

UNDERSTANDING INTERPERSONAL

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN TO:

- Understand how relationships are unique, involve commitment, and are based on rules.
- Describe how relationships with family members, friends, and romantic partners evolve over time.
- Choose how much to self-disclose in a relationship.
- Explain the types of computer-mediated communication and how to use them wisely.
- Examine the effects of gender on relationships with family members, friends, romantic partners, and co-workers.
- Create successful relationships with people from different cultures.

- Characteristics of Interpersonal Relationships
- Types of Interpersonal Relationships
- Understanding Self-Disclosure
- Technology and Interpersonal Relationships
- Gender and Interpersonal Relationships
- Culture and Interpersonal Relationships
- How to Listen Effectively


Zane Gabriel Mercurio/National Geographic

As we develop and maintain relationships with others, we often reveal personal information about ourselves. What personal information have you recently shared with another person?

COMMUNICATION

Only by being open and asking for help will we know that we are not alone. If you have someone who will walk the journey with you, it is always easier.

—Zinhle Thabethe, humanitarian and musician, National Geographic Emerging Explorer



The relationships we have with others are often the most rewarding parts of our lives. Because of the importance of relationships, this chapter will discuss various components that influence them. We will begin by defining the characteristics and types of interpersonal relationships. Next, we will explain how relationships develop and deteriorate. Finally, we will look at how technology, gender, and culture influence these relationships.

Characteristics of Interpersonal Relationships

Communication is the foundation for interpersonal relationships. When we communicate with friends, family members, colleagues, or romantic partners, we do so to build and maintain relationships. We ask questions, share personal information, solve problems, and engage in small talk to sustain relationships we consider to be significant in our lives. But just because we communicate with another person does not necessarily mean that we have a relationship with that person. **Interpersonal relationships involve a personal connection established with another person through the intentional use of communication.** These relationships are unique, require commitment, and are based on implicit or explicit rules. We will now look at what this actually means for people who want rich relationships in their lives.

Interpersonal Relationships Are Unique

Every human being is different. We look, talk, and behave in distinctive ways. And because of this, each interpersonal relationship is unique. You likely have friendships with many people, and each one of these friendships has particular patterns that make it unlike the others. You may share one kind of joke with one friend and a different kind with another. You may share one kind of information about yourself with your roommate but a different kind with your favorite classmate. The way we interact with others is often determined by the type of interpersonal relationship (e.g., friend, co-worker, family member, or significant other), the context surrounding the interactions, and the predetermined norms and routines created by those involved in the relationship. For these reasons, every interpersonal relationship is unique.

Personal relationship

relationship that involves the establishment of a personal connection with another person through the intentional use of communication.

Interpersonal Relationship

Consider the different ways you might interact with a friend you socialize with. You might call a parent or sibling to socialize with after school. You might have a choice of commitment, such as going to a friend or family member's house. Some of us might choose to chat with a friend or family member on an ongoing health issue. You might choose to call a grandparent or chat with a favorite friend. A friendship dissolved by some commitment from supervisors (work relationships) might be a different relationship. Deciding to communicate with a friend has characteristics

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Our relationships with family and friends can be very meaningful. If you have an older or younger person in your life who is important to you, what makes that person unique?

Interpersonal Relationships Require Commitment

Consider the different relationships that are important to you. Do you have a friend you socialize with on a daily or weekly basis? Do you regularly call a parent or sibling to check in? Do you have a co-worker you socialize with after work? Each of these relationships requires a degree of commitment, and these commitments are often (but not always) a choice. Some of us may choose to maintain a long-distance relationship with a friend or romantic partner. Some may choose to discuss an ongoing health issue with a close relative or friend. Others may choose to call a grandparent every Sunday or attend office hours regularly to chat with a favorite professor. On the other hand, you may decide to let a friendship dissipate or even not make friends with a neighbor. Although some commitments may be required by our families, professors, or supervisors (when they assign us to work in groups), most interpersonal relationships would not exist without a degree of voluntary commitment. Deciding to commit to a relationship in some small or large way is one characteristic that defines our interpersonal relationships.

Interpersonal Relationships Are Built Around Rules

Interpersonal relationships function by their own set of rules. These rules are typically implicit, meaning we do not always talk openly about them, but they are a necessary part of every interpersonal relationship. Many rules are established by cultural norms and practices: it is appropriate for a husband to kiss his wife goodbye; it is not appropriate for her physician to

COMMUNICATION AT WORK



The Consequences of Social-Media Blunders

Does what we say and how we say it matter in the workplace? Consider the following examples.

After calling her students “arrogant and snobby” and posting “I’m so not looking forward to another year at Cohasset School,” Dr. June Talvitie-Siple, a supervisor of the high school’s math and science program, lost her job (“H.S. Teacher Loses Job over Facebook Posting,” 2010). Parents and students of this Massachusetts school found the postings, which Talvitie-Siple thought she had posted using her private setting on Facebook. The resulting furor led the teacher to resign. Students suggested that although she was a great teacher, she clearly did not understand the Internet and that “if you are in a professional position, maybe you shouldn’t be putting what you really feel about your job or whatever on Facebook.” Parents replied, “It’s horrid. Who says that about children you are teaching; children you are raising that you are a role model for?” Talvitie-Siple said in an interview that she “is not apologizing for her comments, but that she is sorry that they went public” (“H.S. Teacher,” 2010). She said she was referring to the political situation in the school, which she called “very stressful,” and she said she thought she was only blowing off steam with friends in private” (Collins, 2010).

Three prison guards from Nebraska lost their jobs when Caleb Bartel’s Facebook page said, “When you work in a prison, a good day is getting to smash an inmate’s face into the ground. For me, today was a very good day” (“Facebook Post Prompts Prison Probe,” 2010). The Nebraska Department of Corrections launched an investigation not only into Bartel but also into Shawn Paulson and Derek Dickey, two other guards who had replied favorably to the posting. All three guards lost their jobs. Former Nebraska State Senator Ernie Chambers described the posting as bringing “a cloud of negativity over the penitentiary.” The state corrections department investigation “found that at least one of the guards used force on the day that the comment was posted, though there was no evidence of abuse.” These findings were confirmed by a state patrol investigation as well as by prisons spokesperson Dawn-Renee Smith, who said “The inmate was not injured and the use of force in February was

justified.” Because of the posting, however, Senator Chambers described the three former guards as not fit to hold employment. Bob Huston, director of state corrections, explained that the department does not abuse inmates: “We are not pleased any time we have any thoughts or beliefs or things that would indicate that there is suspected abuse of inmates. That concerns us deeply” (“Facebook Post,” 2010).

Real situations such as these raise interesting questions about communication and its effects in the workplace. When individuals in positions of authority make claims, and those claims are aired or become publicly known, there can be serious consequences: people lose their jobs and their credibility, individuals are hurt and insulted, and supervisors, and bosses must respond to try to sort out facts, clarify details, and protect individuals from harm. Statements made in jest, without forethought, or even in what we think are private moments can reach a larger public and can be life altering; the individuals just described lost their jobs. Television, radio, and other media outlets such as Facebook make the mass distribution of our communication easy, fast, and accessible. Unlike previous generations, individuals today must monitor their public and private communication carefully; when they do not, they stand to lose a great deal.

