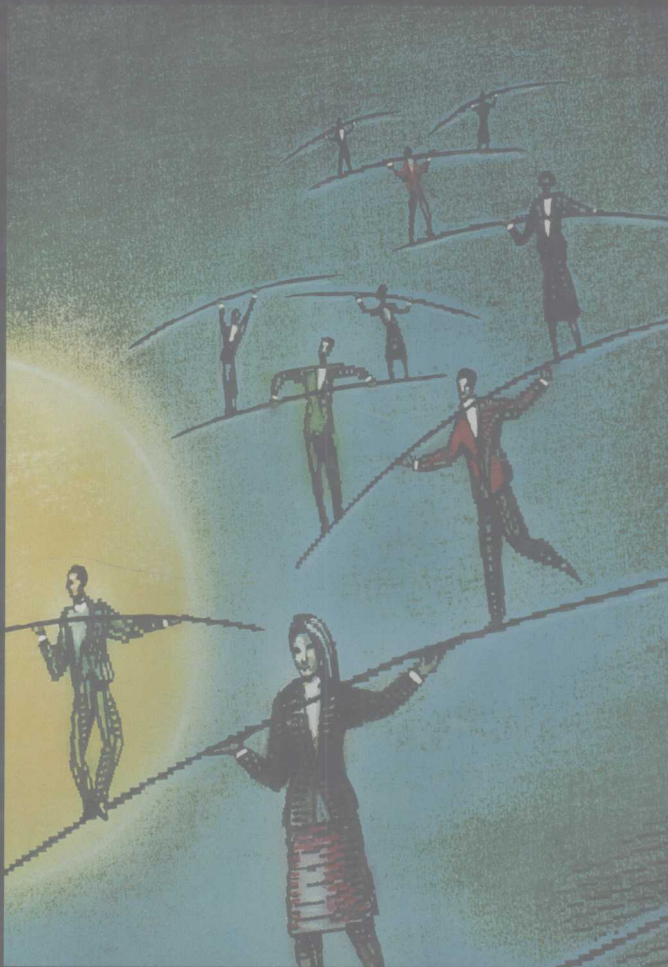
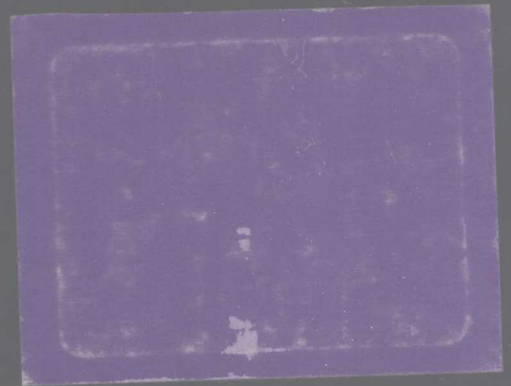


# ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

THIRD EDITION



Balancing  
Creativity and  
Constraint



Eric M. Eisenberg  
H. L. Goodall, Jr.

THIRD EDITION

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# Organizational Communication

## *Balancing Creativity and Constraint*

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# Preface

The success of this text has been a major source of gratification for both of us. The first edition received the 1994 Textbook and Academic Authors Association “Texty” award for excellence in communication, education, and the performing and visual arts. The second edition continued a cross-disciplinary conversation about the role of organizational communication studies in liberal education. The third edition of *Organizational Communication: Balancing Creativity and Constraint* has been thoroughly updated to include a more accessible writing style, coverage of communication in global organizations, and the impact of the latest technology on how people in organizations communicate. We are very proud that it is the best-selling textbook in the field.

A major reason for our success is that we have never lost sight of our goal of helping students bridge the gap between what they learn in school and what they experience at work. Toward this end, we emphasize balancing creativity and constraint, the ability to simultaneously consider the enabling and constraining aspects of communication. Striking this balance helps people to achieve worthwhile professional and personal goals. The central problem in being human is how to be individualistic and heroic (assert our creativity) and still belong to a group (respond to social and institutional constraints). Our model looks at this philosophically important question through the lens of everyday communication practices within the context of work.

Organizational communication has changed dramatically since the whole idea of organizations as bounded entities — the proverbial bricks and mortar — has become obsolete. This has happened largely because of improvements in communication technology and has great implications for how we live our lives. This new edition begins with this basic reality.

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## New to This Edition

- **Coverage of new technologies**, including discussions of the impact of e-commerce, Web-based technologies, computer networks, and voice and electronic mail on organizational communication and the effects on work processes and employees’ productivity and work life, as well as how e-mail and other technologies have changed the ways in which meetings are held and organizations are assembled.
- **A more accessible writing style**. While retaining the scholarship of the previous editions, each chapter has been redrafted, sentence by

sentence, for readability and clarity, and has been freshened with updated information and research support.

- **A global perspective** is found throughout the text, with special attention to managing cultural differences. Throughout, real-life international and multinational examples are used.
- **A new section — “A Field Guide to Studying Organizational Communication”** — is included in response to a call from students for help with their term papers and projects. This section describes a step-by-step process for planning, researching, participating in, and writing a qualitative account of an organization’s communication practices.

Readers familiar with the text will quickly note these modifications and additions. In keeping with reviewers’ and users’ suggestions, we have expanded the number of real-life examples, maintained (and increased the number of) our *What Would You Do?* sections (formerly “Focus on Ethics”) in every chapter, and added new case studies to complement the favorites of our reviewers. We have moved the “Questions for Review and Discussion” to the end of each chapter, where our readers felt it would be more useful to students. Overall, we feel we have successfully balanced the new material with the best of prior editions.

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## Overview of the Book

Chapter 1, “Communication and the Changing World of Work,” introduces students to organizational communication in the context of today’s global, intercultural, technological, strategic, and managerial developments. It also discusses how the diverse and at times virtual workplace of the twenty-first century affects the future of organizations and communication.

Chapter 2, “Defining Organizational Communication,” provides an easier-to-use guide to the four major theories of organizational communication, with an improved emphasis on our balancing creativity and constraint approach. We show how and why our approach is both more realistic and more useful than competing models.

Chapters 3 through 5, which cover the historical approaches to organizational communication, have been thoroughly rewritten to improve readability and updated with recent research studies. Chapter 3, “Three Early Perspectives on Organizations and Communication,” now includes more of a balanced discussion of scientific management, human relations, and human resources. Chapter 4, “The Systems Perspective on Organizations and Communication,” expands the earlier work of Karl Weick on sense-making models and Peter Senge and his associates on the learning organization with newer applications of key principles. Chapter 5, “Cultural Studies of Organizations and Communi-

cation,” continues our tradition of providing a clear discussion of this pivotal turn in theory-making and research and offers an expanded section on organizational narratives and storytelling.

Chapters 6 and 7, “Critical Approaches to Organizations and Communication” and “Postmodern Perspectives on Organizations and Communication,” include in-depth discussions of organizational power, the design of work, empowerment, intercultural communication, feminism, alternative organizations, e-commerce, and globalism. One of the key features of Chapter 7 is the use of the North American BMW plant to describe how postmodern theory translates into everyday organizational practices.

Chapter 8, “The Experience of Work,” features a discussion of the fastest-growing segment of the new global economy — free agents, outsourcers, entrepreneurs, and consultants — and of the socialization processes that many college graduates who enter the traditional workforce encounter.

Chapters 9 and 10, “Interpersonal Relationships and Organizational Communication” and “Communicating in Teams and Networks,” include new sections on overcoming obstacles to interpersonal communication and electronic networks in addition to expanded discussions of intercultural communication, organizational spirituality, gender and communication, and sexual harassment in the workplace.

Chapter 11, “Managing the Total Enterprise: Strategy, Human Resources, and Communication Technology,” focuses on the roles of competitive strategy, image building and repair, communication technology, and human resources in collectively constituting and steering the total organization. This chapter provides students with opportunities to draw on material throughout the text to put their newly acquired theoretical knowledge into practice.

Chapter 12, “The Future of Organizational Communication,” describes the major challenges that organizations and communicators are facing, and will continue to face, in the near future. Our discussion centers on the development of skills and knowledge, how computer technology and biotechnology affect both workers and consumers, and the role of scenario planning as a tool for thinking about and planning for the future.

The Appendix, “A Field Guide to Studying Organizational Communication,” is new for this edition, and provides students and instructors with a helpful step-by-step guide to conducting a qualitative study of an organization’s communication.

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## Acknowledgments

Textbooks are published with the authors’ names listed on the cover, but in every way publishing a textbook is a team effort. We are especially grateful for the strong

support this edition of *Organizational Communication: Balancing Creativity and Constraint* has received from Bedford/St. Martin's Press. In particular, we want to thank our Executive Editor for Communication, Patricia Rossi; Mark Paluch, our developmental editor; Jeannine Thibodeau, our associate editor; Douglas Bell, the senior editor for publishing services; and Nancy Benjamin at Books By Design. All of these fine professionals contributed to this project in ways that have made the third edition of this text the best book it could have been.

