

Understanding Interpersonal Communication

MAKING CHOICES IN CHANGING TIMES



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Making Choices in Changing Times
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Here's what students and professors are saying about *Understanding Interpersonal Communication: Making Choices in Changing Times*

What students are saying:

"This book has given me a lot of insight into interpersonal communication. I feel that after reading this book I can communicate better because I have a knowledge of what [interpersonal communication] is. . . . I am better prepared to communicate with others after reading this book."

Molly C. Nipper, North Harris College

"The concepts and the topics in this text are excellent. [Studying this text] makes you more confident in your communication skills and [in] how to communicate with people [who] are new to you."

Alicia L. Stuart, Emporia State University

"It was full of useful information. It required me to learn in a way I didn't know I could."

Tyler Garhurst, Cuyamaca College

"[The authors] have a real way of relating the topic to everyday issues—it was really easy to understand."

Tiffany Jenkins, Cuyamaca College

"The text was simple to read because there wasn't a lot of difficult language used. There were a lot of examples and clear definitions."

Tiffany Boyer, Cuyamaca College

What instructors are saying:

"The [writing style] is one of the strongest [assets of] this text! [It] is easy to read and the language and examples relate very well to students. I love the . . . examples and equal emphasis on theory and skills offered in this text."

Leslie Maggard, McLennan Community College

"I think this text is quite impressive. From a student's perspective, I really believe that the style of writing, personal examples from the authors, inclusion of all types of diversity, and variety of examples will greatly appeal to the students. I appreciate the fact that it is written to address the interpersonal needs of the current student found in today's classroom. Many students are not communication majors, but are enrolled in other majors and professional programs; they find inclusion in this text and experience how interpersonal communication affects their lives."

William Price, Georgia Perimeter College

"The writing style is one of the book's greatest strengths. It truly has a conversational tone. Explanations are easy to understand but do not talk down to the students. The style engages the reader to continue reading and learning. I felt as if a very knowledgeable friend were talking to me. I was also impressed by how the author wove research, explanation, and examples together without losing the reader's interest."

Judith A. Vogel, Des Moines Area Community College

"The examples strike me as more realistic than those I read in many texts. I can't even tell for sure whether they're hypothetical or based on something that actually happened to acquaintances of the authors—which is a good thing."

Donnell King, Mississippi State Technical Community College

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*We dedicate this book to the thousands of students
 who teach us what interpersonal communication means
 and to those others—our family and friends—
 whose interactions with us make these lessons come to life.*



Preface

We wrote this text because we believe students should have the knowledge, skills, and motivation to communicate in multiple circumstances with a variety of different people. Today, more than ever, students are confronted with choices in communication. For instance, emerging technologies continually expand their options and choices—in addition to choosing to speak with others in person, they can choose to communicate via email, over videophone, with a text messenger, or via a blog. To be able to navigate this increasingly complex communication environment effectively, they need a well-developed knowledge base for making informed choices and improving their skills. We contend that when students enter their interpersonal communication classrooms, they bring with them many habits and beliefs about effective communication that they have acquired from their own experiences observing friends, families, and coworkers, and from being consumers of popular culture. However, students lack an understanding of the theory and research that animate and clarify these practices and beliefs. In other words, students simply rely too much on what they have seen and heard, with little understanding of theoretical explanations for communication processes and outcomes. Consequently, students frequently make communication choices with an insufficient knowledge base. Such decisions limit their potential, leaving them frustrated and dissatisfied.


It is our belief that one fundamental approach to learning about an interpersonal communication skill is to ground it in adequate theory and current knowledge about the skill. Although knowledge cannot completely guarantee that students are going to be happy with the outcome of every communication transaction, it does provide them with necessary and important analytical skills. In sum, we believe that theory informs skills and skills refine theory. As such, in *Understanding Interpersonal Communication* we intentionally integrate a theory-skill framework throughout each chapter. In this text, we move toward eliminating the false dichotomy between theory and skills. Additionally, we strive to demystify and clarify the intersection of theory and practice. In doing so, we hope to break down misguided and preconceived negative images of theory. Using a conversational tone, our text integrates research and theory in an inviting and engaging manner.

In addition, our approach to skill development provides a discussion of interpersonal skills and the behavioral choices students can make in order to become more effective communicators. We avoid “telling” students how to apply interpersonal skills to various situations. Rather, we provide a list of skills pertaining to the theory students read about in the chapter so students will be able to draw upon a sort of toolbox, or set of skills, that are specific and workable.

And finally, we understand that students come to the interpersonal communication course from a variety of life experiences. We worked, therefore, to make our writing accessible, avoiding clichés and using technical terms only when necessary to make a point, explaining their meanings as needed. We also made a conscious effort to use examples that reflect the diversity of interpersonal encounters. Thus, we include examples of interpersonal communication between teacher-student, physician-patient, painter-client, landlord-renter, politician-voter, clergy-layperson, retail clerk-customer, husband-wife, and friend-friend, among others.

Understanding Interpersonal Communication appeals to a diverse student population, presents scholarship and skills in a readable manner, and contains pedagog-





ical features that will not only sustain interest, but also make a difference in students' lives. The result of our efforts—this text—reflects our commitment to ensuring that students understand the importance of interpersonal communication in their own lives and in the lives of others.

Features of the Book

Our experience teaching this course over many years has prompted us to offer the following pedagogical approach and features. These features are intended first to appeal to students, then to help them better understand the concepts in each chapter and apply them in their own lives.

A Bridge between Theory and Skills

With a clear, accessible presentation of the intersection of theory and practice, *Understanding Interpersonal Communication* will empower your students with the knowledge they need to be skillful communicators in today's society.

In addition to **chapter goals** that provide students with a basic roadmap of the theory and skills that will be discussed in the chapter, each chapter begins with a **Case in Point** case study pertaining to an issue or topic in interpersonal communication discussed in the chapter. These cases are drawn from real-life situations identified by students in past interpersonal communication courses we have taught. For example, in Chapter 3, "Communication, Culture, and Identity," we begin with an example of a U.S. student who learns more about Mexican culture. In Chapter 5, "Effective Listening," we present a director of volunteers for a local political campaign whose listening skills are called into question by a supervisor. These case studies include people of diverse ages, backgrounds, and educational levels. Videotaped versions of many of these case studies and accompanying critical thinking questions are featured on the book's companion CD-ROM. Additionally, **Case in Point Revisited** review questions appear throughout each chapter, tying the Case in Point case study to the concepts discussed in that chapter.

Although each chapter discusses a variety of skills, a particular skill is highlighted and further discussed in the **Skill Spotlight** boxed feature. For example, in Chapter 7, "Communicating Nonverbally," we detail the skill of asking others to give us feedback about the clarity of our nonverbal communication. These spotlights are provided to help students explain at least one skill in sufficient detail and then practice it in their relationships with others. Each Skill Spotlight box also features a **Skills at Work** section that takes a quick look at how the skill can be applied to the workplace.

So that students can assess their own communication behaviors and attitudes, each chapter features a **Communication Assessment Test (CAT)** inventory. This feature provides students with communication instruments, such as a measure of communication apprehension or a quiz that will help students sharpen their vocabulary. For example, in Chapter 2, "Communication, Perception, and the Self," we include a "self-monitoring scale" quiz that asks students to consider the extent to which they actively think about and control their public behaviors and actions. These types of assessments allow students to evaluate their communication skills and take personal responsibility for skill development. We have found that students are also able to create their own assessments once they have read and understood

material. The CATs, then, can be used as an effective way for students to become empowered in their classes.

Each chapter ends with **Questions for Understanding**, review and discussion questions that allow students to check their understanding of the chapter material. At least one question per chapter pertains to the chapter-opening Case in Point feature. This question allows students to reconsider how the concepts in the case study can be approached after learning the material in the chapter. Students can answer these questions by working in small groups or on their own.

A Wealth of Choices

Once students have a strong base in theory and skills, they are then able to make informed choices in their interpersonal communication. Many of the features of this book highlight the types of choices available to students in today's changing and technologically advanced world.

To encourage students to think about the material in a personal way, each chapter includes a **Your Turn** journal activity. With this feature, each student is asked to think about a particular topic and write about it in a journal. For example, in Chapter 1, "Introduction to Interpersonal Communication," we ask students to write about the primary influences shaping their interpersonal communication. Our experiences show that journals are excellent outlets for students to share their perceptions and reactions in a way that is personal, reflective, and informative. The Your Turn activities are also featured in the book's student companion workbook.

The **Ethics & Choice** boxed feature appears in each chapter, raising ethical questions and allowing students to consider ethical implications of the key topics or concepts in each chapter. These boxes include examples of ethical dilemmas and critical-thinking questions that challenge students to apply the ethical systems explained in Chapter 1. For instance, in Chapter 11, "Technology and Interpersonal Communication," students are asked to think about the ethical issues associated with knowing that one of their best friends plagiarized a paper from the Internet. The Ethics & Choice feature asks students to delve into how their ethical systems have been formed, influenced, and how they relate to communication choices. Online interactive activities about these ethical dilemmas are featured on the book's companion website. These activities allow students to choose possible responses to the dilemma, and then reflect on the consequences their choice brings about.

As appropriate to the content, select chapters feature discussions of the **dark and bright sides of interpersonal communication**. These discussions touch on topics such as domestic abuse, empathy, and forgiveness. For example, Chapter 4, "Communication and Emotions," discusses the notion of *schadenfreude*, or taking pleasure in another's misfortune. These discussions enable students to see that interpersonal communication can be both helpful and harmful.

At the conclusion of each chapter, the **Choices** boxed feature provides a list of specific and workable skills pertaining to the theory students read about in the chapter. Additionally, each chapter features a section that discusses interpersonal skills and the behavior choices students can make in order to become more effective communicators.



An Approach that Advocates the Wise Use of Technology

Technology has increased our options and choices in communication. Technology such as email and videoconferencing affects who we speak to and how we speak to them in ways that are continually evolving. *Understanding Interpersonal Communication* shows students how they are influenced by technology and how they can use it to become more effective communicators.

This book includes a full chapter on technology's impact on interpersonal communication, **Chapter 11, "Technology and Interpersonal Communication."** We live in a time of unprecedented technological change. One new technology quickly replaces another, affecting our interactions with others. For example, online conversations are now commonplace among people of various races, ages, and cultures. Chapter 11 addresses this relatively new area of interpersonal communication. The chapter identifies and explains characteristics of communication technology, discusses the presentation of the self online and elements of electronic dialogues, explains how relationships function online, and discusses skills that help improve electronic discussions and relationships.

Included in each chapter, the **Facing Change** boxed feature addresses how social and technological changes affect our communication with one another. For instance, in The Facing Change feature for Chapter 2, "Communication, Perception, and the Self," we ask students to think about social changes and write about the perception and self-concept of a new immigrant. In other chapters this feature focuses on technological changes, such as how email, handheld organizers, pagers, and cell phones function in maintaining relationships with friends, family members, and co-workers. For example, in Chapter 9, "Communicating Power and Conflict," we ask students to write about how beepers, cell phones, email and other instant messaging devices might affect the process of an interpersonal conflict. Many Facing Change boxes also feature an accompanying CNN & Change video clip that further highlights the concept discussed in the Facing Change box. These video clips and accompanying critical thinking questions are featured on the book's companion CD-ROM.

In addition to emphasizing technology in the text, we also provide **thorough technology integration** and support for users of the text. **InfoTrac® College Edition exercises** found throughout the book make use of the InfoTrac College Edition database, a virtual library that can be accessed from student computers (see Resources for Students, below, for more information). Web-based **Interactive Activities** that enrich and reinforce chapter content are integrated into every chapter, taking learning beyond the printed page. These brief exercises and activities, highlighted by icons, are easily accessed on the book companion website via the CD-ROM.

Resources for Students

Understanding Interpersonal Communication features an outstanding array of supplements to assist in making this course as meaningful and effective as possible.

- **Understanding Interpersonal Communication CD-ROM** Designed to meet the demands of today's visual, multimedia learners, this CD-ROM is rich with powerful learning resources that will broaden and test your students' critical understanding of each chapter's material. Automatically packaged with every new copy of this text, this CD-ROM pro-

vides one-stop access to all of the text's multimedia resources. All students need to do to integrate their text and technology learning resources is load their CD-ROM—they will not have to fumble with long URLs and various passwords. With one simple click, students have access to video clips of the chapter-opening Case in Point scenarios, the CNN & Choice video clips, a direct link to InfoTrac College Edition, and a direct link to the text-specific book companion website.

—*Case in Point* scenarios, taken from the text, are brought to life on the CD-ROM. These scenarios include an interactive critical thinking and analysis section that students can complete and email to their instructors. Students can also compare their responses to the suggested responses of the authors.

—*CNN & Change* videos, featured in select *Facing Change* boxes throughout the text, are included on the CD-ROM and further highlight the role technology plays in interpersonal communication. These videos are accompanied by critical thinking and analysis questions that students can complete and email to their instructors. Students can also compare their responses to the suggested responses of the authors.

Icons throughout the book encourage students to watch the videos, complete the accompanying activities, and access the book's other technology resources.

- **Understanding Interpersonal Communication Book Companion Website** Students can link to the Understanding Interpersonal Communication book companion website through the text's companion CD-ROM for access to premium chapter-by-chapter content. Resources include practice chapter quizzes and a final exam; self-scoring Communication Assessment Test inventories; an interactive glossary that features games and flashcards; interactive Ethics & Choice activities; InfoTrac College Edition and Internet activities that enrich and reinforce chapter content; a comprehensive list of films, television programs, and songs relevant to each chapter; a Web bibliography featuring a full list of references for each chapter that students can access for further reading or as an aid in research; and personal contact information for the authors.
- **InfoTrac College Edition** Every new copy of the text is accompanied by four months of access to InfoTrac College Edition, the online library. This dynamic database allows students to further their research on interpersonal communication and find a wealth of articles of interest. InfoTrac College Edition puts cutting edge research and the latest headlines at your students' fingertips, offering more than 10 million articles from nearly 5,000 diverse sources, such as academic journals, newsletters, and up-to-the minute periodicals. The diverse range of content includes *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, *USA Today*, *Advertising Age*, *PR Week*, *Variety*, and thousands more. Plus, students now also gain instant access to critical-thinking and paperwriting tools through InfoWrite. InfoTrac College Edition exercises that help students explore critical topics and issues in interpersonal communication are integrated throughout the book and can be accessed at the book companion website.
- **Student Companion Workbook** This workbook provides numerous practical, hands-on activities that apply the concepts presented within the