What Do You Think?

1. What role, if any, do you believe companies have in monitoring what is written on social-media sites?
2. When an employee makes a comment using social media, and the comment is posted using privacy settings, should the communication be punishable by the loss of the person’s job? Or should the employee receive a warning, something like a “two strikes” warning, before being fired or forced to resign. Why or why not?
3. Are there statements that should result in immediate firing or resignation? What are those statements, and why should an individual be fired for communicating them?

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do so. Rules are also created by the context surrounding the relationship: your boss expects you to discuss your work with her; the server at the restaurant does not. Finally, rules are determined by those involved in the relationship: you expect your best friend to call every week, but you do not expect the same from your ex-boyfriend or -girlfriend. Relationships will continue to thrive as we follow the established relationship rules. Violating these rules can lead to a relationship deteriorating or ending. No longer calling a friend on a regular basis may lead to some deterioration in the friendship. Acting dishonestly in a relationship with a romantic partner could end the relationship entirely. The rules that are established in each relationship help make the relationship unique, and these are often rules that show one's commitment to the relationship.

Types of Interpersonal Relationships

Take a moment to consider who the most important interpersonal relationships are in your life. If they are your family, friends, co-workers, or romantic partners, then you fit the norm: our most significant interpersonal relationships come from these four major parts of our lives. Because they are so significant, we will discuss them in the following sections.

Family

In the past few decades we have seen family structures change, creating more diversity in today's families. Today, six out of every ten children live with both biological parents; every four of ten do not (Mondello, 2010). We'll consider those structures next.

Family Arrangements Although there are many ways to define a family, communication scholars Galvin and Brommel define **family** as "a network of people who live together over long periods of time bound by ties of marriage, blood, or commitment, legal or otherwise who consider themselves as family and who share a significant history and anticipated future of functioning in a family relationship" (Galvin, Bylund, & Brommel, 2003). Today, we see many different types of family living arrangements, so we will explore those here.

Communication scholar Mary Ann Fitzpatrick (2003) classified three primary types of relationships that exist for married or cohabiting couples: interdependent couples, independent couples, and separate couples.

Interdependent Couples. This traditional category consists of couples who are highly interdependent. The **interdependent couple** shares traditional views of marriage and family life, activities, and interests.

Independent Couples. **Independent couples** hold less traditional views of family roles and expectations. They are less dependent on one another and seek some autonomy in their activities.

Separate Couples. **Separate couples** are extremely autonomous. Each person in the relationship allows the other his or her own time and space to enjoy activities.

family

network of people who live together over long periods of time bound by ties of marriage, blood, or commitment, legal or otherwise who consider themselves as family and share a significant history and anticipated future of functioning in a family relationship.

interdependent couple

couple who shares traditional views of marriage and family life, activities, and interests.

independent couple

couple who holds less traditional views of family roles and expectations.

separate couple

couple who is extremely autonomous.



GM Visuals/Blend Images/Getty Images

There are three primary types of relationships for married and cohabitating couples. What type of relationship do you expect to have with a romantic partner? Will it be one of the three primary types, or will you blend styles?

Fitzpatrick realizes that not all married or cohabiting couples fit distinctly into one of these three categories and that some couples blend styles. Fitzpatrick claims that the most common form of blending styles is the separate-traditional style. In this type of relationship, one person, typically the wife or woman, holds a traditional view of marriage while the husband or man seeks more independence. Couples determine for themselves which type of relationship best suits their interpersonal and individual needs.

Marriage and family do not have universal meanings for all people. Currently, there is an ongoing debate in the United States, and other countries, over who has the right

to marry. Because the U.S. government allows each state the right to decide which marriages get recognized under state law, it is difficult to determine the exact number of same-sex marriages in the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau (2011) estimates that approximately 130,000 same-sex couples identify themselves as being married and that more than 500,000 unmarried same-sex households also exist. In a story that aired on National Public Radio (2009), University of California demographer Gary Gates explained that same-sex couples often look a lot like opposite-sex married couples. They also are likely to have children and own their own homes.

The concept of family is also in transition, and many families consist of single parents raising children. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2009), approximately 27 percent of children in the United States live with a single parent, and nearly 83 percent of those single parents are mothers. Children are raised not only by a single mother or father but also by grandparents. Whether consisting of a married or cohabiting couple with or without children or a single parent or grandparent raising a child, families tend to evolve as children grow and the makeup of a family changes. This is especially true for military families. For example, U.S. Army Major Daniel Kearney and his wife, Lauren, discuss the struggles that they and other military families have faced when a partner or parent is deployed for an extended length of time ("Military Life," n.d.). It can be difficult for the military families to reconnect with one another and adjust and readjust to day-to-day routines.



CourseMate Connection: Go to cengagebrain.com to access your CourseMate for *Invitation to Human Communication* to view a video about military families. Family members who can adapt to the changes that occur in each stage of development are more likely to survive stressful times.

Friendships

Recall your first day as a college student. You arrived to campus, met your roommate, attended orientation, and began taking classes. You likely



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What is the makeup of your family and the families of your friends? With family demographics changing so rapidly, what do you imagine your family will look like in ten years?

interacted with a number of other students for the first time. Some of these individuals may have become close friends, but others have not. Have you ever wondered what makes a friendship grow and develop? Interpersonal communication scholar Bill Rawlins (1981) developed a six-stage model of friendship to help explain the stages of our friendships. These stages include:

1. role-limited interaction,
2. friendly relations,
3. moves toward friendship,
4. nascent friendship,
5. stabilized friendship, and
6. waning friendship.

Although not every friendship follows each developmental stage, you likely have friendships that have progressed according to the model. As you read about each stage in more depth, consider your own friendships and whether they followed the stages in sequence.

Stage One: Role-Limited Interaction In this stage, we encounter people for the first time. We may greet a cashier at a store, interact with other students in a classroom, introduce ourselves to a new neighbor, or seek out new friendships online. Whether we choose to meet new acquaintances or are put into situations that require us to interact with others, we tend to limit the amount of personal information we share when we first meet someone. When we communicate in the **role-limited interaction** stage, we typically *engage in so-called small talk and share only minimal amounts of information*. This stage can feel awkward, especially for people who experience communication apprehension when meeting others for the first time.

role-limited interaction

engaging in small talk and sharing only minimal amounts of information.

friendly relations

relationships that allow each person to determine whether common interests exist.

moves toward friendship

when people begin to self-disclose in small amounts.

nascent friendship

time when people interact at a personal level, choose to participate in a range of activities with another, and let down their guard in communication.

stabilized friendship

when trust has been established, allowing friends to communicate fully, share private information, and establish additional relationship rules.

waning friendship

friendship that experiences a breach in trust, less quality or quantity of time spent together, or a violation in relational expectations.

Stage Two: Friendly Relations The second stage of development focuses on the exchange of friendly conversation. The **friendly relations** stage allows each person to determine whether common interests exist. If enough interest and commonality are present, then the friendship moves forward. If not, the relationship remains limited to the constraints of the situation. For example, you may speak pleasantly to classmates or co-workers but not extend the friendship beyond the classroom or work environment.

