Communication for College, Career, and Civic Life

COMMUNICATION FOR COLLEGE, CAREER, AND CIVIC LIFE

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Contents

1. What is Communication? 1
    - *Communication Perspective #1: Strategies-Goals Model* 2
    - *Communication Perspective #2: Social Construction Model* 4
    - *Communication Perspective #3: Power and Hegemony Model* 7
    - *Communication Studies Major/Minor: Ready for College, Career and Civic Life* 9
2. Purpose, Situation, and Public Speaking 13
    - *Performative Speaking* 15
    - *Informative Speaking* 18
    - *Persuasive Speaking* 20
    - *Conclusion* 23
3. Audience Analysis and Listening 24
    - *Audience Analysis* 25
    - *Listening* 30
    - *Conclusion* 34
4. Storytelling and Public Speaking 35
    - *What is a Story and Why do Stories Matter?* 36
    - *Dramatic Structures and Story Arcs* 37
    - *How to Tell a Captivating Story* 39
    - *Conclusion* 41
5. Vocal Delivery, Physicality, and Managing Anxiety 42
    - *Vocal Qualities* 43
    - *Physicality* 46
    - *Managing Anxiety* 49
    - *Conclusion* 52
6. Identity, Culture, and Communication 53
    - *Identity/Culture as Demographics* 54
    - *Identity/Culture as Social Constructions* 58
    - *Identity/Culture as Hegemony* 61
    - *Conclusion* 65

7. Informative Speaking 66
What is Informative Speaking? 66
Choosing an Informative Topic 67
Declaring Your Informative Goal 68
Informative Speaking Strategies 69
Conclusion 72
8. Choosing Topics and Gathering Information 73
Choosing a Topic 74
Search Strategies 75
Types of Sources 78
Conclusion 82
9. Media and Information Literacy 83
Vetting Sources 84
Reading Journal Articles 88
Verbal and In-Text Ways to Cite Sources 90
Conclusion 94
10. Organizing Presentations 95
Organizing the Body of Your Speech 95
Other Things to Consider 100
Conclusion 102
11. Introductions, Conclusions, and Transitions 103
Introductions 104
Conclusions 107
Conclusion 109
12. Outlining 110
Draft Outlines 110
Full Sentence Outlines 111
Presentational Outlines 112
Conclusion 113
13. Presentational Aids 118
Types of Presentation Aids 119
Conclusion 122
14. Persuasive Speaking and Language 123
Persuasion and the Power of Language 125
Conclusion 128

15. Ethos 129
Ethos 130
Establishing Your Credibility 131
Two Other Ways to Establish Credibility 133
Judging Ethos 134
Conclusion 134
16. Logos 136
The Toulmin Model 136
Deductive and Inductive Arguments 138
Conclusion 141
17. Pathos 142
Pathos 142
Using Pathos 144
Conclusion 146
18. Leadership, Teamwork, and Collaboration 148
Collaborative Teamwork 149
Leadership and Teamwork 151
Conclusion 153
19. Digital Public Speaking Skills and Delivery 154
Consider the Context: Synchronous and Asynchronous Public Speaking 155
Digital Public Speaking and Delivery 156
Before You Start 158
Shooting Video Footage 160
Editing Video/Sound Footage 161
Tips for Video Engagement 162
Conclusion 163

Bibliography 165
Peer Review Statement 171

Chapter 1

What is Communication?

> *There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says "Morning, boys. How's the water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes "What the hell is water?"*
>
> *– David Foster Wallace, 2005 Commencement Address*

Much like the water in Foster's story, communication surrounds us and is often invisible as an intentional process. As a result, we often don't think of needing coursework or a degree in communication studies to become a better communicator; instead, we think plenty of people have been communicating since they uttered their first "mama" or "dada" and have only gotten more proficient over the years. And, if we do need instruction about communication, then we only need it for special types of speaking, such as writing or giving speeches. As Shakespeare said "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet" and, if that's true, then using *this* word instead of *that* word isn't that big of a deal, right?

Imagine, if you will, your wedding day. You're dressed in your finest attire, your families and friends are all present, and the place of worship is filled with laughter, lights, and the smell of flowers. You've both walked down the aisle, and stand before the assembled crowd, and are asked that age-old question, "Do you take this person to be your lawfully-wedded spouse? Do you promise to love and cherish them, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, for richer for poorer, for better for worse, and forsaking all others, keep yourself only unto them, for so long as you both shall live?" And you take a deep breath, hold the room in your gaze and reply, "Sure."

Now, in the strictest sense, this reply absolutely works as an affirmative to the question. However, we venture to say that this type of answer will probably result in the world's shortest marriage—or at least, create a very contentious start with your partner. Communication is a layered phenomenon; that is, it fulfills a variety of social, cultural, and interpersonal goals even as it seeks to convey information, persuade others to your cause, or motivate them to do something. The complexity of communication lies in being able to develop a wide set of communication **tools, strategies, and processes** to deal with the expected (e.g., getting asked if you wish to marry someone at a wedding ceremony) and the unexpected (e.g., how to deal with relationship failures, group miscommunication, and public speaking mistakes).

Not only is communication a layered phenomenon, the way that it is performed and medium by which it is conveyed also affects it. There is, of course, **verbal communication** which most of us use in our everyday lives.

But, there is also **non-verbal communication**, or how we communicate without using words such as hand gestures, facial expressions, and our tone of voice as well as the various signs, tics, and tells that we used to convey information. For example, the difference between wink and a blink may be small from a physiological standpoint, but the difference is fraught with meaning from a communication standpoint (Geertz, 1973). The **medium** of a message (e.g., face-to-face, print, Internet, or television) can drastically alter a message. For example, what sources people use to get their news, the medium by which they get it (e.g., TV or the Internet), and format that it is conveyed (e.g., as news or entertainment) all can influence a person's perception. In a world of fast paced social media and celebrity spokespeople, the ability to create, consume, and disseminate communication in a skilled and responsible way is indispensable.

Your ability to build and maintain relationships with your friends, family, and romantic partners; establish and cultivate professional connections with your co-workers, managers, and customers; and identify and advocate for positive change in your communities, schools, and society are all directly linked to your knowledge of, and appreciation for, the complexity of communication processes. The challenges of communicating in ways that inform, persuade, or motivate others are made even more daunting by the fact that many people think that because they communicate regularly on a day-to-day basis, then they must be good at its execution. However, we believe that this type of thinking reflects that of the young fish in the story—and that becoming a truly proficient communicator necessitates working hard to be intentional and knowledgeable in its use.

With that in mind, we want to present you with three ways to think about communication. We wish to be clear: there is no right way to think about communication. Rather, each approach to communication offers its own unique strengths and weaknesses. A word of caution though: Just like knowing the notes on a piano or the weight of a football doesn't mean you can play Beethoven's Für Elise or catch a touchdown pass, knowing communication processes is not enough to gain proficiency. You will need to both know and practice your communication skills in order to become a proficient communicator. It will be incumbent, then*, on you* to understand when and how to use communication to its greatest effect, to be mindful of its connections to identity and culture, and to consider how its use is connected to power. Only then will you be able to maximize your chance for success in college, career, and civic life.

