicating with others but not be involved in interpersonal communication.

An "I–Thou" relationship, on the other hand, occurs when you interact with another person as a unique, authentic individual rather than as an object or an "It." In this kind of relationship, true, honest dialogue results in authentic communication. An "I–Thou" relationship is not self-centered. The communicators

communication
Process of acting on information.

human communication
Process of making sense out of the world and sharing that sense with others by creating meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbal messages.

interpersonal communication
A distinctive, transactional form of human communication involving mutual influence, usually for the purpose of managing relationships.

impersonal communication
Process that occurs when we treat others as objects or respond to their roles rather than to who they are as unique persons.

are patient, kind, and forgiving. They have developed an attitude toward each other that is honest, open, spontaneous, nonjudgmental, and based on equality rather than superiority.[16] However, although interpersonal communication is more intimate and reveals more about the people involved than does impersonal communication, not all interpersonal communication involves sharing closely guarded personal information.

INTERPERSONAL VERSUS OTHER FORMS OF COMMUNICATION   In this book, we define interpersonal communication as a unique form of human communication. There are other forms of communication, as well.

mass communication

Process that occurs when one person issues the same message to many people at once; the creator of the message is usually not physically present, and listeners have virtually no opportunity to respond immediately to the speaker.

public communication

Process that occurs when a speaker addresses an audience.

small group communication

Process that occurs when a group of three to fifteen people meet to interact with a common purpose and mutually influence one another.

intrapersonal communication

Communication with yourself; thinking.

- **Mass communication** occurs when one person communicates the same message to many people at once, but the creator of the message is usually not physically present, and listeners have virtually no opportunity to respond immediately to the speaker. Messages communicated via radio and TV are examples of mass communication. Tweets and Facebook posts can resemble mass communication messages since a large number of people usually view those messages.
- **Public communication** occurs when a speaker addresses an audience.
- **Small group communication** occurs when a group of three to fifteen people meet to interact with a common purpose and mutually influence one another. The purpose of the gathering can be to solve a problem, make a decision, learn, or just have fun. While communicating with others in a small group, it is also possible to communicate interpersonally with one or more individuals in the group.
- **Intrapersonal communication** is communication with yourself. Thinking is perhaps the best example of intrapersonal communication. In our discussion of self and communication in Chapter 2, we discuss the relationships between your thoughts and your interpersonal communication with others.

Interpersonal Communication Involves Mutual Influence Between Individuals

Every interpersonal communication transaction influences us. Mutual influence means that *all* partners in the communication are affected by a transaction that may or may not involve words. The degree of mutual influence varies a great deal from transaction to transaction. You probably would not be affected a great deal by a brief smile that you received from a traveling companion on a bus, but you would be greatly affected by your lover telling you he or she was leaving you. Sometimes interpersonal communication changes our lives dramatically, sometimes in small

Recap

The Continuum Between Interpersonal Communication and Impersonal Communication

Interpersonal Communication	Impersonal Communication
• People are treated as unique individuals.	• People are treated as objects.
• People communicate in an "I–Thou" relationship. Each person is treated as special, and there is true dialogue and honest sharing of self with others.	• People communicate in an "I–It" relationship. Each person has a role to perform.
• Interpersonal communication often involves communicating with someone you care about, such as a good friend or cherished family member.	• There is mechanical, stilted interaction, rather than honest sharing of feelings.
	• Impersonal communication involves communicating with people such as sales clerks and servers—you have no history with them, and you expect no future with them.

ways. Long-lasting interpersonal relationships are sustained not by one person giving and another taking, but by a spirit of mutual equality. Both you and your partner listen and respond with respect for each other. There is no attempt to manipulate others.

Buber's concept of an "I–Thou" relationship includes the quality of being fully "present" when communicating with another person.[17] To be present is to give your full attention to the other person. The quality of interpersonal communication is enhanced when both you and your partner are simultaneously present and focused on each other.

Interpersonal Communication Helps Individuals Manage Their Relationships

Question: What is neither you nor I, but always you and I? Answer: A relationship.[18] A **relationship** is a connection established when you communicate with another person. When two individuals are in a relationship, what one person says or does influences the other person. As in dancing, people in relationships are affected by the beat of the music (that is, the situation in which they are communicating), their ability to interpret the music and move accordingly (the personal skills they possess), and the moves and counter-moves of their partner.

