# Understanding Human Communication

NINTH EDITION

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We asked George Rodman's daughter Jenny (a college senior) and Ron Adler's son Daniel (a freshman) what distinguishes good textbooks from bad ones. A good text, they told us, ought to spell out how theory and research relate to everyday life. It should be loaded with interesting examples that help make the subject matter clear. A good textbook should speak to students with a reader-friendly voice, talking *to* them rather than over their heads or down at them. Our college students told us that a good text should be visually inviting—ideally offering at least one interesting extra-textual element on every two-page spread. Finally, they told us that a good text should give them tools to master the material and earn a grade they can be proud of.

We also asked our colleagues what they think distinguishes a good textbook. Above all, they told us, a good text must present an accurate and comprehensive picture of the academic work it addresses. It should be manageable within the length of an academic term. An ideal text, our colleagues told us, would make life easier for them by giving students plenty of learning support.

## BASIC APPROACH

We have worked hard to make sure this ninth edition of *Understanding Human Communication* meets the needs of both students and their professors as described above. If we've succeeded, students will find this book is clear, interesting and useful, and that it provides tools that will help them succeed in their first serious exploration of human communication. And if we've done our job, professors will find the book does justice to the discipline and helps make their teaching more efficient and effective.

This edition builds on the approach that has served over a half million students and their professors well in the past. Rather than take sides in the theory vs. skills debate that often rages in our discipline, *Understanding Human Communication* treats scholarship and skill development as mutually reinforcing. Its reader-friendly approach strives to present material clearly without being overly simplistic. A wealth of examples helps make concepts clear and interesting. A handsome design makes the material inviting, as do a collection of stimulating photos, interesting readings, amusing and instructive cartoons, and well-chosen quotations. Marginal definitions of cultural idioms help non-native English speakers make sense of colloquial expressions.

Every chapter of this book emphasizes the influence of both culture and technology on human communication. Along with discussion in the text itself, sidebars highlight key topics in this area. **Understanding Diversity** sidebars (many new to this edition) address subjects including the cultural challenges of overseas customer service call centers; how ethnic names shape perception; a disorder that interferes with interpreting nonverbal cues; how different cultures regard the kinds of intimacy 21st century western society views as ideal; and how effective public speakers deal with cultural diversity in their audiences.

**Understanding Communication Technology** boxes focus on topics including how instant messaging can improve relationships; how online game play-

ers create new identities; the specialized vocabulary of e-mail; software that allows groups to work online; how heavy television viewing by children can create poor listening skills later in life; and how online groups can promote unhealthy practices like eating disorders.

## CHANGES IN THE NINTH EDITION

Our primary focus in this edition has been on enhancing *student success.* This edition of *Understanding Human Communication* contains several improvements that should help students master the material more effectively.

**Case studies** now open each part, presenting real-life communication challenges on the job, in school, and in personal relationships. Each case study comes with thought provoking questions that encourage students to apply the information in each chapter to understand and solve the problem.

Each chapter now opens with a list of **chapter highlights** that preview the upcoming material in a way that is more readable and understandable than a traditional outline. These highlights aren't just a preview: They also serve as a useful review tool that will help students understand the chapter's contents as they study for exams.

**Key terms** are now listed at the end of each chapter, where they will make more sense after students have read the material. Page numbers where the term first appeared accompany each entry, making it easy for students to refer to that section of the text.

**Marginal icons** like those in the margin direct students to resources that will help them understand concepts in the text and apply them to their own lives. The pencil icon refers to activities at the end of each chapter. The CD icon indicates an activity in the Student Resources section of the CD-ROM that accompanies the text. Every chapter of this edition contains changes that expand and enrich the contents. Among other topics, this edition discusses the ethical challenges of identity management online, how the careless use of language can cause others pain, ways to detect deception via nonverbal cues, and gender differences in nonverbal communication. It offers an expanded discussion of the differences between personal and impersonal communication, describes how interpersonal communication operates on the Internet, explores the ethics of "benign" dishonesty in maintaining relationships, and describes ways people use communication to create greater distance with others in personal relationships.

This edition contains all-new sample speeches on topics that college students will find intriguing such as binge drinking, the psychological effects of the war against terrorism, and modern forms of slavery. The analyses of these speeches include full outlines and commentary by the students themselves, as well as the authors of this book. In addition, the book offers the latest information on using the Internet for speech research. It looks at the latest software for speech organization, as well as the latest research on why PowerPoint isn't always a speaker's best friend. The book contains increased coverage of strategies for overcoming stage fright and provides new information about the effects of information overload on informative speaking. The discussion of persuasion explores the ethical dimensions of using emotional evidence, as well as methods of neutralizing hostility in an audience.