Communication Perspective #1: Strategies-Goals Model

> *You walk into the party, the sound of music and laughter filling your ears. You feel good, if a little awkward, in your new jacket as you search to get something to drink. As the sound of the bass hums in your ears and vibrates through your body, you see your crush across the room. They're standing with their friends, laughing and smiling, and you feel compelled to walk up and say something. They notice you as you get closer to the group, and they say with a smile, "Hey! Good to see you here!" You muster up your courage, offer a smile in return and say, "Hey! Are you a thief? Because you just stole my breath away!"*

As communication scholar Kellerman (1992) argues, all communication is inherently strategic. Individuals always have a **goal** in our communicative actions which are formulated (consciously or not) in our mind. This is not to say that people are always out to get you, are always lying, or always trying to out-maneuver you in a conversation. What it does mean is that people do not communicate randomly; that is, we never pick the words we say, non-verbal messages we send, or text we write in a non-intentional way. Rather, we always pick the **symbols** (consciously or not) we feel will make the most successful **strategy**. In our example, a pick-up line is a strategy (i.e., flirting) with a goal (i.e., to initiate a romantic relationship). Communication, whether it's

successful or not (in the case of our opening example, it probably would not be!), is a tool used to bring about a desired end. Importantly just because we think we are choosing the most successful strategy doesn't mean that it is or will be. However, all communication is used to bring about some end or fulfill some goal. Therefore, we are always trying to increase our chances of obtaining our goal by selecting the correct strategy. In this model, *communication is understood as strategies executed to maximize the likelihood of reaching our goals.*

Goals

Just because communication is *goal-directed*, doesn't mean that there is only ever a singular goal present when we communicate. Often, we have overlapping task, social, relational, and cultural goals that are being addressed when a person communicates. If, for example, you wanted someone to give you the salt shaker while you were at the dinner table, you may phrase your request in three different ways. Saying, "Give me the salt" attends very little to the relationship and very much to the task goal. Saying, "Please pass the salt" softens the request and affirms the relationship you have with the other person. Saying, "If it's not too much trouble, would you pass the salt?" shows that you respect the other person enough to give them the choice to refuse your request, even though you do want the salt. These three types of requests are different politeness strategies; that is, they are strategies that attend to (in different ways) the need to obtain one's task goal (i.e., get the salt) while also attending to the social goal of maintaining a relationship with the person they are asking help from (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Constraints

In addition to being goal-directed, communication is *constraint bound*. Kellerman describes two primary constraints that shape our communication goals and the strategies we use to pursue them: social appropriateness and efficiency. For example, when we make a request from someone we often attend to social appropriateness by thinking of the power differential (e.g., are they your boss or your subordinate?), social distance (e.g., are they an acquaintance or best friend?), and the magnitude of the request (e.g., are you asking for a dollar or a million dollars?) (Brown & Levinson, 1987). We may also think about our social and cultural context—are we at a wedding, funeral, baseball game, or a party? All these constraints inform our thinking about what makes for an appropriate form of communication. Similarly, we are constrained by time and the need for efficiency. Saying, in a measured tone, "If it's not too much trouble, would you consider the possibility of stopping in the near future, please?" may seem very polite. But, if the driver is about to hit another car, you may yell "STOP THE CAR!" because efficiency becomes a greater communicative constraint.

Adjustments

Finally, Kellerman asserts that communication is *adjusted to the purpose of fulfilling goals in a dynamic process*. In other words, within a communication process, an individual may change their strategies as they listen, interpret, and coordinate with those they are communicating with at any time in the exchange. For example, when Duke University's men's lacrosse team was found to have hosted a party that contained underage drinking and female dancers, the university engaged in a variety of public relations communication to address the situation. Len-Rios (2010) found the university expressed disappointment in the men's team early in the investigation, stating "This conduct was wholly inappropriate to the values of our athletics program and the University." However, as the investigation continued and the prosecution's case unraveled,

the university changed its tone to attacking the media it believed created the controversy, "If you were at a university where the president meted out punishment based on what he reads in the newspaper, it would be a pretty dangerous place" (p. 276-277). In this case, the university's goal was to defend itself against political and possible legal fallout, and it engaged in a variety of changing, evolving strategies over the course of months to obtain its objective.

Communication, understood as strategies executed to maximize the likelihood of reaching our goals, is best evaluated based on its **communicative effectiveness**. That is, communication in this model is measured by the question, "Did the communicator select the strategies that fulfilled all of the task, social, relational, and cultural goals of the communicative exchange?" The primary benefit of this model is that it places a great deal of emphasis on the initial source to be communicatively competent. Failures of communication are the fault of the initiator. This failure could be because the initiator doesn't have the correct words (i.e., they don't know the vocabulary or terminology) to obtain their goal. If, for example, you tell a car mechanic, "The doohickey is making a thrum noise. I think the whatchacallit is the problem," they are less likely to be able to help you than if you know to call something an alternator or radiator. The primary drawback of this perspective is that in focusing on effective communication, it may overlook important aspects of communication that are not wholly or primarily concerned with efficiently meeting goals. Think of ritualistic forms of communication, such as prayer, marriage vows, or rooting for one's sports team–are these dynamics best understood through the lens of effectiveness? As we'll see in the next section, scholars have come up with a different approach to these forms of communication to better understand them on their own terms.

Communication Perspective #2: Social Construction Model

> *A six-year old white girl is at the grocery store with her mother. In their small town, almost everyone is white and the town's demographics haven't changed much in its nearly 100-year history. As they proceed to the checkout lane, the little girl notices another child, a young Black boy about her own age. Turning to her mother, she asks, "Why does his skin look like that?" Her mother, embarrassed that her daughter commented on another person's race, tries to shush her. But, the boy's mother, a Black woman, overhears the comment and walks her son closer to the white family.*
>
> *"It's okay," the woman said with a reassuring smile toward the white pair, "Some people are born with different skin color."*
>
> *"Does it hurt?" the little girl asks, her eyes big with concern.*
>
> *"Of course not!" the woman laughs, "Our skin's just skin. Maybe you'd like to play with Darrell sometime and get to know us a little more? We just moved to town and I bet he'd like a friend." She looks up at the white mother, who (looking relieved) nods her head. "Great!," she says, "it's a play date!"*

As Berger and Luckman (1976) argue, communication is not simply a vehicle for describing the world around us; rather, it shapes and constrains our perception of reality. In other words, communication is a process of social construction, where the symbols we use lead us to perceive, understand, and act on the world in particular ways. As the opening example shows, it's not the color of a person's skin that differentiates them. Rather, it is the ways that skin color is communicated about and accepted within a society that gives skin color (or any perceived difference) its social weight. Imagine if the Black mother had not overheard the

white girl—what would the girl have learned if she had only been shushed by an embarrassed mother about commenting on another child's skin color? Maybe that it was a cause for shame or an uncomfortable topic? Her association of race with negative emotions may get connected to other groups of people (e.g., East Asian, Indian, Latinx, or Native Americans) or bloom into other types of negative associations (e.g., fear, anxiety, or anger). Instead, as a result of this kind and open communicative interaction, the young girl likely learns a much more positive lesson. Communication, then, is important to study from this perspective because the social realities we construct through our symbol use shape our experience of the world and are deeply intertwined with communicative ethics. As such, we need to examine where our communication comes from, what it does, and what realities it makes possible or impossible through its practice. Communication, in this model, is *the coordination of meaning among communicators that creates shared social realities*.

Although communication creates social realities, it doesn't do so out of thin air. Rather, communicators always draw upon a past when they engage in symbol use (Baxter, 2006). Most obviously, the words you use when you speak (or the words you are reading right now!) are not new or novel. They are the product of thousands of years of human history, culminating into a series of scratches of ink that we (you, as a reader, and we, as writers) coordinate to make meaning. The conventions of our communication—what is thought of as good, polite, rude, or aggressive—are situationally and historically unique. Some of these communicative rules were established long in the past.

Historical Context

For example, as Bitel (2010) writes, in many Western countries, the idea of gender being binary (i.e., male/female) is rooted in the myths about life in Medieval Europe. As a result of these ideas, most ordinary women in Europe and the U.S. were confined to the home, were unable to own property, and were supposed to be submissive to their husbands whereas men were involved in politics, owned property, and were the head of the household for much of the past 500 years. These past views inform our current ideas about gender, and the expectations of how men and women should act. Although what behaviors are considered appropriately masculine or feminine vary across cultures, every culture's understanding of gender is influenced by the long history of how gender has been communicated about and socially constructed within that culture. Thus, acting outside of traditional gender roles can be difficult because of the weight of hundreds of years of conventions, rules, habits, and rituals. Yet, these norms do change across time, as they are reexamined and rearticulated through communication about gender.

When we communicate with one another, we *cannot not* see each other as individuals with gender, racial, and sexual identities (among others!). As such, we communicate in ways that draw upon the histories of gender, race, sexuality, etc.—no one interacts with another as "just human." Communication, as an act that draws on the past, is a medium of (mis)understanding because of the shared histories that inform present **symbolic coordination**.

The Present

In addition to the past informing communication, the context in which communication occurs also shapes and constrains it. As Baxter (2006) notes, the roles and relationships that communicators have with each other will guide communication. For example, when a student raises their hand in order to talk in class, they are not coming up with that communicative act on their own. They are taking up and performing role-

oriented communication—an act that expresses their identity as a student and (simultaneously) recognizes the teacher's identity as an authority figure (i.e., one that you must ask permission from in order to speak). However, if that student saw the professor in the aisle of a supermarket, both would think it was odd if the student walked up to the professor and raised their hand to talk. In other words, even though the roles between them haven't changed, they draw upon different contextual clues of what is appropriate communication to guide their exchange based on location.

Creating the Future

Finally, communication creates the future in the moment it occurs. Baxter (2006) offers that this function of communication is how identities (e.g., race, gender, or sexuality), roles (e.g., employee and employer), and cultures (e.g., Deaf culture or national culture) are perpetuated. In this way, communication does not just express or describe our identities; rather, communication socially constructs our identities and culture and, as a result, what future generations will come to believe as good/bad, beautiful/ugly, justice/tyranny, etc. For example, as Forth (2019) writes, women who were overweight were considered more desirable in Western society between the 15th and 20th centuries because it signaled wealth and access to an abundance of food. Once food became more available at the turn of the 20th century, body image ideals for women changed dramatically with thinness and youth becoming the ideal for middle- and upper-class women. Currently, there are discussions about what is considered beautiful, with photo editing software, cosmetic companies, and social media all playing a role in our changing norms. Therefore, creating media representations or campaigns that privilege some women's body types over others can create social realities where what is deemed ugly, undesirable, or unlovable is based on a standard that has changed in the past and will change in the future.

Thinking about communication as an act that draws from the past, manifests in the present, and creates the future encourages a person to grapple with the **ethics** of their symbolic coordination. Imagine if a person were to be ignorant of (or chose to hide) in their recounting of U.S. history the immoral actions that the nation has perpetrated in its time: slavery, Indigenous genocide, internment camps, and unprovoked and unjust wars. That person, we would argue, would probably describe the U.S. as perfect (or, as close as a nation can be to perfect) and would ignore or downplay any discussion about how to address how these issues affect us today. In other words, that person would not even have the vocabulary for talking about the problem because those phrases (and thus way of thinking) are absent from the history of language that they draw upon when they talk. To want to improve society it is necessary to know where it has failed or continues to fail in living up to its ideal, and work to create change toward something better. Similarly, you will need to address all sorts of important issues in your life—racism, wealth inequality, climate change, and sexual violence. What history of language you draw from and what world you articulate in the moment of your communication is a choice that comes with a great deal of moral weight.

Dialogues

Communication, within this framework, is best evaluated by the criteria of **dialogue**. To Ricoeur (1992), dialogue is understood as the moment when communicators deeply and intensely experience a connection with each other— where we really experience the other as ourselves. Most people, organizations, and institutions communicate in ways that are instrumental; that is, they talk, make campaigns or commercials, or develop relationships in ways that are focused primarily on what they want or need with little regard for their communicative partners. Ricoeur decried this approach to communication, believing that what faces

humans (and, therefore, what makes us truly human) is the choice we can make to recognize others as subjects who are just as worthy of time, grace, love, forgiveness, or pleasure as we are. A social construction perspective of communication puts a lot of emphasis on all participants to be understood as co-equals and to share deeply of themselves in the hope that mutual understanding will lead to better outcomes. Failures of communication are when participants disengage from one another or don't put forth the effort to perspective-take and, as a result, harm another through their communication.

Communication Perspective #3: Power and Hegemony Model

> *You are assigned a paper for your political science class on the topic of wealth inequality and taxation. The professor's directions are for you to take a position on whether higher taxes for the wealthy would help or hurt the overall economy and to use sources to back your claims. You decide to read some information before coming to a decision, and type the words "should we tax the rich" into Google to see what comes up in the search. After scrolling down a little you see the article, "Think twice before changing the tax rules to soak billionaires," and, intrigued, you click the link.*
>
> *The piece is written by a respected columnist for the Washington Post—itself a respected and internationally read outlet. In the article, the author suggests that the wealthy's use of resources to engage in PR stunts, such as racing other billionaires to outer space, is a perfectly moral use of social resources. They even have a picture of a smartly-dressed Jeff Bezos (the founder and CEO of Amazon) at the top of the article, who would later fly in suborbital flight (almost 70 miles high) on July 20th, 2020. They imply that taxing the wealthy would mean that the government would have to raise taxes on middle- and lower-income people as well and so it would be best to just not raise taxes on anyone.*
>
> *As you finish the piece, you think to yourself, "Wow, that author had a strong opinion against raising taxes on the wealthy." You start to download the article to your computer for future use, but something keeps nagging at you to look deeper into the situation. You open another tab and do a Google search on Jeff Bezos to find that he owns the Washington Post—the same outlet in which the article appeared.*

As philosopher Nancy Fraser (1989) argues, many modern societies are guided by questions of what a population needs and how governments, media, corporations, and other powerful entities can best address those needs. If a population believes that a need is met, then those entities are viewed as legitimate and worth continuing. Importantly, though, those needs don't have to actually be met as long as the population believes they are, or that their unfulfillment is the fault of someone else. Communication can be, therefore, a powerful tool for misinformation and propaganda, allowing powerful forces to shape **social discourse** in ways that suit them.

Take our opening example: Jeff Bezos, a man who makes more money in a second than the average U.S. citizen makes in a month (Allcott, 2021), bought an internationally read newspaper which just so happens to publish a piece arguing against taxes on the wealthy. Furthermore, the author implied that raising taxes on the wealthy would mean raising taxes on everyone else—a proposition that links the needs of average U.S. citizens (e.g., having enough money for food, rent, or transportation) to the desires of billionaires (e.g., who have spent more than $1 billion per year since 2000 to go to space). In this perspective, communication is *the imposition of meaning from one group onto others, and ultimately of a population onto itself, securing political-economic arrangements that favor the powerful as normal, neutral, necessary, or natural.*

When most people think of power, they may conjure up images from *The Hunger Games*, where the villains are in complete control of society and a small, plucky band of teenagers fight their way to freedom. The reality, however, is much more complicated. First, in most modern societies, there is little need for overt displays of force in order to maintain control. Although military and police forces are sometimes used against civilians and the press, most powerful groups utilize traditional media, social media, and other outlets to cultivate allegiance or rebellion. For example, Russia's innocuously named "Internet Research Agency" which is, in fact, an organization which specializes in spreading disinformation and propaganda across the Internet (Linvill, 2019). Organizations like these are integral in spreading and cultivating conspiracy theories, reactionary politics, and violence.

In other words, there is no need for draconian laws or a repressive military state; rather, spreading this type of dis/information can ensure people are too busy fighting amongst themselves, or unsure what to believe, to identify or resist things that make their lives dimmer, poorer, or less free. Second, most of the people who run these organizations may not be evil; however, they are interested in maintaining the political-economic arrangements that already favor them and have the means to guide society in directions that serve their interests. For example, oil executives from companies such as Exxon Mobil, Shell, Chevron, and BP have spent hundreds of millions of dollars across the world to dismantle environmental and worker safety laws over the decades—changes that benefit them and their shareholders (Tabuchi & Friedman, 2021).

Power

Power is the ability to change a target's (i.e., an individual, group, or even a nation) thoughts, beliefs, or behaviors. Importantly, power isn't innately evil or wrong. We are guided by, and enforce, all sorts of laws, rules, and habits that keep us happy, safe, and fulfilled; however, power can also be used to deprive people of those attributes. Sprague (1992) drawing from Lukes (1973), offers there are three dimensions of power. In the first dimension, power is used explicitly and overtly to induce people to do something that they would not have done on their own volition. Think, for example, of a police officer telling a person, "Hands up" or "Get on the ground," while their gun is drawn. The commands are made with the threat of violence as a way to control a person. In the second dimension, power is used implicitly and covertly to induce people to do something that they may not have done on their own volition.