Stage Three: Moves Toward Friendship When friendships reach the **moves toward friendship** stage, we begin to self-disclose in small amounts. Because we are continuing to discover common interests and whether we want to spend more time with another, we behave according to roles determined by our culture and social environment. We may choose to interact outside the original social context. This happens when students decide to meet outside of class for social purposes, or when co-workers get together before or after work hours. These gatherings often occur in public settings where others are present. Because friends enjoy interacting and can come and go as they please, many friendships remain in this stage.

Stage Four: Nascent Friendship Once people consider themselves as friends, they have reached the **nascent friendship** stage—the stage in which the friendship blossoms. This is the point at which *we interact on a personal level, choose to participate in a range of activities with another, and let down our guard when it comes to communicating*. Friends work out their own distinct communication and behavioral rules. Patterns and routines begin to emerge. Friends may meet to work out together regularly, have lunch several times a week or month, or hear new musicians at the local coffee shop on open mike nights.

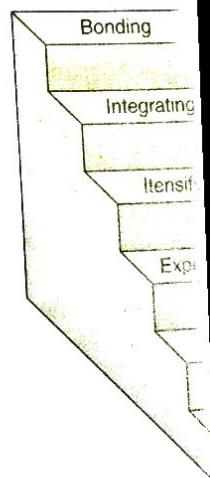
Stage Five: Stabilized Friendship Trust is the characteristic that distinguishes the fifth stage of friendship development. Once friendships have reached the **stabilized friendship** stage, *trust has been established, allowing friends to communicate fully, share private information, and establish additional relationship rules*. Friends understand one another's personality and behavioral traits. Moreover, certain expectations for the friendship (often unspoken) exist. For example, friends may begin to expect a certain level of interaction and self-disclosure. The high level of interaction and amount of self-disclosure is what distinguishes this relationship as close and best friends.

Stage Six: Waning Friendship Friendships may wane slowly over time or end abruptly, depending on the reasons for the deterioration. **Waning friendships experience a breach in trust, decrease in quality or quantity of time spent together, or a violation in relational expectations**. Once friendships reach the waning stage, communication begins to be more strategic and less spontaneous. If we perceive the breach in trust or relational rules to be unintentional, then we may choose to continue the friendship with the hope that trust can be reestablished in the future. If we perceive the violation of trust or relational rules to be intentional, then we may choose to end the friendship. Many people have friendships that fall under all of these categories. This is because growing and developing friendships tend to

shift categories, depending on communication, self-disclosure that exists. But what about that has developed into a relationship? Because romantic relationships are important parts of our lives, we will discuss

Romantic Partners

Did you know that romantic relationships evolve much like friendships? This is because, like friendships, they have a quality and quantity of interaction, rules and expectations that are necessary parts of a partnership. However, there are different kinds of romantic relationships. One of the models for explaining how romantic relationships develop and deteriorate is the communication staircase (Knapp, 1978, 1984, 2010). Although not all relationships develop through these stages, many use a staircase metaphor to describe an upward climb to bonding and a downward descent through the stages. Notice the similarities as discussed by Rayburn and Knapp as described by Knapp



shift categories, depending on the level of communication, self-disclosure, and trust that exists. But what about a friendship that has developed into a romantic relationship? Because romantic relationships are important parts of our interpersonal relationships, we will discuss those next.

Romantic Partners

Did you know that romantic relationships evolve much like friendships? This is because, like friendships, quality and quantity of interactions, relational rules and expectations, and trust are necessary parts of our romantic partnerships. However, just as there are different kinds of friendships, there are also different models for romantic relationships. One of the more popular models for explaining how relationships develop and deteriorate is explained by communication scholar Mark Knapp (Knapp, 1978, 1984; Knapp & Daly, 2010). Although not all romantic relationships develop or deteriorate following these stages, many do. Knapp's model uses a staircase metaphor to illustrate an upward climb toward commitment and a downward descent toward dissolution. Both staircases have five steps. Notice the similarities between the development of friendships as discussed by Rawlins and the development of romantic relationships as described by Knapp.

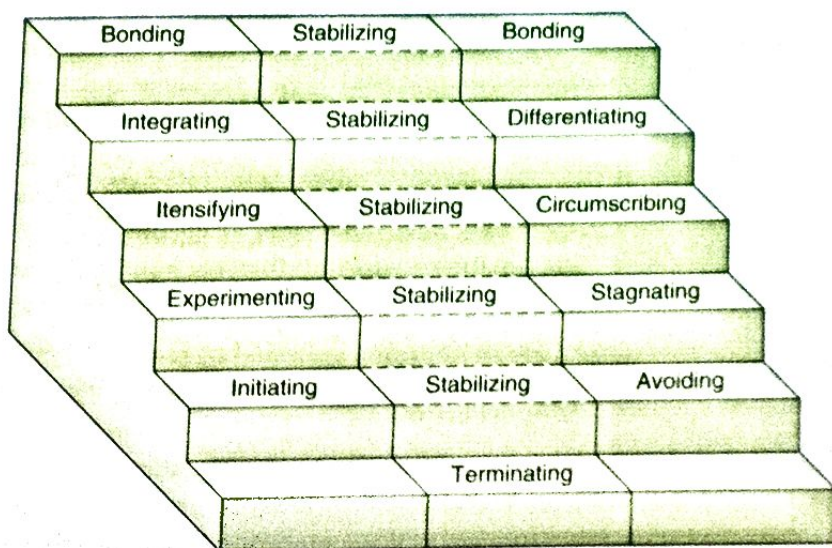


Figure 6.1 Mark Knapp's relational stages model

Source: Knapp, M.L. *Interpersonal Communication and Human Relations*, 1st Edition. © 1983. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.

PRACTICING HUMAN COMMUNICATION

Can You Recognize the Stages of Friendship?

Next to each stage of friendship in the following list, give an example of communication when you were in that stage of friendship with someone who is currently a very close friend. For example, in a role-limited relationship, you may have first met your friend in one of your college classes and engaged in small talk about the teacher and the course. For the last stage, you might need to use an example of a different person, someone you are no longer in touch with.

Stage	Example of Communication
1. Role-limited, small talk	
2. Friendly relations, common interests determined	
3. Move toward friendship, begin to self-disclose, meet outside class or work	
4. Nascent, let down guard, interact more personally	
5. Stabilized, trust established communicate fully have relationship rules	
6. Waning, a breach of trust or someone who moved away and you see each other less	

The Staircase Up: Climbing Toward Commitment The five steps leading toward commitment are initiating, experimenting, intensifying, integrating, and bonding.

initiation step

step involving the first set of interactions made between people.

experimenting step

step when small talk is used to learn more about the other person and to help present a likable self-image.

intensifying step

step when there is an increase in communication, intimacy, and connectedness.

integrating step

step consisting of two individuals merging their social circles and organizing their daily activities around each other.

bonding step

step that occurs when a couple commits to their relationship.

Step 1 Initiating. The first step of initiating is similar to Rawlin's role-limited stage of friendship. The **initiation step** involves the first set of interactions made between people. Communication consists mostly of initial greetings and any additional information needed to fit the situation. For example, introducing ourselves to your best friend's new housemate or to a new co-worker initiates a relationship. At this time, our communication tends to be pleasant and provides little self-disclosure.