You initiate and form relationships by communicating with others whom you find attractive in some way. You seek to increase your interactions with people with whom you wish to develop relationships, and you continually communicate interpersonally to maintain the relationship. You also use interpersonal communication to end or redefine relationships that you have decided are no longer viable or need to be changed. In essence, to relate to someone is to "dance" with them. You dance with them in a specific time and place, with certain perceptions and expectations. Over time, this dance becomes an ongoing interpersonal relationship.

You are increasingly likely to use social media to connect with friends and manage your relationships. Research has found that instant messages (including text messages) have an overall positive effect on your relationships. E-mail, texting, and other forms of instant messages appear to be primarily used to maintain *existing* relationships, although they certainly play a role in establishing initial contact with others. Additional research has found that people first perceive online and instant messages as lower quality than face-to-face interactions, but over time they are judged just as positively.[19] So whether it occurs on- or offline, interpersonal communication helps you manage your relationships.

In face-to-face encounters, we simultaneously exchange both verbal and nonverbal messages that result in shared meanings. Through this kind of interrelation, we build relationships with others.

relationship

Connection established when one person communicates with another.

Interpersonal Communication's Importance to Your Life

1.2   **Explain why it is useful to study interpersonal communication.**

Why learn about interpersonal communication? Because it touches every aspect of our lives. It is not only pleasant or desirable to develop quality interpersonal relationships with others, it is vital for our well-being. We have a strong need to communicate interpersonally with others, whether face to face or through social media. Learning how to understand and improve interpersonal communication can enhance our relationships with family, loved ones, friends, and colleagues, and can enrich the quality of our physical and emotional health.[20]

Improved Relationships with Family

Relating to family members can be a challenge. The divorce statistics in the United States document the difficulties that can occur when people live in relationships with others: About half of all marriages end in divorce. We don't claim that you will avoid all family conflicts or that your family relationships will always be harmonious if you learn principles and skills of interpersonal communication. You can, however, develop more options for responding when family communication challenges come your way. You will be more likely to develop creative, constructive solutions to family conflict if you understand what's happening and can promote true dialogue with your spouse, partner, child, parent, brother, or sister. Furthermore, family communication author Virginia Satir calls family communication "the largest single factor determining the kinds of relationships [people make] with others."[21] Being able to have conversations with family members and loved ones is the fundamental way of establishing close, personal relationships with them and with others.

Improved Relationships with Friends and Romantic Partners

For unmarried people, developing friendships and falling in love are the top-rated sources of satisfaction and happiness in life.[22] Conversely, losing a relationship is among life's most stressful events. Most people between the ages of nineteen and twenty-four report that they have had five to six romantic relationships and have been "in love" once or twice.[23] Studying interpersonal communication may not unravel all the mysteries of romantic love and friendship, but it can offer insight into behaviors.[24] Increasingly, people use Facebook and other social media to develop their relationships with friends and loved ones.[25]

Improved Relationships with Colleagues

In many ways, colleagues at work are like family members. Although you choose your friends and romantic partners, you don't always have the same flexibility in choosing those with whom or for whom you work. Understanding how relationships develop on the job can help you avoid conflict and stress, and increase your sense of satisfaction. In addition, your success or failure in a job often hinges on how well you get along with supervisors and peers.

Several surveys document the importance of quality interpersonal relationships in contributing to success at work.[26] The abilities to listen to others, manage conflict, and develop quality interpersonal relationships with others are usually at the top of the skills list employers seek in today's job applicants.[27]

Improved Physical and Emotional Health

Positive interpersonal relationships with others have direct benefits for your overall health and happiness. Research has shown that the lack or loss of a close relationship can lead to ill health and even death. Physicians have long observed that patients who are widowed or divorced experience more medical problems such as heart disease, cancer, pneumonia, and diabetes than married people.[28] Grief-stricken spouses are more likely than others to die prematurely, especially around the time of the departed spouse's birthday or near their wedding anniversary.[29] Being childless can also shorten one's life. One study found that middle-aged, childless wives were almost two-and-one-half times more likely to die in a given year than those who had at least one child.[30] Terminally ill patients with a limited number of friends or no social support die sooner than those with stronger ties.[31] Without companions and close friends, opportunities for intimacy and stress-minimizing interpersonal communication are

diminished. Although being involved in intimate interpersonal relationships can lead to conflict and feelings of anger and frustration, researchers suggest that when all is said and done, having close relationships with others is a major source of personal happiness.[32] Studying how to enhance the quality of your communication with others can make life more enjoyable and enhance your overall well-being.[33]

Interpersonal Communication and the Communication Process

1.3   Describe the key components of the communication process, including communication as action, interaction, and transaction.