We also want to thank our colleagues and friends at other universities and colleges who reviewed the manuscript and offered insightful suggestions for improvement: Catherine Becker, Radford University; Mark J. Braun, Gustavus Adolphus College; Paige P. Edley, Bowling Green State University; Geoffrey Gurd, University of Ottawa; Marlene M. von Friedrichs-Fitzwater, California State University—Sacramento; Steve May, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Debra Mazloff, University of St. Thomas; Athena du Pré, Southeastern Louisiana University; William L. Robinson, Purdue University—Calumet; Deborah Smith Howell, University of Nebraska—Omaha; K. Philip Taylor, University of Central Florida; and Jennifer Jervis Tinghe, Xavier University.

In addition, we are personally and professionally indebted to a number of colleagues, students, and staff members for their support in this project: Pete Kellett, Elizabeth J. Natalle, Joyce Ferguson, Cris Davis, Amanda Gunn, and Janice Smith of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro; Beth Goodier at the University of South Florida; Patricia Riley at the University of Southern California; Patricia Geist at San Diego State University; Katherine Miller at Texas A&M University; Maria Cristina Gonzalez of the University of Creation Spirituality; Alexandra Murphy of DePaul University; Carl Lovitt of Penn State Berks-Lehigh Valley; and Bruce Hyde at St. Cloud State University.

Finally, we could not have written this edition without the enthusiastic and loving support of members of our immediate families — Lori Roscoe, Evan and Joel Eisenberg, and Sandra and Nic Goodall — as well as of grandparents (especially Clarence and Martha Bray), siblings, and close friends. As always, we are grateful to those individuals who, despite the intellectual, social, political, economic, and spiritual turmoil of our time, remain committed to continuing the dialogue.

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## About the Authors

**Eric M. Eisenberg** first learned about the field of Communication from his father, Abne Eisenberg, a Communication Professor at Queens College. Abne enlisted Eric's help in grading exams and papers, and over the next fifteen years, despite numerous detours (e.g., microbiology, poetry, and pre-med), Eric kept returning to his first love. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a bachelor's degree in Communication from Rutgers University, having survived and at times even enjoyed a year-long simulation of a media marketplace called INTERACT.

When selecting graduate schools, Eisenberg went in search of quality training in communication research methods to complement his fine education in communication theory at Rutgers. Michigan State University was purported to be a methodological Mecca, so Eisenberg packed up his old yellow Ford Fairlane 500 (with no heater!) and headed west. It was at MSU that he discovered that the research that interested him most had a decidedly practical bent. He received his master's degree in Communication working with Dr. Cassandra Book on an experiment evaluating the most effective uses of simulations and games in the classroom. Dr. Book was a superb mentor and master teacher who encouraged Eisenberg to complete a second master's degree in Education in 1980. Book also gave him his first taste of organizational research — they conducted a needs assessment and communication network analysis of the American Dietetic Association. He got rid of the Ford the first winter in Michigan.

Having been raised in a household with no links to corporate America, Eisenberg was intrigued by the possibility of learning about the “real world” of organizational communication. Determined to become fluent in both management and communication, and under the expert guidance of Dr. Peter Monge, he immersed himself in management theory and practice, publishing work on organizational communication networks and superior-subordinate communication. Eisenberg received his doctorate in Communication from Michigan State University in 1982. He now owned two suits.

The city boy had learned to love the Midwest, but it was time to head east again. Intrigued by the original and expansive writings of Dr. Art Bochner (who had spent a fortuitous semester at MSU), Eisenberg took his first academic position in the Department of Speech at Temple University in Philadelphia. It was there that he wrote his award-winning paper on the strategic uses of ambiguity in organizations, and with the support of his colleagues at Temple, turned his attention more closely to the uses of language and symbols in organizational life. He stayed connected to business practice by launching and directing the Applied Communication master's program at Temple and teaching at the downtown campus. During this period, he married Lori Roscoe (whom he had met at Michigan State) and they started building a life together.



In 1984, Eisenberg left Philadelphia to join the Communication faculty at the University of Southern California. Over the next decade, he was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure, published numerous studies of organizational communication and culture, and received recognition as University Scholar and Outstanding Teacher. His paper "Jamming: Transcendence through Organizing" received the NCA research award for the best publication in organizational communication in 1990. At the same time, Eisenberg worked closely with Dr. Patricia Riley on numerous grants and contracts aimed at applying cutting-edge knowledge about communication to organizational practice across a variety of industries (e.g., aerospace, health care, electronics, manufacturing). Meanwhile, Evan and Joel were born at Good Samaritan Hospital in downtown L.A. Eisenberg published his bittersweet poems from this period in a collection called *Fire and Ice: Fiction as Social Research* (A. and S. Banks, ed.).

