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Interpersonal Communication

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Preface

TO THE INSTRUCTOR

Goals and Rationale. This fourth edition of *Interpersonal Communication* retains the primary goal of previous editions: *to help students achieve interpersonal competence in an increasingly complex social world, a world that is rooted in shared cultural norms and yet challenged by new modes of thought and action.* Managing interpersonal interactions in such a world is not easy. At the very least, it demands understanding what is universal in the process of communication as well as sensitivity to and appreciation for the way situated contexts affect performance. We have tried to seek a balance between discussing basic principles and examining how these principles play out in actual interaction.

As in previous editions, we built our discussion around a model of communicative competence, emphasizing the abilities and understandings individual communicators must have in order to create and maintain rewarding relationships. We believe the model is useful not only because it provides structure and unity to our discussion, but also because it helps us focus on a question that is important to our students: What can I do to become a better communicator? At the same time, we recognize that competence models, because they situate communication in individual communicators, often overlook the fact that communication is relational. We have therefore tried, both in the explication of our model and throughout the text, to emphasize the fact that communication takes

place within relationships and that relationships shape and change us in subtle ways.

Throughout the text you will find boxes that focus on interesting and unusual applications of communication principles. Drawn from anthropology, ethnology, history, psychology, popular culture, and the like, they show the connections between our field of study and other disciplines in the humanities and sciences. We've included them not only because they provide nonobvious examples of communication contexts, but also because they demonstrate how the material students learn in one class is enriched by what they learn in others.

At the end of each chapter, you will find a section devoted to enhancing communication skills. This section offers practical ways to put the content of the chapter to work. The end-of-the-chapter section, "Process to Performance," also emphasizes applications by providing discussion questions, observational assignments, and classroom exercises. An *Instructor's Manual* provides review questions, test items, additional classroom activities, and handouts. We hope you will find this material helpful in the classroom.

Additions to the Fourth Edition. In preparing this edition, we have put most of our effort into revising two chapters: Chapter 2, on interpersonal communication, and Chapter 8, on self competence. In both cases, we have updated research and theory. In Chapter 2 we place greater

emphasis on ways in which relationships transform us. Our goal is to show students that whenever people communicate interpersonally, there are three parties present: the two individuals and their relationship. Chapter 8 has also been streamlined. We focus on five different approaches to examining the self-concept in addition to our previous examination of how the self-concept affects interpersonal communication behavior.

The remainder of our revisions consists of minor attempts to update research and make the text flow more smoothly. All in all, the revisions we have made to this edition do not demand large changes on the part of the instructor. Rather, we think they will make the instructor's task easier.

TO THE STUDENT

We hope that reading this book will open your eyes to the new world of interaction. Although you've communicated all your life, you've probably never really *seen* communication. Most people don't take time to observe and analyze familiar everyday activities. When they do, often they are amazed at the richness and complexity they find. We believe that after reading this book, you will never again dismiss communication as uninteresting or commonplace. You'll have the tools that will allow you to observe communication in context and increase your control of interpersonal interactions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are indebted to those who have reviewed this and previous editions of *Interpersonal Communication*. We believe (and readily admit our bias) that each edition has been improved in terms of both the comprehensive nature of its

content and the arrangements of ideas and materials. Our reviewers are largely responsible for those improvements. Over the years, we have benefited from the insights of the following scholars and teachers to whom we give our heartfelt thanks:

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Sarah Trenholm

Arthur Jensen

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