When we think about the concept of "goals," we need to move far beyond the economic goals that are often assumed in discussions of the "bottom line." The goals that drive many organizations and individuals today involve changing the world in big and small ways or perhaps simply concern about "connection" itself.

When we work to stretch our thinking in these ways, we see that there are many examples of organizational types in today's world that were not often considered in past decades. To take a basic example, we often think about "businesses"—entities that are designed to make money—as the epitome of organizations, but scholars are now increasingly interested in communication processes in nonprofit organizations (see, e.g., Koschmann, 2012). For both profit and nonprofit organizations, more and more organizations can be characterized as service organizations rather than manufacturing organizations. In areas around the globe, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are especially important in coordinating processes of change in first- and third-world nations. It is increasingly common for individuals with similar needs and goals to come together in organizations known as cooperatives (co-ops) that are often motivated by a concern for democracy, social justice, and environmental and global responsibility. Furthermore, with advances in computer and communication technology, organizations often do without the brick-and-mortar physical location and operate as virtual organizations. It is also critical to stretch our thinking to understand that the features of an "organization" are also relevant for the consideration of social organizations, such as fraternities and sororities, or even families or groups of friends who are coordinating around valued goals and tasks.

Complicating Our Thinking about Communication

It is also important for us to complicate our thinking about communication if we are to deal with the complicated world that confronts us. Early models of communication were highly simplistic, arguing that communication could be conceptualized with a model such as the S-M-C-R model, in which a Source transmits a Message through a Channel to a Receiver. In the organizational context, this could be seen as a supervisor (source) asking for volunteers to work on the weekend (message) through an e-mail (channel) sent to all her employees (receivers). Even when a "feedback loop" is added to this model (e.g., responses to the e-mail), it is clear that it fails to encompass the varying ways we need to think about communication. Communication is not just about sending simple messages to one or more receivers. Communication is also about the intricate networks through which computers link us to others. Moreover, communication is about the creation of meaning systems in families and cultures; understanding a market segment to enhance persuasion and increase sales; and the multiple ways information must flow to provide aid when a natural disaster strikes. It is about framing information about a possible threat so the public is warned but not panicked. Communication is about coming to an understanding within a community about issues that both unite and divide.

Robert Craig (1999) proposed a model of communication theory that helps sort out these various aspects of communication. First, he contrasts a **transmission model of communication** with a **constitutive model of communication**. In a transmission model, communication is a way of moving information from sources to receivers, similar to the S-M-C-R model. In a constitutive model, communication