Step 2 Experimenting. In the **experimenting step**, small talk is used to learn more about the other person and to help present a likable self-image. Our communication continues to be polite, and we tend to discuss safe topics. We might discuss where we grew up, previous jobs, hobbies, musical interests, favorite television shows or movies, and the like. We are also concerned about showing our best selves to the other person, so we tend to present most of the information in a positive or safe light (so we might omit the recent family feud or that job we were fired from). Most relationships remain in the experimenting stage.

Step 3 Intensifying. We take the **intensifying step** when there is an increase in communication, intimacy, and connectedness. Verbal communication becomes more frequent and informal. The use of pronouns *we* and *us* signal that the relationship is developing. In the intensifying phase, we hear ourselves and our partner say things such as "We are going to Chicago this weekend," "We are at Jay's last night," or "Do you think we should go to this party?" We may develop nicknames for one another or even shortened phrases that mean something to both people involved in the relationship but not outsiders.

Step 4 Integrating. The **integrating step** consists of two individuals merging their social circles and organizing their daily activities around each other. Couples may begin to mirror one another in styles of dress, language, and activity choices. They may have a special place, song, or symbol that is "their own," and they may share the same friends, same social activities, and even grocery shop together or organize car repairs or doctor appointments so that one person can help each support the other.

Step 5 Bonding. The **bonding step** occurs when the couple commits to the relationship. This commitment is conscious and intentional, and it may take time to



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What phase of the relationship might this couple be in? What do you think the next phase might be for this couple?

items that mark the relationship as official (rings or other jewelry and markers of togetherness, for example), cohabitation, or participating in a ceremony (e.g., civil union ceremony, marriage) to publicly or privately formalize the commitment.

Once a couple reaches the bonding stage, they usually engage in strategies to maintain the relationship. This is called **relational maintenance**; it is the *process of keeping a relationship together through the use of mundane activities*. These maintenance strategies are important; without routine maintenance, relationships often deteriorate. Of course, each relationship has its own unique maintenance strategies. However, scholars have studied relational maintenance strategies in both heterosexual and gay couples and found certain routine communicative behaviors that helped stabilize a relationship (Alberts, Yoshimura, Rabbi, & Loschiavo, 1995; Canary & Stafford, 1994; Haas & Stafford, 1998). Those common maintenance strategies are (1) dividing household tasks evenly, (2) spending time with the other's friends and family, (3) using humor and cheerful communication, and (4) being open through self-disclosure. All of these help to maintain the relationship.

Although relational maintenance is a necessary part in continuing the relationship, not all relationships survive. When relationships come to an end, Knapp suggests that they follow a five-step descent down the ladder and toward deterioration.

The Staircase Down: Descending Toward Deterioration Knapp describes five phases that relationships go through when they begin to deteriorate: differentiating, circumscribing, stagnating, avoiding, and terminating.

Step 1 Differentiating. During the **differentiating** phase *couples begin to spend time on their own interests in order to express their individuality and separate from their partner*. Although spending time on one's own activities and interests is a healthy way to sustain self-identity, differentiating exists when couples consciously engage in separate activities or focus on separate interests in order to distance themselves from the other person. In this early phase, couples might say, "I just need some time apart to get my head straight" or "I think I'll go to Chicago by myself this weekend."

Step 2 Circumscribing. When couples enter the **circumscribing** phase, *they begin communicating less frequently, share less personal information, and spend shorter amounts of time together*. The couple may continue to appear in public or attend gatherings with friends, but private interactions and time spent together have decreased. The *we* and *us* language common in the intensifying stage changes back to *I* and *me* language, and couples begin to share fewer details of their days and how they feel about those details. As the relationship continues on its downward spiral toward dissolution, the couple may argue more or simply not want to share what is important with each other.

relationship maintenance

process of keeping a relationship together through the use of mundane activities.

differentiating

when individuals in a couple begin to spend time on their own interests in order to express their individuality and separate from their partner.

circumscribing

when couples begin communicating less frequently, share less personal information, and spend shorter amounts of time together.



This couple appears to be in the stagnating phase of their relationship. What advice could you give them as they work to rebuild their relationship or to continue to move toward its termination?

stagnating

when couples have minimal interaction or shared activities.

avoiding

when couples attempt to stay away from each other

terminating

when individuals in a couple make their separation final.

Step 3 Stagnating. The **stagnating** step consists of *minimal interaction or shared activities*. The couple has now reached a point at which they anticipate time together and communication to be unpleasant. Because self-disclosure is minimal, couples likely have grown apart and feel distant from one another. Couples may begin revealing relationship details and struggles with close friends and admitting that the relationship has deteriorated.

Step 4 Avoiding. During the **avoiding** phase, *couples attempt to stay away from one another*. To accomplish this, couples may change their work schedules, sleep in separate bedrooms, or participate in more activities outside the home environment. Some couples may choose a temporary or trial separation. Communication often turns negative as each person blames the other for the relationship's problems and failures.

Step 5 Terminating. The final step in the dissolution of a romantic relationship is **terminating**. This occurs when *the couple makes their separation final*. One person may choose to move out or relocate to another city. If the couple is married, divorce proceedings begin. Friends and family are now aware the relationship has terminated. Important items are divided up, and the couple no longer exists as a romantic unit. Communication in this stage typically continues to place blame on the other person while also focusing on the future and exciting new possibilities.

Knapp explains that couples do not always progress through the deterioration steps in a linear way. Their behavior may indicate one phase (an individual moves out of the house for a trial separation, representing the avoiding stage) but the couple may continue to talk regularly and go on occasional dates together. Furthermore, not all relationships develop or decline as suggested previously. Many relationships decline before reaching the bonding stage. Other relationships dissolve in a more mutually pleasant way than described in the stagnating stage. And many relationships are able to stop the descent and climb back up the ladder of commitment and stay together. Because a relationship begins a descent does not mean it will ultimately end. Two people can rebuild their commitment to one another, especially if they are aware of Knapp's ladder metaphor and use their communication skills to establish and maintain the kind of relationship they want with one another.

ETHICAL MOMENT



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Terminating a Relationship: Facebook or Face to Face?

Illana Gershon, author of the book *The Breakup 2.0: Disconnecting over New Media*, explains that virtual breakups are becoming more common everyday. Gershon tells the story of a college student named Leslie who experienced an online breakup:

Leslie checked her Facebook profile late one day and discovered that she was suddenly single. Her now ex-boyfriend had met someone new, and she learned this through the ubiquitous news feed that presented her personal rejection like a breaking news story. When he changed his Facebook profile, he also changed hers as well—they were no longer announced as a couple. Their friends received the news before she had.

Gershon claims that although most people believe people should break up face to face, social media and technology provides different options for ending relationships. Gershon explains that "texting, instant messaging, Facebook, e-mail, Twitter . . . [are] now widely seen as acceptable" for announcing the termination of a relationship (Gershon, 2010; Vlahakis, 2010). In addition, a study by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers found that one of every five divorcing couples blame Facebook for the demise of their marriage. Couples now use Facebook to do their detective work: "A Facebook status update, a 140-character Twitter post, or a confessional entry

on a blog all leave behind a pretty much permanent digital trail that can be used in court in case of a divorce" (Stevens, 2011). Author James Weaver is skeptical of the blame placed on Facebook as the cause of so many divorces. In a blog posting by Benjamin Stevens, Weaver says, "Sure, social media makes it easier to connect with old flames and strike up new relationships, but divorces and infidelity have been around for all of human history, whereas social media is less than a decade old. Truth is that people cause divorces, not social media" (Stevens, 2011).