Interpersonal communication is a complex process of creating meaning in the context of an interpersonal relationship. To better understand interpersonal communication as a distinct form of communication, it is useful to examine the basic communication process.[34]

Elements of the Communication Process

The most basic components of communication include these elements: source, message, channel, receiver, noise, feedback, and context. Understanding each of these elements can help you analyze your own communication with others as you relate to them in interpersonal situations as well as other communication contexts. Let's explore these elements in greater detail.

- *Source*. The **source** of a message is the originator of the ideas and feelings expressed. The source puts a message into a code, a process called **encoding**. The opposite of encoding is the process of **decoding**, which occurs when the receiver interprets the words or nonverbal cues.
- *Message*. **Messages** are the written, spoken, and unspoken elements of communication to which people assign meaning. You can send a message intentionally (talking to a professor before class) or unintentionally (falling asleep during class); verbally ("Hi. How are you?"), nonverbally (a smile and a handshake), or in written form (this book).
- *Channel*. The **channel** is the means by which the message is expressed to the receiver. You probably receive messages through a variety of channels including mediated channels such as text messaging, e-mail, phone, video conference, Facebook, or Twitter.
- *Receiver*. The **receiver** of the message is the person or persons who interpret the message and ultimately determine whether your message was understood and appropriate. As we emphasize in this book, effective communicators are other-oriented; they understand that the listener ultimately makes sense of the message they express.
- *Noise*. **Noise** is anything that interferes with the message being interpreted as it was intended. Noise happens. If there were no noise, all of our messages would be interpreted accurately. But noise is always present. It can be literal (e.g., beeps coming from an iPad or iPhone that signal incoming e-mail or text messages) or it can be psychological (e.g., competing thoughts, worries, and feelings that capture our attention).
- *Feedback*. **Feedback** is the response to the message. Think of a Ping-Pong game. Like a Ping-Pong ball, messages bounce back and forth. We talk; someone listens and responds; we listen and respond to this response. This perspective can be summarized using the following physical principle: For every action, there is a reaction.

source
Originator of a thought or emotion, who puts it into a code that can be understood by a receiver.

encode
To translate ideas, feelings, and thoughts into code.

decode
To interpret ideas, feelings, and thoughts that have been translated into a code.

message
Written, spoken, and unspoken elements of communication to which people assign meaning.

channel
Pathway through which messages are sent.

receiver
Person who decodes a message and attempts to make sense of what the source has encoded.

noise
Anything literal or psychological that interferes with accurate reception of a message.

feedback
Response to a message.

Without feedback, communication is rarely effective. When your roommate says, "Would you please pick up some milk at the store?" you may say, "What kind—1 percent, 2 percent, organic, or chocolate?" Your quest for clarification is feedback. Further feedback may seek additional information, or simply confirm that the message has been interpreted: "Oh, some 1 percent organic milk would be good." Like other messages, feedback can be intentional (your mother gives you a hug when you announce your engagement) or unintentional (you yawn as you listen to your uncle tell his story about bears again); verbal ("That's a pepperoni pizza, right?") or nonverbal (blushing after being asked to dance). Feedback happens not only face to face, but also online. Your responses (feedback) to what you have purchased on Amazon.com and other shopping sites often result in directed, customized messages crafted just for you.[35]

context

Physical and psychological environment for communication.

- *Context*. **Context** is the physical and psychological environment for communication. All communication takes place in some context. As the cliché goes, "Everyone has to be somewhere." A conversation on the beach with your good friend would likely differ from a conversation the two of you might have in a funeral home. Context encompasses not only the physical environment but also the people present and their relationships with the communicators, the communication goal, and the culture of which the communicators are a part.[36]
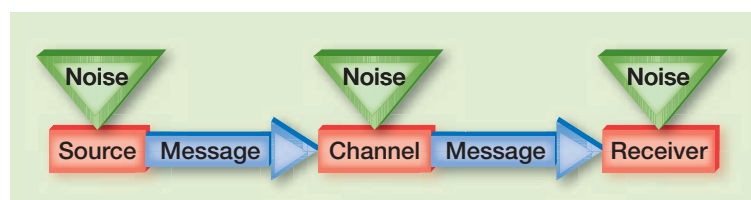
Models of the Communication Process

The elements of the communication process are typically arranged in one of three communication models, showing communication as action, as interaction, or as transaction. Let's review each model in more detail to see how expert thinking about human communication has evolved.