# ANCILLARY PACKAGE

This edition of *Understanding Human Communication* contains a results-oriented package of **ancillary materials** that will make teaching more efficient and learning more effective. For students, each new copy of the text comes with a free **Student Resources Disc,** which includes a complete study guide to the text; dozens of fill-in-the-spaces activities that students can complete on a computer, then print out and turn in for feedback; self-tests; sample speech videos; and much more. The *Understanding Human Communication* **Web site** (www.oup.com/us/uhc) offers a wealth of resources including links to articles and websites on a variety of communication topics and viewing guides for feature films that illustrate how communication concepts appear in a variety of settings. For those wanting additional support, a brief **Student Success Manual** is available and is packed with tips that will show how to master the course material and improve study skills. The **Instructor's Manual** provides the largest, most comprehensive package of support of any text in its market. It includes a copy of the rewritten and expanded **test bank** (also provided to instructors on disc), as well as a printed version of all the quizzes and study materials that appear in the Student Resources Disc.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Finally, we thank our families for their good-natured tolerance and support of our efforts during the year we worked on *Understanding Human Communication*. In the end, we did it for you.

Ronald B. Adler
George Rodman

# UNDERSTANDING
# HUMAN COMMUNICATION

## CASE STUDY

You have been approached by a publishing company that is planning a book titled *About the Americans*. This guide is designed for travelers from other countries who will be visiting the United States, and who need to understand how Americans communicate.

The book will be a compilation of observations by a large number of people who have lived in the United States, both native-born Americans and visitors. The authors believe that insights of keen observers will reveal a great deal about how communication operates in this country.

The publishers have chosen you because you are a student who has systematically studied communication. They will pay handsomely if your observations show how the principles covered in your communication course operate in everyday life.

Use the activities and questions below to structure your observations. Give **specific examples** of communication in the United States to illustrate each of your points.

As you read the chapters in this unit, consider the following:

## CHAPTER 1

**1.** Describe an incident that illustrates how communication is a symbolic process.

**2.** Using your own experience, describe 2–3 examples of each type of communication (intrapersonal, dyadic/interpersonal, small group, public, and mass) in everyday life.

**3.** Discuss one or more typical communication transactions that aim at satisfying each type of need: physical, identity, social, and practical.

**4.** Use an incident from everyday life to illustrate the transactional process of communication, as described on pages 15–18.

**5.** Use the characteristics of competent communication (pages 18–24) to evaluate one transaction you have observed or experienced.

**6.** Show how avoiding common misconceptions about communication (pages 24–27) can make relationships more satisfying.

## CHAPTER 2

**1.** Describe a case where an American and someone from another country might have incompatible narratives.

**2.** Discuss how common perceptual tendencies (pages 36–39), situational factors (pages 39–41), and cultural differences (pages 41–43) have led to friction. How might greater empathy have helped the people involved communicate more smoothly?

**3.** Explain some of the factors (personal and cultural) that have helped shape your self-concept.

**4.** Using yourself or someone you know as an example, describe how the process of identity management operates during an average day. Discuss the ethics of presenting multiple identities.

## CHAPTER 3

**1.** Describe an incident illustrating how meanings reside in people, not words.

**2.** Recall incidents when (a) language shaped your attitudes, and (b) when your own choice of words reflected your attitudes.

**3.** Explain how the types of troublesome language described on pages 88–94 have caused problems in a situation you experienced or observed.

**4.** Based on your experience in U.S. culture, describe how gender and nongender variables described on pages 98–103 affect communication.

**5.** Give examples illustrating which communication styles described on pages 103–106 operate in mainstream U.S. culture.

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## AFTER STUDYING THE MATERIAL IN THIS CHAPTER . . .

### You should understand:

1. The working definition and characteristics of *communication*.
2. The types of communication covered in this book.
3. The needs satisfied by communication.
4. The characteristics of linear and transactional communication models.
5. The characteristics of competent communication.
6. Common misconceptions about communication.

### You should be able to:

1. Define *communication* and give specific examples of the various types of communication introduced in this chapter.
2. Describe the key needs you attempt to satisfy in your life by communicating.
3. Use the criteria in this chapter to identify the degree to which communication (yours or others') in a specific situation is competent and suggest ways of increasing the competence level.
4. Identify how misconceptions about communication can create problems and suggest how a more accurate analysis of the situations you describe can lead to better outcomes.

## CHAPTER 4

**1.** Describe situations from your own experience illustrating the listening misconceptions listed on pages 116–119.

**2.** Recall examples of at least three of the faulty listening behaviors described on pages 119–121.

**3.** Describe how a situation at work or school looks and sounds different depending on which of the personal listening styles (pages 126–127) was used.

**4.** Apply the guidelines in the second half of this chapter to three situations that require good listening: one informational, one critical, and one empathic.

## CHAPTER 5

**1.** Use the information in this Chapter to write a set of guidelines for newcomers to the United States on how nonverbal communication operates in this country. Pay special attention to unspoken rules governing various types of nonverbal communication: touch, voice, time, etc.



ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION