

# Preface

**O**ne student commented, anonymously, on an earlier edition of *In the Company of Others* that this is a textbook that “gets real.” I consider that a supreme compliment. Too often mass-market books, and some textbooks, on human communication offer chirpy homilies encouraging readers to get along with others, be cooperative, improve self-esteem, listen intently, and the like. These are agreeable and worthwhile sentiments. Nevertheless, readers can be forgiven if they find themselves perplexed by how to accomplish getting along, being cooperative, enhancing self-esteem, listening well, and other admirable suggestions. When such books offer advice or a step-by-step plan, these are rarely given credibility by supporting research. My own preference, both as a teacher and as a textbook author, is to provide detailed practical ways, *supported by abundant research*, to address the myriad communication challenges each of us face in our complex lives. This “getting real” approach means that I embrace controversy and I look for insights, explanations, and practical solutions revealed by voluminous research that addresses issues uppermost in students’ minds. If little had changed in this regard since the third edition of this text was published, I would feel content to leave well enough alone. Much has changed in our increasingly techno-centered world, and much has been learned in the interim to help us meet the new challenges. So I enthusiastically invite you to explore with me the ever-fascinating, ubiquitous, and preeminent human activity, communication, in its many modern manifestations.

## Distinguishing Features

While covering all the standard topics in substantial detail, remaining faithful to the core material almost all instructors agree is essential (verbal and nonverbal communication, perception, listening, conflict management, small-group processes, public speaking, and so forth), *In the Company of Others* differs from other texts in significant ways. Here are the main distinguishing features.

### Communication Competence Model: A Foundation for Students

The communication competence model is one of our discipline’s unique contributions to understanding and improving human behavior. A premise of this book is that communication competence, whether in the arena of interpersonal relations, small-group work, public speaking, or communication technology, is critical to student success and achievement. The five components of the model—knowledge, skill, sensitivity, commitment, and ethics—for achieving communication effectiveness and appropriateness underscore the complexity of the communication process and provide direction and guidance for students. The model is integrated throughout the text, not merely discussed in the first chapter and then dropped entirely or mentioned only briefly in later chapters. Communication competence icons appear in margins throughout the text to highlight the pervasive influence of this model on material presented in every chapter. Most topics and issues in the text, including perception of self and others, intercultural and gender communication, language use, listening, transacting power, managing conflict, and using communication technologies, are analyzed from the model’s perspective. In addition, “Developing Communication Competence” boxes are included in each chapter to help students improve their communication.

### Cooperation: A Recurring Theme

Cooperation is a recurring theme of this book. One of the great potential contributions of the communication discipline is that not only can we discuss cooperation theoretically, but we can also provide specific, concrete advice on how to structure human transactions so cooperation can become a reality. Many textbooks in several disciplines pay lip service to the need for human cooperation, but they are noticeably devoid of informed, research supported suggestions regarding how to make it happen. This does little more than frustrate students who are looking for practical guidance on working collaboratively. *In the Company of Others* thoroughly addresses the issue of cooperation in a variety of communication contexts. This book is based on the assumption that cooperation should be embraced, nurtured, and cultivated.

### Integration of Gender and Culture

Gender and culture are important themes because we live in a world of increasing diversity. *In the Company of Others* treats gender and culture as integral parts of the overall discussion of communication. Gender receives special attention early in the text, and culture and gender are the main subjects of Chapter 3. This material is thoroughly integrated in subsequent chapters. Topics related to gender and culture include cultural differences in perception and nonverbal meanings, the role of gender and culture in powerful/powerless language, cross-cultural friendships and romantic relationships, gender and cultural bias in the workplace, the effects of communication technologies on cultural transactions, leadership and the glass ceiling in groups, and many others.