text. The workbook contains the *Your Turn* journal activities featured in each chapter, as well as chapter outlines and goals, activities, and self-tests.

Resources for Instructors

Understanding Interpersonal Communication also features a full suite of resources for instructors. To evaluate any of these instructor or student resources, please contact your local Thomson Wadsworth representative for an examination copy.

- **Instructor's Resource Manual** This helpful manual includes syllabi and course outlines, chapter overviews, class-tested activities and exercises, transparency masters, and test items. The test items are also available electronically via ExamView® (see below).
- **Multimedia Manager for Understanding Interpersonal Communication** Invigorate your lectures with predesigned Microsoft® PowerPoint® presentations containing numerous images and text. Easily customized, you can modify the slides or add your own content in minutes to get a powerful, personalized presentation.
- **ExamView® Computerized Testing** Create, deliver, and customize tests and study guides (both print and online) in minutes with this easy-to-use assessment and tutorial system. ExamView offers both a *Quick Test Wizard* and an *Online Test Wizard* that guide you step by step through the process of creating tests, while its unique interface allows you to see the test you are creating on the screen exactly as it will print or display online. You can build tests of up to 250 questions using up to 12 question types. Using ExamView's complete word processing capabilities, you can enter an unlimited number of new questions or edit existing questions. For users in both Windows and Macintosh formats.
- **WebTutor™ ToolBox for WebCT and Blackboard** Preloaded with content and available free via access code when packaged with this text, WebTutor ToolBox pairs all the content of this text's rich book companion website with the sophisticated course management functionality of a WebCT or Blackboard product. You can assign materials (including online quizzes) and have the results flow automatically to your gradebook. ToolBox is ready to use as soon as you log on—or, you can customize its preloaded content by uploading images and other resources, adding web links, or creating your own practice materials. Students only have access to student resources on the website. Instructors can enter an access code for password-protected instructor resources. Contact your Thomson Wadsworth representative for ordering information.
- **InfoTrac College Edition Student Activities Workbook for Interpersonal Communication** by Lori Halverson-Wente. This workbook features extensive individual and groups activities, focusing on specific course topics that make use of InfoTrac College Edition. Also included are guidelines for instructors and students that describe how to maximize the use of this resource. This workbook can be bundled with this text.
- **Communication Scenarios for Critique and Analysis Videos** Communication concepts previously presented in the abstract come to life in these videos. Each offers a variety of situations that allow students to watch, listen to, and critique model communication scenarios. Video policy is based on adoption size; contact your Thomson Wadsworth representative for more information.

Acknowledgments

The impetus for writing this book rests primarily with our students. We begin our acknowledgements, therefore, by thanking the thousands of students we have taught over a combined 40-plus years of teaching interpersonal communication. The insights, themes, and examples we've included in this book reflect those students who have provided us inspiration throughout our careers.

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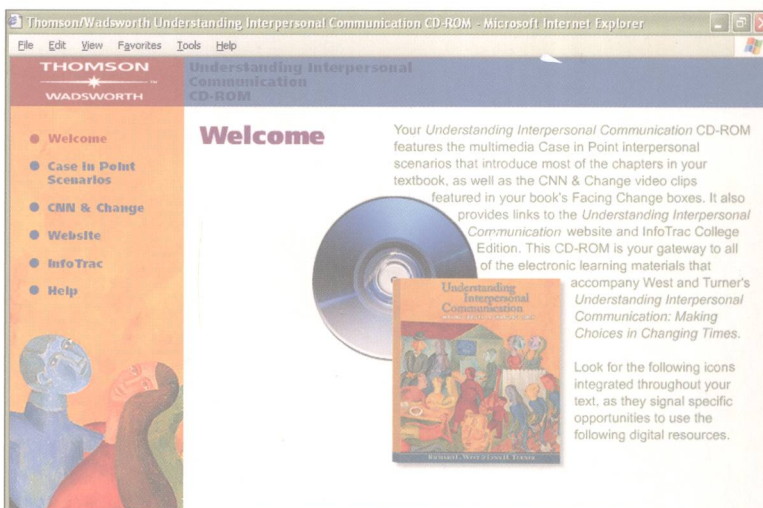
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