What Do You Think?

1. What role if any do you believe social media should play in announcing the breakup of a relationship?
2. When might face-to-face interaction be more effective for communicating a breakup? When might social media be most effective?
3. Do you believe the accessibility of retrieving personal information from social media such as Facebook or Twitter is causing more relationships to terminate?
4. What rules or guidelines do you believe should be followed when using social media to end a relationship?

Disclosure

...become romantically involved, the more likely we are to reveal information about ourselves with disclosure is the intentional sharing of information that we choose to be known to others. There are two types of interpersonal relationships as a window.

...depending on the amount of personal information about two topics while sitting together describes the variation in depth (Altman & Taylor, 1973) and depth or how much you announce to your co-workers but you may provide more breadth) but talk more breadth). In addition, the theory sees self-disclosure becomes more continually peel ourselves.

...us understand to others. This is something information about may consist of occupation, closed. The that you are quality traits (thought) a natural are of. We back from

others. The **hidden window** consists of information that you understand about yourself but are not willing to share with others. The hidden window may consist of some of our past experiences, personal problems, or aspects of our identity (e.g. political affiliation, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, or age) that we choose for various reasons to not disclose. The **unknown window** is information that is yet to be discovered by you and others. The window may consist of hidden talents, passions, fears, or diseases we have yet to discover. Understanding self-disclosure as a window helps us see that the size of each window varies, depending on the relationship. In one relationship where we may not feel very safe, we likely will have a very large hidden window. In another relationship in which we are getting to know someone and coming to trust them, our open window may grow in size rapidly. And if we are resistant to feedback from others, our blind window might stay very large for some time. Remember, too, that the size of each window is rarely static; they shift as our relationships grow and develop.

Self-disclosure is very important to relationships for two reasons. First, when we disclose to others, we gain a deeper understanding of ourselves. When we share our opinions on community issues, our relationship triumphs and failures, our ambitions and fears, we gain a better sense of who we are as individuals. We learn what makes us unique and what commonalities we have with others. When that disclosure is reciprocal, we learn about the other person as well. Second, self-disclosure can improve the quality of our relationships. When we discuss our thoughts and feelings, difficult challenges, and even our successes and hopes, we learn about the ways we are similar and different—and that we are not the only ones to face adversity or to have hopes and dreams, that we can trust and respect others. But self-disclosure can be complicated, so we will discuss some of the guidelines for such disclosure next.

Guidelines for Self-Disclosure When we enter a relationship, we usually have expectations about self-disclosure. When we share information about ourselves, we expect others to share information in return. When self-disclosure is reciprocated, we view the relationship more favorably. On the other hand, we tend to feel uncomfortable in situations where someone self-discloses a lot of personal information early in the relationship or when someone self-discloses but we feel less favorable toward them. Several guidelines can help us understand these complex moments before we decide to share personal information with others.

Self-Disclosure Should Be Appropriate to the Relationship. You are already aware that there is a certain degree of breadth and depth to our self-disclosure. This helps us understand that there are levels of appropriateness associated with revealing personal information to others. With acquaintances or co-workers, sharing small amounts of personal information across a range of topics is appropriate. With our romantic partners or close friends, sharing more intimate details across this range of topics is expected. Generally speaking, begin with small amounts of self-disclosure and increase the levels of breadth and depth as the relationship progresses and trust is established.

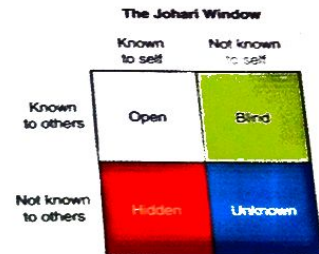


Figure 6.2 The Johari window
Source: Adapted from Luft, Joseph. *Of Human Interaction*,
© 1969 The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

hidden window

information that you understand about yourself but are not willing to share with others.

unknown window

information about yourself that is yet to be discovered by you and others.

Match the Breadth and Depth of Disclosure Provided to You. This rule is known as the *norm of reciprocity*, and it governs the process of sharing personal information with others. Relationships that incorporate similar amounts of self-disclosure are preferred. When someone reveals too much personal information, we begin to feel uncomfortable. One sign of revealing too much personal information too soon occurs when one person begins sharing less information or reverting back to previous “safe” topics. Paying attention to the norm of reciprocity can indicate important information about the relationship.

Pay Attention to the Purpose of the Self-Disclosure. We have a great deal of private information we can choose to share or withhold from others. It is important to identify the reasons we choose to share particular information about ourselves. We may reveal our sexual history to our romantic partner as a way to establish trust in a sexual relationship. However, sharing this information in the locker room or with friends in a social setting serves a very different purpose. This self-disclosure often is intended as a boast of our experiences or past commitments. Self-disclosure is meant to enhance the quality of relationships rather than negatively affect them. Therefore, our most important and meaningful disclosures should be reserved for the relationships that are most important and special to us.

Relationships and our communication in them are affected by a variety of factors. The type of relationship we are experiencing, the level or developmental stage of the relationship, and degree of self-disclosure can shape the quality of and communication in the relationship. In the next section we will explore how technology, gender, and culture also affect our interpersonal relationships.

Technology and Interpersonal Relationships

For several decades, communication scholars have studied the association between technology and interpersonal relationships. At first, scholars believed the increased time spent using mediated channels led to an increase in individual isolation, decrease in relationship quality, and unwillingness to participate in one's community (Finholt & Sproull, 1990; Putnam, 1995; Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001; Sproull & Kiesler, 1986). There was a growing concern that increasing amounts of time spent on the Internet negatively affected the time spent with family and friends (Nie & Hillygus, 2002). More recently, studies have indicated the opposite effect. The University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism's annual study of Internet use reports that approximately 68 percent of Internet users between the ages of nineteen and thirty-five rank social media as “important and very important” for maintaining relationships, and more than 50 percent all other age groups agreed (USC Annenberg School, 2011). However, additional studies indicate that too many “friends” on social media can actually reduce the feelings of connection we have with others (Tom Tong, Van Der Heide, Langwell, & Waither, 2008).

We know that media have changed the way relationships form and evolve over time. Texting and tweeting make it possible to communicate in real time with others (and romantic partners prefer texting to

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T.H. Culhane
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NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPLORER TIP

T.H. Culhane
Emerging Explorer Urban Planner

How does technology affect your ability to maintain long-distance working relationships?

I should just tell you that when I first joined Facebook back in, I guess it was 2007, I joined because I was a Harvard student and we knew about its potential. Then my lead professor at UCLA encouraged all his students to use it, and we were supposed to use it to further the research that we were doing. The people that I was communicating with on this tool became early adopters in Egypt and then in other parts of Africa and the Middle East. I have friends over in Indonesia and Guatemala who also saw Facebook as a tool for important things, which I think is why Egypt used it for a social revolution.