### A Fresh Look at Communication Technologies

No one can doubt the enormous impact communication technologies are having on our lives. How we cope with these technologies and the huge changes they bring is a vital issue. Technological changes and advances are addressed in substantial detail throughout the text, but particular emphasis is given to the influence of technologies on social relationships (see especially Chapter 8). *In the Company of Others* provides the most extensive coverage of technology and its impact on our communication of any textbook on the market. Subjects include social online networks, cyberlove and cyberdating, e-dumping, text messaging and language, electronic technology and information overload, cyberaddiction,

cyberconflicts, virtual groups, cell phone and online etiquette, Wikipedia, and Internet research and misinformation, among others.

## **Emphasis on Power**

Power is inherent in every human transaction. It is perplexing that many textbooks give so little attention to the integral role power plays in all human relationships. The communication discipline has many valuable insights to offer on this important subject that require more than perfunctory, obligatory mention. Chapter 7 gives special focus and detailed analysis to the subject of power in relationships, and later chapters include additional discussions and applications. Such topics as the effects of power imbalances in relationships, sexual harassment in the workplace, sources of personal power, strategies for transacting power competently and cooperatively, and ways to empower ourselves and others are addressed.

## **Focus on Critical Thinking**

Asking students to think critically and to determine which ideas and conclusions make sense may strike some students as promoting closed-mindedness. “Shouldn’t all ideas be given an equal hearing?” Chapter 6 explores skepticism and the probability model like no other textbook, discussing the issue of open- and closed-mindedness in the process. Open-mindedness is explained as following where the evidence and reasoning lead, while closed-mindedness is accepting or rejecting an idea or conclusion despite what the evidence and reasoning suggest. Chapters 12, 13, 14, and 15 offer further coverage of critical thinking, with a focus on using sound reasoning and concrete evidence to build both informative and persuasive speeches. The “Focus on Controversy” boxes in every chapter also encourage critical thinking from student readers about current issues.

## **“Focus on Controversy” Boxes**

Communication theory separated from the realities of a complex and not always pleasant world can seem sadly irrelevant to students faced with vexing problems. “Getting real” means to me that embracing a discussion of the tough realities of our challenging social relationships in a frenetic, hypercompetitive world has direct relevance to students’ lives. Addressing important controversies directly can provide significant opportunities for student learning. The aim is to show students how to weigh evidence and draw conclusions supported by research. Examples of topics include the ethics of hypercompetitiveness, the issue of absolute honesty in relationships, excessive self-esteem, gender and relationship violence, verbal obscenity, texting as language, and plagiarism of public speeches. Every controversy receives a balanced treatment. Conclusions are drawn and thought-provoking questions are posed. Treatment of relevant controversies will certainly spark interesting discussion in the classroom and, more importantly, trigger critical thinking from students.

## **Extensive Treatment of Speech Anxiety and Attention Strategies**

*In the Company of Others* provides the most extensive treatment of speech anxiety of any human-communication textbook. Speech anxiety is the most important concern on most students’ minds when they are told that giving speeches will be a required activity in class. Also, no hybrid textbook on communication covers attention strategies as thoroughly as *In the Company of Others*. Let’s face facts: no one wants to listen to boring speeches and no one wants to present a speech that puts the audience in a stupor. Attention strategies are a vital part of an effective speech.

## **Carefully Composed Model Speeches**

A major concern I had with general communication textbooks before I wrote *In the Company of Others* was the discrepancy between text descriptions and actual models of informative and persuasive speeches. Often the model speech even contradicted advice provided in the main text. Model informative and persuasive speeches have been carefully composed to illustrate the advice offered in the text.

## **Readability**

Samuel Johnson’s comment, “What is written without effort is in general read without pleasure,” guided the writing of this textbook. Readability is a vital concern to me. Textbooks should not induce a coma, although it is understandable why some might cause eyelids to slam shut. Textbooks are not meant to read like the latest Stephen King novel, but they don’t need to be a horror by reading like an instruction manual for installing and setting up your new flat-screen TV. Similarly, an overly dense, theoretical text written in technical language can impede clarity and understanding for students and create the kind of frustration many people experience when reading manuals for the latest computer software. Consequently, I searched in obvious and not-so-obvious places for the precise example, the amusing illustration, the poignant event, and the dramatic instance to engage readers, enhance enjoyment, and improve clarity. Colorful language and lively metaphors are sprinkled throughout the text to provide vividness. Humor is plentiful.