USC was a world-class institution, but Los Angeles was a hard place to raise a family. Eisenberg took a position as Full Professor at the University of South Florida in 1994, staying true to his lifelong pledge to remain within driving distance of a Disney amusement park. He was attracted to USF for its extraordinary faculty, the energy of a young school with a new doctoral program in Communication, and his old friend Art Bochner. Immediately he knew he had found his home — an eccentric but winning department where experience and philosophy were privileged over theory and method. More publications followed, including his first textbook (this one!) and other strange forays into the world of communication and organizational change.

Once in Florida, Eisenberg's consulting work shifted toward the hospitality and health care industries. He is currently writing an article for the *Journal of Communication* about the role of communication in the development of identity, which will be expanded into a book next year. In 1996, Eisenberg was elected Chair of the Department of Communication at USF, and is currently serving a five-year term. In 2000, his wife received a doctorate in Aging Studies with an emphasis on the morality of physician-assisted suicide. Eisenberg and his family love the Tampa Bay area and he is grateful for the opportunities to teach and learn from exceptional people whenever and wherever he finds them.

**Harold Lloyd (Bud) Goodall, Jr.** has been both a subject and a student of organizations since his birth, in King's Daughters Hospital, in Martinsburg, West Virginia, in 1952. Reared in a traditional family; educated in public and private schools and universities; employed by large and small businesses; participant and volunteer in community activities and church-sponsored events; and the owner of a publishing house and partner in a consulting firm — all of these organizational experiences have shaped his approach to studying, writing about, and living his many and varied organizational lives.

He first became interested in researching and writing about organizational communication while a new faculty member at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. As a resident "communication specialist," he was asked to develop

training sessions in “effective communication” for scientific and engineering firms that supported NASA’s “Space Shuttle” and the federal government’s “Star Wars” project. Later, as his interest in organizations grew from training to consulting, and his scholarly interests shifted from traditional social science to interpretive forms of inquiry, he applied detective methods to various high-technology firms and government agencies. These interpretive methods included his going undercover in the organizations to experience firsthand the lives that were lived there. The result of those years of study and writing were captured in his first two organizational ethnographies, *Casing a Promised Land: The Autobiography of an Organizational Detective as Cultural Ethnographer* (1989), and *Living in the Rock n Roll Mystery: Reading Context, Self, and Others as Clues* (1991).

Goodall received his B.A. from Shepherd College in 1973, his M.A. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1974, and his doctorate in Speech Communication from Pennsylvania State University in 1980. He has taught at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, the University of Utah, Clemson University, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. In three of his academic positions — UAH, Clemson, and UNCG — he applied his understanding of organizational and learning theories to create new communication departments and curricula in which vision, mission, values, and course work are strategically aligned and students are better served. Additionally, he is a partner in a consulting firm that specializes in transforming schools and organizations to better serve their communities. His work in the academic community was honored with the Gerald M. Phillips award for mentoring by the American Communication Association.

Goodall’s primary scholarly mission has been to change the way texts about organizations and communication are written in an effort to make them more accessible, more representative of everyday life, and more creatively engaging. His ethnographies have received laudatory reviews and awards from both academic and nonacademic sources, and over two hundred colleges and universities worldwide have adopted his textbooks. He has been consistently featured in the popular press and media from coast to coast for his trade books. Overall, he is the author or co-author of eighteen textbook, trade, and scholarly volumes and over one hundred journal articles, book chapters, and scholarly presentations. He is listed in *Contemporary Authors*, *Dictionary of American Scholars*, and *Who’s Who International*.

“Dr. Bud” is married to Sandra Goodall, who received her advanced training in communication at the University of Utah. She is a private organizational consultant and Feng Shui master with a passion for organizing workplaces and home spaces as sources of balance and harmony in people’s lives. Together they have a son, Nicolas Saylor Goodall, who, although not yet a teenager, already aspires to a life full of rock n roll, tennis, and rocket science. They make their home in the Greensboro area, where they have been blessed with many good friends, colleagues, and neighbors. All of these good people share with them stories of lives lived in organizations and families, and serve as constant reminders that finding the necessary balance is both a life goal and a daily challenge.

# Organizational Communication

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