We now have Web 2.0 and social media to maintain our interpersonal connections. I use those tools to connect with friends in the Okavanga Delta or from Nigeria or Tanzania. We are all on our Facebook groups, and we are very active using Google Plus and YouTube. We make YouTube videos for each other, we've linked to other YouTube videos, and we've linked to Web sites. We sometimes chat. It doesn't matter whether they are in a small village or if they are in a slum or they are in a city, if they have access to a kiosk occasionally and the Internet, we can communicate. Integrating technologies can be an important part of maintaining relationships and continuing the work toward industrial ecology solutions for cooperative cities.



Portrait: T.H. Culhane

stay connected when they are apart) (Pettigrew, 2009), blogging helps us engage in political and civic discourse, and social-networking sites allow new friendships to form and old friendships to stay active. The rapid growth in technology leaves communication scholars scrambling to understand how new forms of technology affect our personal relationships. We will now look at ways that technology positively affects our relationships with others and the ways it might also have negative effects.

Relationships and Computer-Mediated Communication

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is the exchange of messages transmitted between two or more people using a digital electronic device. Today's most popular CMC involves communicating online with others. According to the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project, approximately 74 percent of adults over the age of 18 in the United States use the internet (Rainie, 2010). Two-thirds of Americans now use Facebook, Twitter, and other social-media sites, making it easy to connect with others throughout the day. In 2011, Facebook registered its 800 millionth user!

Most communication via the Internet is text based and either asynchronous or synchronous. **Asynchronous** means that the messages are sent but not received at the same time. This occurs when we post a message on our blog that is not immediately read, or when we send a text to

computer-mediated communication (CMC)

the exchange of messages transmitted between two or more people using a digital electronic device

synchronous

message sent & received at the same time

synchronous

message that is received in real time.

hyperpersonal communication

communication that occurs when individuals express themselves more freely in a mediated channel than in a face-to-face interaction.

a cell phone that is turned off. E-mail, text messaging, blogs, and social-media postings are often asynchronous because the receiver typically does not receive the message immediately. **Synchronous** messages are *messages that are received in real time*. This happens when we communicate in chat rooms or send instant messages back and forth. Many forms of CMC can be asynchronous or synchronous, depending on whether the individuals are using the electronic device at the same time. Video sites such as Skype and WebEx are synchronous and becoming popular tools for maintaining long-distance working and romantic relationships. The one commonality between asynchronous and synchronous messages is that many CMC users engage in **hyperpersonal communication**—that is, *communication that occurs when individuals express themselves more freely in a mediated channel than in a face-to-face interaction*. As such, technology has become not only a way to stay connected to others but also a relational maintenance strategy for interpersonal relationships.

Although many people complain that too much time spent texting or on Facebook detracts from real-time interactions with peers, research suggests something quite different. In 2007, media studies scholars Nicole Ellison, Charles Steinfield, and Cliff Lampe studied students at Michigan State University (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). These researchers wanted to know what the benefits of using Facebook might be for college students, and what they found was quite interesting. They discovered that new students use Facebook to stay connected with their friends from high school, which helped them feel less alone in their first year and minimized the “friendsickness” that came from missing their old friends. They also discovered that for those students who were shy, struggling with self-esteem, and feeling disconnected from the campus, Facebook helped them boost their self-esteem and confidence, make new friends, and feel more at home and involved in their school. Finally, they found that Facebook not only helped students at all grade levels maintain the friends they had before coming to college but also helped them make and strengthen new friendships with other students in their dorms and classes (Ellison et al., 2007).

Many individuals, bloggers, students, activists, and the like agree that social-networking sites are revolutionizing how we create and maintain friendships and also affecting politics, learning, work, and activism. Social networks make it possible for huge numbers of people to contact one another quickly and continuously. This means that information and ideas are shared and spread rapidly and immediately. Although this is a positive aspect of social networking, it also has a downside.

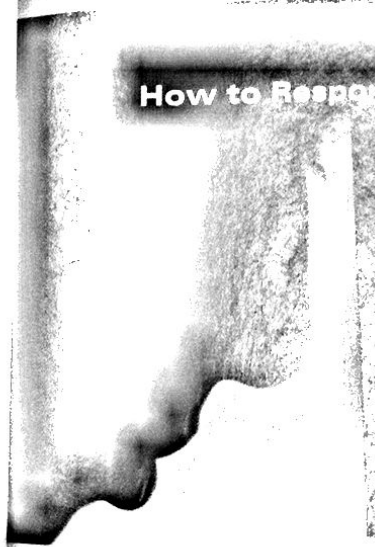
Studies show that teens between ages thirteen and seventeen are disclosing too much personal information and putting themselves at risk with these social networks: 69 percent share their addresses and physical location in their updates, 50 percent share their real first names with strangers, and 24 percent share their e-mail addresses. Tracy Mooney, one of the researchers who conducted the survey, explains that “Online, there’s a sense of trust and anonymity, so kids let their guard down. . . . Kids would never hand out their name and address to a stranger in the

real world, so it’s alarming” (Schwartz, 2010). YouTube, however, seems to be the Internet and America’s adult social-media user. 71 percent of the eight million users have tightened their need to continue monitoring to display on their social

CMC has had a major impact on making new friends, maintaining long distances, CMC helps maintain strong relationships both professional and personal. There is a continuous ne

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

How to Respond



Makoto, who requested that I take a photograph as he looks at an instrument of mental torture when he was a high school student in 2007. Cyberbullying is a global problem almost endemic because of ra

She kept texting me so many times I had to throw my phone against the wall. She called her. After that the media can't fight your own battles!”

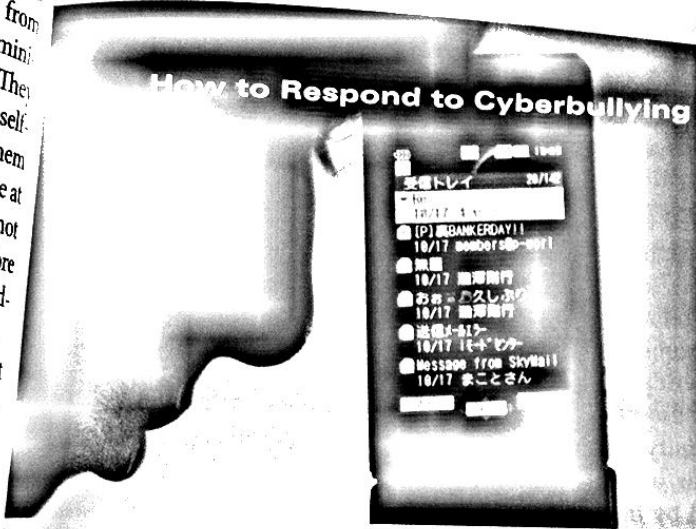
—Eleven-year-old from Michigan

real world, so it's alarming to see how many kids do that very thing online" (Schwartz, 2010). Young adults between ages eighteen and twenty-nine, however, seem to be more savvy about privacy. Research from the Internet and American Life Project found that 44 percent of young adult social-media users limit their personal information online, and 71 percent of the eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-old social-networking users have tightened their privacy settings (Elier, 2010). Still, many users need to continue monitoring their privacy settings and what they choose to display on their social-media sites.