# New in this Edition

Much has changed for this fourth edition. These changes include the following:

1. The entire text has been thoroughly, meticulously updated. This updating includes:
  - a. Almost 500 new references have been added. There are now more than 1,100 references that are 21st-century citations (2000–2011), which is more than half of the total.
  - b. Dozens of new studies, surveys, and statistics on technology and social media have been included throughout the text.
  - c. Hundreds of new examples, stories, jokes, and anecdotes have been added so material is contemporary, resonates with readers, and sparks reader interest.
  - d. Many new photos, cartoons, and graphics have been added or have replaced previous illustrations.
  - e. Model informative and persuasive speeches have been thoroughly updated with more current research and statistics included, and the entire speeches have been edited for concision.
  
2. Significant organizational changes have been made.
  - a. Most chapter openings have been shortened substantially to provide crisper introductions.
  - b. Material previously included in lengthy openings has been placed in new segments within the main chapter. Examples of new segments include the power of language (Chapter 4), power of nonverbal communication (Chapter 5), and significance of listening (Chapter 6).
  - c. Reorganized material on communication climate in Chapter 1
  - d. Reorganized section on definitions of sex and gender and section on self-disclosure in Chapter 3.
  - e. Moved sections on language and thinking, framing, and labeling to new section on power of language in Chapter 4.
  - e. Material on group synergy and negative synergy has been moved from Chapter 10 to Chapter 11 to fit more appropriately.
  - f. Material on leadership in groups in Chapter 10 has been reorganized.
  - g. Reorganized section on developing arguments in Chapter 12.
  - h. Reorganized section on persuasive strategies in Chapter 15.
  - i. Numerous headings and subheadings have been changed or added throughout the text for greater clarity.
  
3. New material has been added to each chapter.
  - a. **Chapter 1:** Added research and discussion of social networking and small talk and the effects of constant access from electronic technologies. Also added new material on breaking up electronically (e-dumping), and the inappropriateness of texting abbreviations in student-teacher communication and the worst communication blunders made by those interviewing for jobs.
  - b. **Chapter 2:** Research and examples of selective attention and texting with its dangers identified have been added. The dangers of social networking sites and self-disclosure also have been added. Research on how and why the negativity bias is built into our brains is also discussed.
  - c. **Chapter 3:** New, updated material has been added on gender differences in communication.
  - d. **Chapter 4:** New section on language of abuse and exclusion has been added, and a new section on language and identity has been included.
  - e. **Chapter 5:** A new chapter opening has been constructed. New material on deception detection also appears. Section on tattooing has been extended with updates statistics and discussion. Rules of casual attire at work have been updated and discussed. Recent research on the importance of touch communication has been included and discussed. Recent research on gated communities has also been added.
  - f. **Chapter 6:** Opening is entirely new. New research on the importance of listening has been added and discussed. Segments on information overload and the relationship between blogging sites and political true belief have been added.
  - g. **Chapter 7:** Research on high-power individuals communicating like sociopaths is reviewed. New material on replications of the Milgram obedience studies has also been included.
  - h. **Chapter 8:** Research on the fragility of relationships has been updated and discussed. Section on primary reasons for forming relationships has been added. New material on "praise first, then describe" has also been added to section on defensive versus supportive communication. More applications to friendships and workplace relationships have been added to the chapter. New material on "mate poaching" and relationship deterioration also appears in the chapter. Lengthy section on technology and social relationships has been extended and thoroughly updated with an added emphasis on workplace relationships and telecommuting challenges and relationships. Section on online romance has been revised.
  - i. **Chapter 9:** New research on conflict between doctors and nurses and communication styles of conflict management has been added. Research on anger management in the workplace also appears in this chapter. A new section on workplace bullying has been included.