For example, have you ever been driving and seen a marked police vehicle in the median of the highway? Your heart might flutter as you look at your speedometer and make sure your seatbelt is buckled. Even though you are doing nothing wrong, just the sight of a police officer is an exercise of state power— simply seeing them reminds you that you must follow the law or face consequences. In the final dimension, power is so routinized that people do not even think that they are changing their behavior. For example, if you follow the speed limit while driving you might think to yourself, "I don't want to get a speeding ticket, so I'll follow the law" even though you don't see any police officers to enforce the rules. In this way, you have subjected yourself to power by changing your behaviors, even in the absence of any present external force.

Hegemony

Hegemony, then, is the condition in which a person believes their choices are normal, natural, or neutral when, in actuality, their choice is shaped and constrained by the communicative culture they are a part of. The state of hegemony, like power, isn't necessarily or inherently bad. We might wish that it was hegemonic to believe

that all people have rights, and to act in the world as if respecting those innate rights is normal, natural, or neutral. However, make no mistake, the idea of human rights is, historically speaking, a relatively recent development and under constant attack around the world. Furthermore, many countries that recognize human rights do not agree on the same rights or to the same degree rights need to be protected. The language that we use to communicate our ideas, such as truth, justice, or beauty are all subject to, and expressive of, power.

Communicative Justice

Communication, within this framework, is best evaluated by the criteria of **communicative justice.** Of course, within this perspective, justice isn't a neutral descriptor—it reflects and expresses power. However, we believe that the criteria of justice should be characterized by three communicative ideals: protecting human rights, informing others completely, and respecting autonomy (Deetz, 1992). These ideals apply to all people, groups, and organizations, and should guide communicative practice in all situations. Communication, viewed through the lens of power and hegemony, is a means by which those with more power attempt to keep political-economic relationships the way that benefits them the most. To develop an understanding of communication is, therefore, imperative so you can seek justice for yourself and others.

Communication Studies Major/Minor: Ready for College, Career and Civic Life

Communication is as innate to our species as our opposable thumbs or bipedal legs—*it defines who we are, what we can do, and who we can be*. The strategies we use to obtain our goals, the phrases we use to develop our social bonds, and the terms we deploy to define problems/articulate solutions are neither random nor inconsequential; rather, they are a fundamental aspect of our relationships with our friends, families, and colleagues as well as how governments, media corporations, and workplaces shape our lives. To study communication, then, is to study the very essence of what it means to be human—to know how to convey information, persuade others to your cause, or motivate them. And, whether you study how to be a better communicator, we hope you keep the three perspectives of communication (i.e., goals-strategies, social construction, and power-hegemony) at the front of your mind. Because, if you do, you'll be more than the young fish at the start of this chapter—you'll be able to see and change the world around you by your communication practices.

In this class, you'll be introduced to the fundamentals of studying communication. Although we are sure you'll learn a lot over the course of the semester, we would encourage you to explore a major or minor in communication studies as a way to obtain your personal and professional goals within and beyond college. Our department offers coursework that reflects these perspectives of communication, which can greatly enhance your life. We are concerned with helping you become the best at creating effective communication, and how to create, curate, and disseminate messages, videos, and social media in ways that best obtain goals. We offer the following majors and minors, and you can learn more about our program on the University of Northern Iowa Communication and Media website:

- **Communication Studies:** Talk to someone before class. Watch a TikTok video. Read a blog. Listen to a podcast. Browse a website. We are communicating when we do any of these things. The means and methods of communication are constantly evolving, but the basic principles of communication remain

the same – those principles are what we teach. What makes the communication major at UNI unique is that the things you learn in a class can be put into practice immediately – building a set of skills and principles that will prepare you to adapt to our constantly changing world. We offer the following certificates that you can obtain either as a Communication Studies major/minor, or as a bundle of classes to complement your chosen major and make you more prepared for post-graduation life: *Organizational Communication and Training*; *Organizational Communication and Inclusive Leadership*; and *Performance, Rhetoric, and Advocacy*.

- **Communication-Theatre Teaching:** The communication-theatre teaching program is the only one of its kind in the state, preparing students to teach communication and theatre (including speech communication, debate and theatre) in grades 5-12. Administered jointly by the Department of Communication and Media and the Department of Theatre, a major in communication-theatre teaching provides you with rich content area learning in both communication and theatre courses. Students will have multiple field placement opportunities, giving them over 700 hours of real classroom experience before graduation. Our graduates go on to teach at the middle and high school level, providing their own students with the opportunity to expand their creative capacities, argue with evidence and conviction, and develop leadership and team-building skills.
- **Digital Media Journalism:** Digital journalism at UNI focuses on reporting, news writing, editing and design, online journalism, mobile journalism, sports journalism, photojournalism, and media law and ethics, and is taught by experienced, award-winning faculty. The major and minor are popular with students from all areas across campus who want to write well and understand the best practices in ethical reporting and great storytelling. The digital journalism major is part of the Department of Communication and Media's digital media program. With concentrations in digital journalism, digital media leadership and digital media production, the program is a hub of creativity, collaboration and innovation.
- **Digital Media Production:** The digital media production major provides hands-on training from award-winning faculty for a range of media careers in television news and magazine shows, fiction, documentary and web/interactive formats. In our courses, you will learn how to develop scripts and screenplays, operate field and television studio cameras, design creative lighting, record audio for field and music events, and create compelling videos through editing and motion graphics. The digital media production major is part of the Department of Communication and Media's digital media program. With concentrations in digital journalism, digital media leadership and digital media production, the program is a hub of creativity, collaboration and innovation.
- **Digital Media Leadership:** The digital media Leadership program is preparing creative leaders for the challenges facing the media industry. The program offers a variety of cutting-edge courses, outstanding faculty, media industry events and internship opportunities that prepare students for careers in Iowa and beyond. Students develop media management strategies and entrepreneurial skills for producing, distributing, marketing and monetizing digital media content across platforms. The digital media leadership major is part of the Department of Communication and Media's digital media program. With concentrations in digital journalism, digital media leadership and digital media production, the program is a hub of creativity, collaboration and innovation
- **Interactive Digital Studies**: The IDS major/minor is a great tech-fueled addition to any specialized major program of study. It consists of the four IDS foundation courses and one "bundle" of study. We offer the following bundles: Advertising, Computation, Imaging, Music, History, Writing, Visualization, Web

Development

- **Political Communication:** With fewer than a dozen undergraduate political communication programs in the United States, UNI students are sure to stand out. Our majors work with experts in both communication & media and political science, and graduate with first-hand experience gained through internships in political campaigns, legislative offices, government agencies, businesses and nonprofit organizations.
- **Public Relations:** If you're a strong communicator, team player and cool under pressure, you should consider a career in public relations. As a public relations major, you'll learn to build, engage and maintain good relationships, public understanding, and reputation for various brands and organizations. All of our emphases include coursework from other departments, professional internship opportunities and experiences outside of the classroom with student organizations sponsored by the department. At UNI we offer three major emphases that reflect important areas of public relations practice: Strategic Public Relations, Special Events, and Sports Public Relations.
- **Business Communication**: How we communicate is just as important as the business strategies and policies we implement. Unfortunately, because human communication is routine, we often don't think about how our communication style can impact our business success. Polished written and oral communication and enhanced listening skills will make you a better leader in any organization.
- **Communication and Media Master's Program**: The Graduate Program in the Department of Communication and Media provides students with Master's level training and helps them fulfill their post-graduation goals, whether obtaining professional employment, enrolling in a PhD program, or reskilling/upskilling for their current profession. We offer three opportunities for Master's educational experiences and credentials: *the standard 2-year MA program*, *the accelerated 4+1 program for high achieving undergraduate majors*, and *Master's level certificates*. Nearly all of our coursework is offered in the evenings, entirely online, or hy-flex (i.e., the ability to Zoom into a F2F class instead of being physically present). This organization allows students to pursue M.A. level education with a flexibility that works for full-time students, full-time employees, and everyone in between.

All these choices, and more, in the Department of Communication and Media can help put you on the path to professional and personal success. All that awaits is your choice to take the first step toward the next chapter of your life.

Job Title	Median Salary	Job Growth for Future
Public Relations Specialist	$62,800 per year	8.0%
Meeting, Convention, and Event Planners	$49,470 per year	14.0%
Postsecondary Education Administrator	96,910 per year	7%
High School Teacher	$61,820 per year	5%
Human Resources Specialist	62,290 per year	8%
Social and Community Service Managers	74,000 per year	12%
Postsecondary Teacher/Professor	$79,640 per year	12%
Sales Managers	$127,490 per year	5%
Political Campaign and Fundraising Managers	$119,860 per year	8%
Film and Video Editors and Camera Operators	$60,360 per year	12%

Employment in Communication and Media occupations is projected to grow 6 percent from 2021 to 2031, on pace with the average employment in all sectors of the economy. Furthermore, the median annual wage for communication and media majors is $62,340 which was higher than the median annual wage for all occupations of $45,760. As such, a degree in this field can make sure you have the financial stability to reach your personal, professional, and civic goals throughout your life. All information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022).

Chapter 2

Purpose, Situation, and Public Speaking

Sofia took a deep breath, trying to settle the butterflies in her stomach. She was supposed to give a speech in a few minutes to her college's UnidosUS chapter in a few minutes on September 15th, the first day of the National Hispanic Heritage Month. She has stayed up all night preparing her speech, but now wondered if it was as good as she thought it was when she finally fell asleep last night. She looked around backstage, her eyes darting around, flitting from place to place—a perfect analogy to her racing mind.

'You're going to do great," Jesús says, giving her a thumbs up.

Sofia smiles weakly, clutching her notes even harder. It feels like the auditorium is 100 degrees with an air so thick she can hardly breathe. She starts to pace as she hears Miguel begin his introduction. "Only a few minutes and then it's showtime," she thinks and begins rehearsing her speech in her mind.

"It is my great pleasure to introduce our club president, Sofia Lopez Morales. Es un gran placer presentar a la presidenta de nuestro club, Lopez Morales."

Miguel announces as the crowd stands up to applaud.

Sofia takes a step forward, her knees nearly buckling with anxiety. Jesús catches her, giving her a one-armed hug around her shoulder and a smile. "You can do this! Remember, they are on your side!"

With one final deep breath, Sofia nods and then walks onto the auditorium stage, smiling. Jesús, also smiling, hands her the microphone and then walks off stage leaving Sofia alone to look out amongst the crowd. Nearly fifty people, students, professors, and the Dean of the College are in attendance. She fumbles her notes, "Good morning for being here" she gasps as one falls down and she bends to pick it up. She hears the audience chuckle as it dawns on her what she has just said. "Sorry! I mean thank you for being here and good morning! Bienvenidos!"

Many in the crowd respond in kind, smiling and looking interested to hear what she is going to say. As she straightens, she looks at the crowd again and this time she doesn't see fifty people—she sees Maria who is in her first class, Algebra at 8 AM; Antonio who has a great sense of humor and is quick with a joke; Carolina, her closest friend, sitting with her girlfriend Daniela; and other friends and trusted mentors. Taking strength from their hopeful looks, she begins, "Welcome. Today, I want to tell you a story about the history of our people–a history triumph. Bienvenidos. Hoy quiero contarles una historia de nuestro pueblo — una historia de triunfos."

Why do people speak in public? For many, it is a setting that many try to avoid because of anxiety, but there will be times throughout your life you will have a reason to speak to a group of people. Each of these reasons

are understood as the **rhetorical purpose** of a public presentation and constitute the reason(s) why a person addresses others. Whether in a boardroom, classroom, religious institution, or a public rally, speaking to a group of individuals can be a daunting task. Although you might feel nervous, excited, or determined as you give your presentation, it is important to take an accounting of your purpose when giving your speech and understanding the **rhetorical situation**.

The rhetorical purpose and situation can be broadly divided into different categories. Typically, scholars believe that there are three primary types of rhetorical purposes:

- **To perform:** this type of presentation seeks to commemorate an event or enact a ritual such as consecrating a wedding, giving an award, or offering a eulogy.
- **To inform**: this type of presentation is delivered to increase your audience's awareness or understanding of a technology, issue, or idea.
- **To persuade***:* this type of presentation is given with the intention to change an audience's beliefs or behaviors.

Of course, a presentation might contain multiple purposes. For example, a funeral eulogy might try to perform a commemoration for the deceased while also persuading the audience to treat others better in life. However, by thinking of these three purposes as distinct reasons as to why we engage in public speaking, it helps us have a clearer understanding of our goals when communicating with others. In addition to the purposes, it's important to recognize the rhetorical situation in which a presentation is given.

A rhetorical situation comprises of four components:

- **Purpose**: the purpose of performing, informing, or persuading with a presentation helps you think about what is appropriate or not to communicate.
- **Topic**: the content of the presentation, language, tone, and subject matter, should all be chosen carefully based on the context of the public speaking event.
- **Speaker**: who is giving the presentation matters in terms of how they are perceived by the audience as credible, funny, or inspirational.
- **Audience**: who the speaker believes their intended audience is and, just as important, who the audience actually is vital to understand. For example, a joke or story that may work with one audience may not when it is told outside of that context.

Taken together, the rhetorical purpose and situation are essential ingredients for a good public address. Overlooking either can seriously undermine the effectiveness of your speech and make your communication ineffective–sometimes to the point where your speech can have the opposite of your intended effect!

In this chapter, we will overview the three rhetorical purposes and offer ways for you to think about your presentations. By doing so, we hope you can begin to appreciate that public speaking is more than just standing in front of a lot of people and talking; rather, it is a complicated activity that requires thorough preparation in order to execute properly and successfully. Whether addressing people on your campus, at your career, or in your community, developing a sense of rhetorical awareness of your purpose and situation will help you reach your goals.

Performative Speaking

The sky is crying, and the flags are at half-mast. It is a sad, sad day. But it is also your day, Noah, my little man. I will miss your forceful and purposeful little steps stomping through our house. I will miss your perpetual smile, the twinkle in your dark blue eyes, framed by eyelashes that would be the envy of any lady in this room.

Most of all, I will miss your visions of your future. You wanted to be a doctor, a soldier, a taco factory manager. It was your favorite food, and no doubt you wanted to ensure that the world kept producing tacos.

You were a little boy whose life force had all the gravitational pull of a celestial body. You were light and love, mischief and pranks. You adored your family with every fiber of your 6-year-old being. We are, all of us, elevated in our humanity by having known you. A little maverick, who didn't always want to do his schoolwork or clean up his toys, when practicing his ninja moves or Super Mario on the Wii seemed far more important.

Noah, you will not pass through this way again. I can only believe that you were planted on Earth to bloom in heaven. Take flight, my boy. Soar. You now have the wings you always wanted. Go to that peaceful valley that we will all one day come to know. I will join you someday. Not today. I still have lots of mommy love to give to Danielle, Michael, Sophia, and Arielle. Until then, your melody will linger in our hearts forever. Momma loves you, little man.

— Eulogy written by Veronique de la Rosa to her son killed in the Sandy Hook Elementary School Massacre.

Performative speaking is one of the most creative, varied, and important forms of public address. Whether to celebrate, commemorate, inspire, or entertain, performative speaking has the power to heal, motivate, and call others to action. Performative or performance in this sense doesn't mean inauthentic or acting; rather, it speaks to the idea that communication that addresses the rituals, ceremonies, and special occasions that mark our lives "performs" some social function.

Take Veronique's eulogy for her son for example: Why offer such a heartfelt and deeply personal reflection in a public space? What does her speech "do" when given in the presence of friends, family, and the public–all of whom are connected to her grief through the tragedy of one of the deadliest school shootings in U.S. history? We might guess that engaging in the public ritual of commemoration might offer some closure or solace or that in sharing her eulogy we, as the audience, might reflect on our own relationships with our children and their safety. There is no doubt that her speech, while short, is incredibly powerful and calls us to empathize with her pain.

Performative speaking, as ritualistic communication, is given in a specific context and given meaning by its adherence (or not) to the social conventions that mark the context. Remember from Chapter 2 that rituals consist of a social performance of patterned behavior to effect or participate in serious life. The idea of *serious life* is to say that rituals occur where social standing can be won or lost through one's adherence to,

or rejection of, ritualized behavior. For example, if one acts happy or pleased that person dies, and expresses that through a eulogy, many will find their presentation tacky, rude, or sacrilegious. Typically, performative presentations are characterized by one of these four rhetorical purposes:

- **To Celebrate:** This type of speech is given to honor, or highlight the accomplishments of, a person, organization, or institution at the time they have occurred. This rhetorical purpose is typical at weddings, award ceremonies, or birthdays. Often, the rituals that characterize these speeches include praising the subject of honor, telling a light or inoffensive joke about the subject of honor, or complimenting the location (e.g., "Today, we celebrate Ken and John, in this beautiful church, on their decision to spend their lives together in wedlock.").
- **To Commemorate:** This type of speech is given to pay tribute to, remember, or reflect on a person, organization, or institution. In other words, whereas a speech to celebrate usually occurs and is addressed to an accomplishment in the moment (e.g., giving a speech at the reception of a wedding), a commemorative speech usually addresses the subject of honor's past in a substantial way. This rhetorical purpose is common at funerals or retirements. The rituals that are often associated with this type of speech include sensitivity to tone (i.e., usually somber for eulogies), telling context-appropriate inspirational or entertaining anecdotes about the subject of honor, or discussing the influence/impact the subject of honor had or will have on the future.
- **To Inspire:** This type of speech is given to motivate others, stir up their courage, or galvanize an audience. This rhetorical purpose is common at commencement ceremonies, keynote addresses, inaugural speeches, or religious sermons. The rituals that are commonly connected to this type of speech include sensitivity to volume, dynamism, and tone (i.e., usually all are high to provoke a response of the audience), exalted language or metaphors, and the presence of a target that the audience's energy will be focused on overcoming (e.g., beating the other sports team).
- **To Entertain:** This type of speech is given to amuse, delight, and engage the audience with humor or spectacle. This rhetorical purpose is mostly seen at banquets, award dinners, or roasts. The rituals associated with this type of speech include being cheerful or lighthearted, but still having a serious message or bit of wisdom to be imparted on the audience.

Taken together, these four rhetorical purposes constitute a variety of speech forms that are found in different rhetorical situations. The performative speech is unique in that it **explicitly intertwines the content of the speech with tone, emotion, and dynamism meant to celebrate, inspire, or entertain**. This type of public address accompanies almost every major event in society, such as rites of passage, tributes, and gatherings. In fact, almost every large gathering of humans is accompanied by some sort of ritualistic communication, such as prayer, benediction, or blessing. Being able to meet the demands of a performative speech means you will be able to participate in, and excel at, an important part of social life.

Given the importance of performative speaking, it is vital to understand the various situations you might find yourself in that demand this form of communication. Below, we describe four forms of performative speaking and catalog the successful characteristics for each:

- **Introduction Presentation:** This type of presentation introduces or presents the next speaker or event to

the audience. Typically, an introduction speech sets the tone for the event (e.g., maybe loud and dynamic at a music festival or somber and tame at a funeral). It is important to be knowledgeable of the next speaker or event so you can give a unique introduction rather than a formulaic one. Make sure you know the proper pronunciation of the speaker's name and the correct title of their speech or the event. This type of speech is typically short because you want the audience to focus their attention on their main speaker instead of you. Often, the presentation is less than one minute in length and ends with a call to action, such as standing and clapping.

- **Award Presentation/Acceptance Presentation:** This type of presentation is given when you give or receive an award. If presenting the award, make sure to recite the name of the award, its criteria, and the accomplishments of the recipient, which demonstrates why they deserve the award. You may also compliment and recognize other nominees for the award and remark on how close the competition was for the award. If receiving an award, make sure to be appropriate to the event in celebration, humble, and prepared. You should have prepared remarks, thanking the audience, key people who helped you, and anyone else that is important to you (e.g., family or friends). Do not, however, read a laundry list of names nor should you pick/call on members of the audience to thank (unless you have forewarned them). It is acceptable to show emotion and pride, but do not go over the time limit. Typically, an acceptance speech is less than five minutes.
- **Eulogy/Tribute:** Eulogies and tributes are typically given at funerals, retirements, and special occasions that mark a significant accomplishment on the part of a person or organization. Although you may wish to speak about your relationship with the deceased or organization, it is important to remember that this speech is about them, not you. As such, you want to focus most of your attention on what made, or makes, the subject of the speech important, positive, or worth remembering. Make sure to describe their accomplishments in detail without embellishment. Humor is acceptable as long as it is light and inoffensive; however, if you are unsure if a joke or anecdote meets that standard it is probably better to forgo trying to be funny. Finally, you should try to remain in control of your emotions, so you don't get distracted and talk for too long. Typically, a eulogy/tribute is 5-10 minutes.
- **Toast:** Toasts and roasts are often given at celebratory events such as weddings, birthdays, housewarmings, or graduation. In the U.S. a toast is usually signified when a person is given the opportunity to speak publicly by an event or sign (e.g., at weddings, a toast may be initiated by lightly tapping a utensil to a glass). Toasts are often sentimental, heartwarming, and/or humorous, and mark an occasion as one to be celebrated. Conversely, during a roast, you may be one in a list of people meant to make fun of a person as you simultaneously honor them. It is important to remember your audience when deciding what kind of humor or jokes you will use at the honoree's expense. In either toasts or roasts, you should not reveal guarded secrets, tell deeply embarrassing stories, or recount serious disagreements with others. A toast or roast should be lighthearted and elevate the mood of the audience. Typically, toasts and roasts are two to five minutes in length.

Regardless of which type of speech you are called to perform, it is important that you read the rhetorical situation carefully and match your tone, content, and style to the context. Not doing so can create awkwardness, embarrassment, or anger. A well-constructed performative speech has the potential to entertain, bring closure, and honor others whereas a poorly constructed speech can offend, exacerbate pain, or embarrass others. It is up to you to prepare and perform in a way that will elevate your communication and reach your audience.

Informative Speaking

"Today, I'm going to show you how to cook the perfect pot of pasta. Now, I know what you're thinking, 'How hard is it to cook pasta? You just boil some water, throw the pasta in it, and wait until it's soft.' But, if this is your approach to cooking pasta, then I'm afraid you're doing it all wrong!

Jason kept Allison in frame of the camera as she moved around the kitchen. She had been making how-to videos on cooking for YouTube for nearly a year now and was approaching 500,000 subscribers. Although they didn't make enough revenue to quit their jobs, they knew they were on track to their goals to become full-time content creators.

"First, bring water to boil in a large pan. You may think adding salt to the water will make it boil faster, but this is not true. However, you DO need to put salt in the water before putting the pasta in it. Otherwise, the pasta will turn out bland and flavorless." Allison kept talking as she set the pot on the stove and added the salt.

"Next, when the water is boiling, put the pasta in it. You want to get all the pasta submerged and cooking as quickly as possible. Otherwise, your pasta will be cooked on one end and raw on the other." Jason zoomed his camera to the pot as Allison put the pasta into the boiling water. "Then, you want to lightly stir the pasta every few minutes to make sure it doesn't clump up."

"Finally, you may be tempted to use a colander to drain your pasta of all its water. Don't do that! Reserve one or two cups of the pasta water so you can make a homemade sauce. The starch and salt in the water will make a silky-smooth texture for your sauce and really kick it up a notch. Check out our next video on how to make a garlic-tomato sauce in five minutes!"

"That's a wrap," Jason exclaimed as he turned off the camera. "Great job!"

"You think so? I felt I was a little scattered when finding the ingredients. Can we do another shot?" Allison asked.

"Sure," Jason said as he raised his camera. "We'll make sure we get it perfect."