CMC has had a major effect on our interpersonal relationships. From making new friends, meeting romantic partners, and staying in touch over long distances, CMC has provided the tools necessary to build and maintain strong relationships. Yet it also has the ability to negatively affect our professional and personal lives. The ever-increasing forms of CMC means there is a continuous need to understand its effect on human relationships.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

How to Respond to Cyberbullying



YURIKO NAKAO/Reuters/Corbis

Makoto, who requested that his last name not be used, poses for a photograph as he looks at his cell phone, which became an instrument of mental torture that nearly drove him to suicide when he was a high school student in Tokyo on October 22, 2007. Cyberbullying is a global problem, but in Japan it is almost endemic because of rampant bullying in schools.

She kept texting me so many mean things that I wanted to throw my phone against the wall. I told my mom and she called her. After that the mean girls texted me, "Wow, you can't fight your own battles!"

—Eleven-year-old from Michigan

Although bullying has been around for a long time, cyberbullying takes this uncivil form of communication to new levels of hostility. Cyberbullying is defined as children or teens using mobile phones, interactive technologies, and the Internet to repeatedly, willfully, and intentionally torment, threaten, harass, humiliate, and embarrass another child or teen. According to the Cyberbullying Research Center, cyberbullying teens have "created Web pages, videos, [and] profiles on social-networking sites making fun of others. With cell phones, adolescents have taken pictures in a bedroom, a bathroom, or another location where privacy is expected and posted or distributed them online. More recently, some have recorded unauthorized videos of other kids and uploaded them for the world to see, rate, tag, and discuss." More than harmful, cyberbullying can have deadly consequences. Megan Meier, Phoebe Prince, Tyler Clemente, and Jamey Rodemeyer were all young people who committed suicide in response to cyberbullying.

Victims of cyberbullying report feeling "depressed, sad, angry, and frustrated." They fear going to school, and cyberbullying lowers their self-esteem and increases conflicts in their families and even violent or delinquent behaviors. "As one teenager stated: 'It makes me hurt both physically and mentally. It scares me and takes away all my confidence. It makes me feel sick and worthless'" (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010, p. 1) Approximately 20 percent of teens report being victims of cyberbullying—and, surprisingly, 20 percent of teens admitted to being cyberbullies.

Gender and Family

Family is one relationship that has an enormous influence in teaching us how to perform gender. The family is usually the first group of people that teaches us about gender roles and expectations. The term **gender role** is “commonly used to refer to feminine and masculine social expectations in a family based on a person’s sex” (DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2007, p. 154). According to Allen and Walker (2007), “there is no better predictor of the division of household labor than gender” (p. 7).

Think back to how work was divided in your household. Who was responsible for household work and child care? Who was more likely to be responsible for fixing broken items, doing vehicle maintenance, and doing yard work? (Canary & Wahba, 2006). Did your family designate certain spaces in the house as “belonging to” a mother or father? Mothers tend to occupy the kitchen, closet, and bathroom spaces, whereas fathers tend to claim the basement, the easy chair, and the garage as their space. Same-sex couples often reject these gendered divisions of labor and space (Peplau & Beals, 2004). Instead, same-sex couples divide labor based on ability, interest, and the common goal of sharing responsibility for household labor and child care.

The roles we are socialized into or that we take on consciously affect how we communicate with others. If we have a very fluid view of gender roles, we likely will adopt the same-sex-couple approach, and our communication will center on discussing who is best at and likes a task. If we subscribe to more rigid or traditional views of gender roles, however, then some of our communication will likely focus on keeping those roles in place and not stepping into someone else’s “role.”

Gender and Friendships

Gender also affects the type and quality of our friendships. Research indicates that women’s friendships are often based on their ability to communicate and to self-disclose. Many women are socialized when very young to engage in expressive and supportive communication. They typically talk about their feelings, daily lives, and personal struggles. This type of communication allows women to feel closely connected with one another. Men also create and maintain close friendships with others. However, instead of building friendships via communication as many women do, men tend to build friendships around shared activities such as playing or watching sports or video games or working on projects (Wright, 1982). These gendered differences in friendship formation are also carried into cross-sexed friendships. Although both men and women enjoy cross-sexed friendships, they do so for different reasons. Men



Many fathers are taking a more active role in the lives of their children than ever before. What roles did your parents and caregivers take during your childhood and what roles do you expect to take on as you begin a family of your own?

gender role

used to refer to feminine and masculine social expectations in a family based on a person’s sex.



typically receive more social and emotional support from their female friends and feel more comfortable expressing themselves emotionally without being criticized for violating perceived societal expectations for masculine behavior. Women tend to engage in more competitive activities with male friends and value more instrumental behavior. In addition, women report that men offer a more "objective viewpoint" than their same-sex friendships (Monsour, 2002).

Gender and Romantic Relationships

If you want to date someone, who is responsible for making the first move? Once you manage to get that date, who pays? And when problems happen in a relationship, who is in charge of handling the emotional aspects of that problem? Although traditional norms for dating and relationships are changing, research shows that men still are expected to initiate dates and physical intimacy and women are expected to perform relationship maintenance (Laner & Ventrone, 2000). Men continue to be the primary breadwinners whereas women assume responsibility for domestic labor and

Some of the traditional roles expected of each person in a romantic relationship are changing. What roles are expected of you in your romantic relationships?

child care (only 22 percent of women earn more money than their husbands) (Fry & Cohn, 2010). However, these tendencies are beginning to shift. Studies show that both women and men appreciate partners who not only have professional lives but also assume domestic responsibilities, engage in expressive communication, and do things for and with their partners (Cancian & Oliner, 2000). Meanwhile, more and more men want to and are becoming more involved in raising their children.

Gender influences how we experience and communicate in our personal relationships. The ways we negotiate our first meetings, our dates, our time together—in short, our romantic relationships—are often determined by society's expectations for gender. Sexuality plays into these scripts as well: heterosexual couples tend to follow more traditional roles and expectations, gay men tend to be more emotionally expressive than straight men (but less than heterosexual and lesbian women), and lesbian couples tend to rank the highest of all groups for emotional expressiveness and relationship maintenance (Biblarz & Savci, 2010; Downing & Goldberg, 2010; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007). In addition to learning how we perform gender based on our interpersonal relationships, our culture also affects the way we experience our relationships.

Culture and Interpersonal Relationships

Interpersonal relationships are influenced by the culture in which they reside. Culture is defined as the learned patterns of perception, values, and behaviors, shared by a group of people (Martin & Nakayama, 2004). Perhaps you have traveled to another country and noticed differences

in communication differences may Individualistic Europe believe Individuals are e for their actions, in Latin America cultures value individual's need

When differ not surprising culture commu size direct and straightforward to say what they cultures often communicative the message. E ern cultures, n tion. Therefore another is act using "yes" or by saying, "Let text or low co on a continuu

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Chapter

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in communication styles, dress, behaviors, or lifestyles. Some of these differences may be based on the type of culture you were visiting. **Individualistic cultures** such as those in North America and northern Europe believe individual autonomy and independence is important. Individuals are expected to *make their own decisions, take responsibility for their actions, and be self-sufficient*. **Collectivist cultures** such as those in Latin America and Asia emphasize the needs of the group. *Collectivist cultures value relationships and harmony with others; therefore, the individual's needs are subordinate to the group's needs.*

When different cultures perceive different goals for relationships, it is not surprising that there are also differences in how members of a given culture communicate with one another. **Low-context cultures** *emphasize direct and literal communication*. For example, in the United States, straightforward, honest, and detailed information is valued. People tend to say what they mean and mean what they say. By contrast, **high-context cultures** often avoid confrontation and use the context surrounding the communicative act and nonverbal cues to determine the meaning of the message. High-context cultures, which are common in many Eastern cultures, may use *less straightforward and more indirect communication*. Therefore, people must “read between the lines” to understand what another is actually saying. For example, instead of answering a question using “yes” or “no,” members of high-context cultural groups may respond by saying, “Let me get back to you.” Cultures are not necessarily high context or low context in an isolated and absolute way; rather, contexts exist on a continuum with some cultures being higher or lower than others.

To maintain a successful relationship with members of different cultures, it is important that we understand the differences in communication styles and behavioral practices. Learning about the history, values, and practices from other cultures is the first step toward building and maintaining our intercultural relationships. You will read more about how culture affects working in groups and teams in Chapter 8.

individualistic culture

culture in which individuals make their own decisions, take responsibility for their actions, and are self-sufficient

collectivist culture

culture that values relationships and harmony with others.

low-context culture

culture in which people emphasize direct and literal communication.

high-context culture

culture in which people use less straightforward and more indirect communication.

Chapter Summary

Interpersonal Relationships Consist of Personal Connections Made with Others Through the Intentional Use of Communication

- The way we interact with others is often determined by the type of interpersonal relationship, therefore making every interpersonal relationship unique.
- Relationships require a certain degree of commitment.
- Interpersonal relationships function by their own set of rules as determined by those involved in the relationship.

- There are different types of interpersonal relationships, including families, friendships, and romantic partners.

Families Consist of a Network of People Who Are Bound Together by Ties of Marriage or Blood or Through Commitment to Another

- Married or cohabiting couples may have relationships that are interdependent, independent, separate, or a combination of relationship types.
- There is no universal definition of family in the United States.
- Family relationships tend to evolve and shift over time.

Friendships Tend to Go Through Stages as They Develop Over Time

- Friendships go through six stages as they form, develop, and dissolve: (1) role-limited interaction, (2) friendly relations, (3) moves toward friendship, (4) nascent friendship, (5) stabilized friendship, and (6) waning friendship.
- Friendships grow and develop depending on the level of communication, self-disclosure, and trust that exists.

Romantic Relationships May Develop Similarly to Friendships

- The five steps that occur as the romantic relationship develops toward commitment include initiating, experimenting, intensifying, integrating, and bonding.
- Relational maintenance, or everyday mundane activities, can help keep a relationship together.
- Relationships go through five stages when they begin to deteriorate: differentiating, circumscribing, stagnating, avoiding, and terminating.

Self-Disclosure Can Be an Important Part of Relationship Development and Maintenance

- Self-disclosure involves the degree of breadth and depth of oneself as shared with another person.
- Self-disclosure allows us to gain a better understanding of our thoughts and opinions, improve the quality of our relationships, and provide us the opportunity to discover new things about ourselves.
- It is important to carefully consider the appropriateness and purpose of self-disclosure before sharing personal information with others.

Technology Has Changed the Way Relationships Form and Evolve Over Time

- Most communication via the Internet is text based and is either asynchronous or synchronous.

- Internet users often use hyperpersonal communication to maintain interpersonal relationships.
- Computer-mediated communication has the potential to negatively affect personal and professional lives, so users should be cautious about posting personal information, photos, and videos.

Sex and Gender Affect the Way We View Relationships

- The family is usually the first source of information to teach us about gender roles and expectations.
- Women's friendships are often based on their ability to communicate and self-disclose, whereas men tend to base friendships around shared activities.
- Gender may affect women and men differently in the workplace. For example, women continue to earn less than their male counterparts.
- Heterosexual romantic relationships continue to uphold many traditional gender roles. For example, many men are still expected to initiate dates and physical intimacy, whereas women are expected to perform relationship maintenance.

Culture Influences Interpersonal Relationships

- Individualistic and collectivist cultures approach relationship goals differently.
- Low-context cultures emphasize direct communication and tend to mean what they say.
- High-context cultures use less direct communication and rely more on nonverbal communication and context surrounding the communication act.
- Successful relationships between members of different cultures requires an understanding of each culture's difference in communication styles and behavioral practices.

Key Concepts

asynchronous (135)
avoiding (130)
blind window (132)
bonding step (128)
breadth (132)
circumscribing (129)
collectivist culture (141)
computer-mediated communication (135)

culture (140)
depth (132)
differentiating (129)
experimenting step (128)
family (123)
friendly relations (126)
gender (138)
gender role (139)
hidden window (133)

high-context culture (141)
hyperpersonal communication (136)
independent couple (123)
individualistic culture (141)
initiation step (128)
integrating step (128)
intensifying step (128)
interdependent couple (123)
interpersonal relationship (120)

low-context culture
moves toward friendly
nascent friendship
open window (132)
relationship maintenance
role-limited interaction

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low-context culture (141)

moves toward friendship (126)

nascent friendship (126)

open window (132)

relationship maintenance (129)

role-limited interaction (125)

self-disclosure (132)

separate couple (123)

sex (138)

social-penetration theory (132)

stabilized friendship (126)

stagnating (130)

synchronous (136)

terminating (130)

unknown window (133)

waning friendship (126)



Invitation to Human Communication Online

Speech Communication CourseMate includes an interactive eBook and interactive learning tools, including National Geographic Explorer videos, student videos, quizzes, flash cards, and more. Speech Builder Express 3.0 and Speech Studio 2.0 are also available. Go to cengagebrain.com to access your CourseMate for *Invitation to Human Communication* where these resources can be found.

Further Reflection and Discussion

1. Think about married couples in your family: parents, aunts and uncles, cousins. Which couples have interdependent relationships? Independent? Separate? A combined type? Explain how each couple exhibits that type of relationship.
2. What are some activities or actions that indicate a relationship is in the initiating stage? What are some activities that indicate the experimenting, intensifying, integrating, and bonding stages?
3. Discuss how you know when it is appropriate to disclose personal information about yourself in a relationship with a friend, family member, or romantic partner.
4. In romantic relationships, who is expected to initiate dates? Who is expected to maintain the relationship? Discuss how these roles may be between same-sex and heterosexual relationships and what advantages or disadvantages there might be.
5. What is your experience with gender roles in the home? Discuss this with one or more of your parents or grandparents. Do they represent gender equity? Are gender roles generational?
6. What personal information do you share about yourself in a friendship with a same-sex friend? How do you make this decision?

Activities and Web Links

Visit cengagebrain.com to access the CourseMate for *Invitation to Human Communication* where these activities and web links can be found.

1. Read the article and watch the video about Zach Wahls defending the right to same-sex marriage. Does this change your opinion on the issue? What is your definition of a family? Think critically about the arguments on the other side of the issue—that is, those who disagree with you. What are their arguments? How do you respond civilly? Find a credible online newspaper or magazine article that supports each side of the debate. What arguments are given? Are they presented civilly? Go to *Weblink 6.1*.
2. Read this article on how social-media blunders can affect interpersonal relationships at work, at home, and even in the government. Search the Internet for other Twitter or Facebook blunders and devise a policy to present your supervisor at work on how employees can avoid making blunders and what actions to take if they make such a mistake. Go to *Weblink 6.2*.