- j. **Chapter 10:** New chapter opening has been written. New section on the "rule of seven" is included in discussion of group size. New research on binge drinking and conformity to norms has been included.
  - k. **Chapter 11:** There is a new chapter opening. New research on "bad apples" in groups is included. Material on virtual groups has been revised.
  - l. **Chapter 12:** Opening has been revised. Recent research on generation gaps and audience analysis has been included. Using the Internet for speech research has been revised.
  - m. **Chapter 13:** There is a new opening for section on speech anxiety. Recent research on using unpleasant examples to gain attention also is discussed in this chapter.
  - n. **Chapter 14:** Expanded discussion of narratives, telling stories, is included with a new section on narrative tips. There is greater emphasis on technology and use of visual aids .
  - o. **Chapter 15:** There is a new opening for the persuasive speaking strategies section. New section on anger appeals as a persuasive strategy has been added. Ethics and emotional appeals section has been further developed.
  - p. **Appendix A-2:** A discussion of speeches for special occasions has been added as a second appendix.
4. New theory has been included, such as:
    - a. Channel richness theory appears in Chapter 1
    - b. Attachment theory appears in Chapter 8.
    - c. Similarity attraction theory appears in Chapter 8.
    - d. Exchange theory also appears in Chapter 8.
    - e. Anger activism model appears in Chapter 15
  5. New boxed material has been added. For example,
    - a. "The Language of Texting" (Chapter 4)
    - b. "The Uncritical Inference Test" (Chapter 4)
    - c. "Reactions to Defensive and Supportive Communication" (Chapter 7),
    - d. "What Is Your Leadership Style Preference?"
    - e. "Are You a Difficult Group member"
    - f. "Social Loafing: A Self-Assessment"
  6. Some boxed material has been deleted, such as "Aping Language" and "Presidential Verbal Goofs" because the topics have become shopworn.
  7. The very popular Film School segment at the end of every chapter identifies carefully selected movies on DVD that illustrate key concepts. Instead of doing the work for students by analyzing each film and applying it to chapter material, I have asked students to do this by answering critical-thinking questions. More current films have been added to most chapter lists.

## Organization of the Text

*In the Company of Others* is divided into four segments. First, Chapters 1–6 lay the groundwork for the rest of the book. Subjects include the communication competence model, the role of perception in human transactions, intercultural and gender communication, the use and misuse of language, nonverbal communication, and the listening process. Each of these subjects crosses into every arena of communication. Second, Chapters 7–9 on interpersonal communication discuss power in communication transactions, interpersonal dialectics, strategies for making relationships work, and conflict management techniques. Third, Chapters 10 and 11 on group communication explain the anatomy of small groups, team building, and teamwork in groups and organizations. Fourth, Chapters 12–15 on public speaking address preparing public speeches, presenting a speech to an audience, and constructing an effective informative or persuasive speech.

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## About the Author

J. Dan Rothwell is chair of the communication studies department at Cabrillo College. He has a BA in American history from the University of Portland (Oregon), an MA in rhetoric and public address, and a PhD in communication theory and social influence. His MA and PhD are both from the University of Oregon. He has authored four other books: *In Mixed Company: Communication in Small Groups and Teams*, *Telling It Like It Isn't: Language Misuse and Malpractice*, (with James Costigan) *Interpersonal Communication: Influences and Alternatives*, and *Practically Speaking*, a public speaking text that is in the finishing stages of production with Oxford University press. During his extensive teaching career, Dr. Rothwell has received numerous teaching awards, including most recently: the 2011 National Communication Association "Community College Educator of the Year" award; 2010 Ernest L. Boyer International Award for Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and Technology; and the 2010 Cabrillo College "Innovative Teacher of the Year" award.

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