Whether watching a person demonstrate a new gadget to a small group or watching a Let's Play video for a million fans on YouTube, informative presentations are a ubiquitous part of our daily lives. In your public and professional lives, you will need to develop the ability to clearly communicate information with others in ways that make it relevant, exciting, interesting, and engaging. Informative speaking is a way to pass knowledge onto others, whether formally (e.g., teachers to students) or informally (e.g., parents to their children). Sometimes informative speaking may be very linear and task oriented (e.g., how to fix a carburetor or change a battery) or non-linear and open-ended (e.g., telling the story of the Boy Who Cried Wolf). Regardless of the circumstance, being able to address the rhetorical purpose of the informative speech while meeting the rhetorical situation will ensure you have a lasting impact on the audience.

The purpose of an **informative presentation** is to give completely new knowledge, skills, or understanding

about the topic to your audience. For example, giving a presentation on how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich would probably not count as an informative presentation because almost everyone knows how to make one (unless your audience happened to be a room full of 5-year-old children). What is most important is that your presentation does *not* try to persuade the audience toward any goal or outcome. That would be more appropriate in a persuasive presentation, which we will discuss in the next section. In informative speaking, your rhetorical purpose is only to give the best knowledge available to your audience about a particular subject, not call them toward any particular action.

The rhetorical purposes that best characterize informative speaking are:

- **To Describe:** This type of presentation is given to detail information regarding an object, person, animal, place, event, or idea. This rhetorical purpose characterizes the jobs of teachers, corporate trainers, consultants, and human resources managers, but also a wide range of other jobs and situations. You may be called on to describe a new product or service, explain a difficult concept to a student, or illustrate the most important events of a car crash or crime to the police. Presentations with a descriptive purpose can be technical (e.g., the way to calculate the APR on a car loan) or metaphorical (e.g., my love for you is like a red rose).
- **To Demonstrate:** The type of presentation is given to instruct others about following a process that achieves a certain goal. This rhetorical purpose is seen in how-to videos (like the one that opened this chapter), lessons in classrooms, and on-the-job training. The important difference between a demonstration and descriptive speech is that the former actually shows the process of the presentation topic while explaining how to do it (e.g., showing how to repair a bike tire flat while fixing one) whereas the latter only describes it.
- **To Report:** This type of presentation is given to update others on the ongoing situation. This rhetorical purpose is often demonstrated in contexts such as meeting updates, political briefings, or annual/monthly reports. For example, if you are working on a political campaign as an organizer, you may need to give weekly reports to the candidate's headquarters on budget, volunteers, and neighborhood coverage.

Because informative presentations are context-dependent, expectations for their duration can vary widely. Briefings may be only thirty seconds or a full hour, school lessons are typically 45-90 minutes long, and demonstrations are as long as it takes to actually show and explain the process. However, you want to make sure that you are being respectful of your audience's time and not going longer than what is needed.

When it comes to performing an informative presentation, you should organize your materials in a way that makes the information easy for your audience to understand and use. Knowing different types of organizational strategies, then, is a crucial component of being an effective public speaker. We suggest that you choose a topic that you want to inform your audience about and then, based on that decision, pick one of the strategies below that you feel best highlights the important components of your topic. These strategies include:

- **Chronological:** Used when giving a presentation where the sequence of events matters to the overall history or process you are describing. For example, you may wish to detail the process of criminal justice legislation as it relates to criminal activity or demonstrate the steps to installing a kayak rack on the roof

of a car.

- **Topical:** Used in presentations where the overall topic has natural subtopics. For example, in a speech about dogs who compete in dog shows, you might divide the presentation into parts about different breeds of dogs or sizes of dogs.
- **Spatial:** Used to describe a person, place, or event as it relates to the context or space it is connected to. For example, comparing *Six Flags Amusement Parks* based on which city they are located.

These organizational strategies of informative presentations ensure that the knowledge you wish to relate to your audience is relevant, interesting, and succinct. Think about how you can help your audience retain information, stay engaged, and remember the information you chose to share. Never lose sight of the most important goal of an informative presentation: Giving the audience new information or knowledge about a topic that is relevant to them. Craft your delivery to this rhetorical purpose and we promise that your audience will benefit from your presentation.

Persuasive Speaking

"Look, there's no better time to purchase a car than right now. And this is the car for you," Jose kept a smile on his face as he showed the new vehicle to the buyer, Todd. Todd had come into the car dealership looking to purchase a new vehicle, even though his current one was still in good condition. However, he felt like purchasing a new vehicle now made sense for his budget.

"I don't know," Todd replied. "It looks like there's more rust under this car than I would expect for its age. Do you know if the previous owner cleaned the undercarriage regularly?"

"No, but you know, cars these days are built to withstand a bit of rust," Jose said. "You can't expect a used car to be rust free when you live this far north."

"That's true, I guess," Todd said slowly. "But I think it might make more sense to just buy a brand-new car if I'm going to make a purchase. You know– not inherit someone else's problems."

"I totally agree," Jose said smoothly. "But you'll have to wait up to three months for a new car. You can drive this baby off the lot right now. Let me tell you what, I'll knock $1,000 off the price right now if you'll follow me back and sign the paperwork."

Todd's head snapped as he came out of his reverie, "Nah, that's okay. I don't think this is the situation that I want to buy a car in, sorry. You take care." And with that, he started to walk toward the exit.

"Wait, wait, wait," Jose said, catching up to him. "Did I say $1,000? I meant $1,500!"

"And I'm still at 'no.' Goodbye." Todd walked out the door, proud of himself but a little unsure. He knew he'd avoided being pressured into a bad deal, but he still wanted to buy a car. "Oh well," he thought, "Plenty of other dealerships in the area."

When most people think of persuasive speaking, they imagine a scenario much like Todd's. That is, they are usually on the receiving end of a salesperson, telemarketer, time-share huckster, or other professional whose sole purpose is to get someone to buy their product or service. As a result, many people have a negative perception of persuasive speaking because it is viewed as a tactic of coercion. However, persuasion differs from coercion in that it does not use force, violence, or threats nor does it hide, lie about, or obfuscate information. Certainly, there are those who abuse the ethics of public speaking and put their own goals before their audiences. However, true persuasion only occurs when the audience acts or thinks differently based on their own free will to make an informed choice.

A **persuasive presentation** is communication with an intent to change, reinforce, or influence others' actions, attitudes, or values. Persuasive communication can occur between two people (as our opening example showed) or can be a speaker toward a group or crowd of listeners. Importantly, persuasion is assumed when there is intent on the part of a speaker to influence the listener(s). Wearing a t-shirt with your favorite band is not a form of persuasion whereas telling your friend why your favorite band is the best band in the world would be considered persuasive speech. In trying to persuade others, you should strive to be fact-based and ethical. Although you can influence others through unethical means (like Jose tried to do by pressuring Todd), often those tactics will either not work or may even backfire.

For example, Todd may now tell his friends and family, or write an online review, about his negative experiences at the car dealership and suggest others avoid purchasing vehicles there. Now, not only has Jose lost Todd's business, but it's also possible that he will lose other customers as well. To make sure you are attending correctly to the rhetorical situation, we encourage you to think about the rhetorical purpose that best fits your needs. Persuasive presentations are usually characterized by one of the following purposes:

- **To Convince:** This type of presentation is given to change the attitudes or values of an audience whose beliefs differ from yours. This type of rhetorical purpose is present in almost all aspects of life since we typically want those we are in contact with to have attitudes or values that match our own. For example, if you and your friend disagree about the quality of a television show, you will likely try to get them to see why it is as good (or bad) as you think it is.
- **To Motivate:** This type of presentation is given to stimulate the attitudes or values of an audience whose beliefs match yours. This type of rhetorical purpose is present in a great deal of religious sermons since most people who listen to the religious leader are part of the same religious group. In this case, the paster, priest, monk, rabbi, or other type of religious leader is not trying to convince someone to convert; rather, they are reinforcing the beliefs of those who are already converted (e.g., telling them they are the chosen people of their particular deity).
- **To Actuate:** This type of presentation is given to call the audience to action on the topic you are addressing. This type of rhetorical purpose is present in a great deal of political speech, where candidates routinely ask the audience to support them. For example, a candidate might encourage the audience to vote for them, canvas a neighborhood to raise support for a particular bill, or walk in a demonstration.