COMMUNICATION AS ACTION: MESSAGE TRANSFER   The oldest and simplest model, shown in Figure 1.1, is *communication as action*—a transferring of meaning. "Did you get my message?" This sentence reflects the communication-as-action approach to human communication. Communication takes place when a message is sent and received. Period.

COMMUNICATION AS INTERACTION: MESSAGE EXCHANGE   The perspective of communication as interaction adds two elements to the action model: feedback and context. As shown in Figure 1.2, the interaction model is more realistic than the action perspective, but it still has limitations. Although it emphasizes feedback and context, the interaction model does not quite capture the complexity of simultaneous human communication. The interaction model of communication still views communication as a linear, step-by-step process. But in interpersonal situations, both the source and the receiver send and receive messages at the same time.
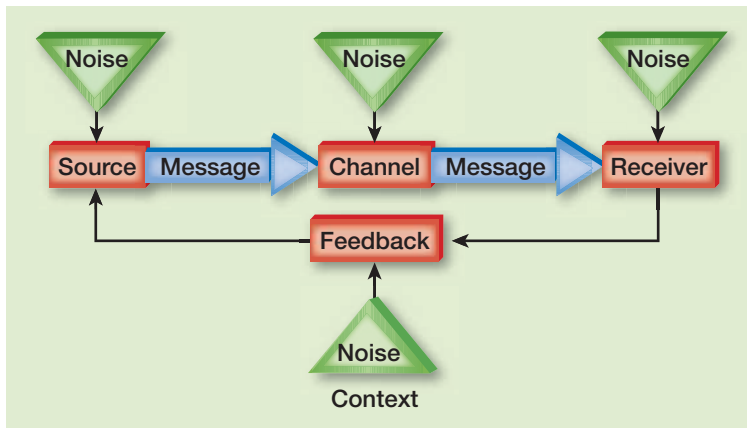
COMMUNICATION AS TRANSACTION: MESSAGE CREATION   Today, the most sophisticated and realistic model views communication as transaction, in which each element influences all of the other elements in the process at the same time. This perspective acknowledges that when you talk to another person face to face, you are

**Figure 1.1** A Simple Model of Human Communication as Action

Figure 1.2 A Model of Communication as Interaction

Interaction models of communication include feedback as a response to a message sent by the communication source and context as the environment for communication.

Figure 1.3 A Model of Communication as Transaction

The source and receiver of a message experience communication simultaneously.
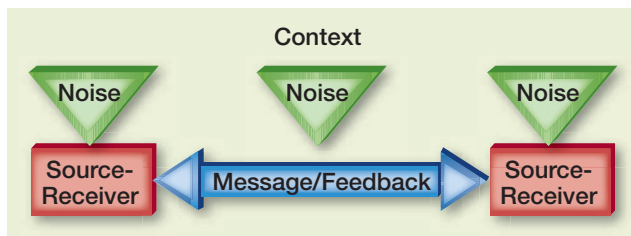
constantly reacting to your partner's responses. In this model, all the components of the communication process are simultaneous. As Figure 1.3 indicates, even as you talk, you are also interpreting your partner's nonverbal and verbal responses.

The transactional approach to communication is based on **systems theory**. A system is a set of interconnected elements in which a change in one element affects all of the other elements. Key elements of any system include *inputs* (all of the variables that go into the system), *throughputs* (all of the things that make communication a process), and *outputs* (what the system produces). From a systems theory point of view, each element of communication is connected to all other elements of

systems theory

Theory that describes the interconnected elements of a system in which a change in one element affects all of the other elements.

Relating to Diverse Others

The World Is Here

The title of Ishmael Reed's essay "The World Is Here" reminds us that America is not a one-dimensional culture.[37] You need not travel to far-off places to develop interpersonal relationships with people from other cultures, races, or ethnic backgrounds. It takes skill and sensitivity to develop quality interpersonal relationships with others whose religion, race, ethnicity, age, gender, or sexual orientation differ from your own. Throughout this text, we include boxes like this one to help you develop your sensitivity to important issues related to cultural diversity. As you embark on your study of interpersonal communication, consider these questions, either individually or with a group of your classmates:

1. What are the implications of living in a melting pot or tossed salad culture for your study of interpersonal communication?
2. Is there too much emphasis on being politically correct on college campuses today? Support your answer.
3. What specific interpersonal skills will help you communicate effectively with others from different cultural and ethnic traditions?