Obviously, a persuasive presentation can be characterized by more than one of these rhetorical purposes. Often, you will hear or give speeches that combine the purposes of convincing-actuating or motivating-actuating. However, it is vital that you recognize your rhetorical situation, so you don't give a presentation that

is ineffective based on its purpose. For example, if you were to give a speech with the purpose to motivate-actuate about the need for vegans to lobby support for more vegetarian food programs to the *Cattlemen's Beef Board and National Cattlemen's Beef Association*, you'd probably find your message being completely ineffective. Similarly, knowing when and how to try to convince, motivate, or actuate your audience will be key to your presentation success.

An important thing to remember is that being given a platform to speak does not mean that you should choose whatever topic is of interest to you simply because you find it interesting. You need to recognize your rhetorical situation and make sure you are picking a presentation topic and tone that fits it. For example, you might feel very passionate about topics such as abortion, religious affiliation, or gender identity, but if you do not have a relationship with the audience or if you only have a limited amount of time to speak, then you will probably not be able to convince or actuate your audience on these issues. Instead, you will most likely entrench their preexisting beliefs, which is called the **boomerang effect**.

A persuasive presentation is not a time to pontificate nor is it a blank check to talk about whatever you desire; rather, it is an opportunity to establish a relationship with your audience and, through that connection, encourage them to see and act in the world the ways that you deem important, valuable, or ethical. When giving a persuasive presentation, you will find that you are often proposing or arguing for a certain point of view. As such, you'll need to make sure that in your effort to persuade others, your propositions are supported. The three types of propositions are:

- **Proposition of Fact:** This type of proposition is concerned with the truthiness or falseness of the statement. In this instance, the speaker wishes to convince or motivate the audience by the credibility of the information being presented. For example, if the speaker wants to convince the audience that electric vehicles are more efficient than traditional vehicles, they will need to compare the environmental and financial costs using the most up-to-date and reliable information.
- **Proposition of Value:** This type of proposition addresses the beauty, wisdom, or morality of the proposition. For this type of speech, a speaker would attempt to convince or motivate the audience that their criteria for evaluating an action, belief, or idea is appropriate to the situation or superior to other types of criteria. For example, a speaker may argue that no-knock warrants are unconstitutional based on the values of privacy, personal property, and resisting government intrusion.
- **Proposition of Action:** This type of proposition details the procedures, policy, or behavior needed. When giving a speech of action, the speaker will need to convince or motivate the audience into agreeing that action is needed. Then, the speaker should detail the steps the action or actions will take, providing information on the necessity of each. For example, a speaker who wants to push for marijuana law reform will need to convince or motivate the audience that the lack of reform is a problem or that reforming will bring benefits. Then, they will need to explain each step the audience will need to take in their push for reform (e.g., demonstrations, letter writing campaigns, or voting).

Remembering the different propositions that characterize persuasive speaking can help you be a more effective speaker. For example, if the sources you use for information are not credible, then your audience may reject your propositions of fact. Or, if you have wildly different values than your audience, you will need to tailor your message to make sure your message is not immediately rejected. Remember that true persuasion only occurs when your audience is given the information and resources needed to come to a choice of their own

free will. When people are treated with respect, and they make their choice to accept a new fact, value, or plan of action will they do so with the enthusiasm necessary to achieve your (and their) goals.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have shown three ways of overarching rhetorical purposes: to perform, to inform, and to persuade. We showed how each is characterized by a series of rhetorical situations and sub-types of rhetorical purposes in an effort to help you understand the complexity of meeting the demands of each rhetorical situation. Regardless of your rhetorical purpose, we believe that it is vital that you treat your audience ethically by ensuring that you perform with attention to detail, inform with all relevant information, and persuade by respecting your audience's free will. Being an ethical speaker sometimes means that you will not be an effective speaker, but obtaining communication goals through lying or subterfuge will only undermine your credibility as you continue in your life within and beyond college.

Chapter 3

Audience Analysis and Listening

Justin was talking at the national 4-H Conference, and it seemed like there were more people in the auditorium than he had ever seen in his life. Of his high school's graduating class of 13 people, he was one of the few who took 4-H seriously. He loved talking about his family's farm, his love of agriculture, and his ambition to be an agronomist (i.e., soil and plant scientist). The presentation he was giving today was on the importance of protecting the watershed from chemical and fertilizer runoff from farms–an issue he became passionate about when he noticed the stream behind his house had turned from crystal clear to dirty and brown when Agro-Business built their new chicken farm upstream. He took a deep breath and, trying to relax, began to speak.

"In 2021, the United States Department of Agriculture, the government body that oversees the farming in the U.S., reported that there were approximately 185 million chickens and 112 billion chicken eggs sold. The chicken industry is a multi-billion-dollar industry, one that ensures that people around the world are fed." As Justin began his presentation, he began to relax a little. He had practiced this presentation dozens of times before coming onto the stage and knew it by heart.

"The demand for chickens and eggs is perhaps one of the reasons why chicken farms are so large. It requires a huge investment in feed, cages, and building and maintaining the coops. However, the high demand has another unfortunate side-effect–it encourages unsafe work conditions, cutting corners, and pollution." As Justin looked out from the stage, he made sure to make eye contact with members of the audience. He wanted them to feel his interest in the topic and share it with him. However, when his eyes landed on one of the people, he noticed he was frowning. With each point and statistic that Justin relayed, the man frowned harder, huffed, rolled his eyes, and gave every indicator that he was unhappy with what Justin was saying.

"The runoff from chicken coops is one of the greatest threats to other farms, wildlife, and the environment. It creates toxic algae blooms that poisons the lakes that the streams and rivers run into, killing the fish or making them inedible. Without meaningful legislation in our state regulating chicken farm runoff, there is a real possibility that the rivers, streams, and lakes that you love to swim, fish, and kayak in will be filled with chicken waste. That's why it's important to support local poultry farmers and push your representatives to safeguard our water. Thank you." When Justin left the stage, the audience began clapping except for the man who sat with his arms crossed.

As Justin got a water bottle from the refreshment stand, he felt someone tap him on the shoulder. He turned around and it was the man from the audience. Justin could see now that his shirt had an Agro-Business label on it. "Uh-oh," Justin thought, "I'm in for it now."

"Hey, I just wanted to tell you that I listened to your presentation, and I disagreed with everything you said." The man said in a rush.

"Well," Justin replied, "Do you want to talk about it somewhere or did you just want to tell me that."

The man blinked once, obviously unprepared for Justin's polite response. "I just wanted to tell you that. You're wrong and you shouldn't say those things."

"Okay, well, thanks for your feedback." Justin said and walked away. He was glad he gave his presentation, happy he hadn't let the man's actions during his presentation distract him, and proud he had handled the confrontation

maturely. "Next time, I should remember that there might be Agro-Business employees in the audience though. I wonder how I could change my presentation to address them too?" Justin thought as he made his way through the crowd.

Public speaking has the incredible potential to influence, guide, and change human behavior. Whether you plan to perform, inform, or persuade, to be an effective speaker, you will need to do your research on your audience. One way to do this is to think of your audience's identity (see Chapter 2) and how their various demographic information can give you clues as to how to craft your message. However, just knowing your audience's demographics will not be enough to create an effective or compelling message. Instead, you will need to know more about your audience and what their motivations are before you can give a presentation that connects to them.

In order to be a good public speaker, you will need to be a good listener. Good listening skills ensure that you can effectively interact with an audience and speak to them extemporaneously about the issues they raise. Additionally, being a good listener means you are an effective audience member–able to glean information from the presentation that others might miss. Much like how people think communicating is easy (see Chapter One), many people believe that they are good listeners. However, as Stephen Covey (2004) explains:

> Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply. They're either speaking or preparing to speak. They're filtering everything through their own paradigms, reading their autobiography into other people's lives. (p. 239)

In other words, although we might be physically present and see or hear the others' communicative signals, it does not necessarily mean that we are listening deeply to their messages. This realization is even more true when we consider that we obtain a great deal of our information from non-verbal and paralinguistic (e.g., tone, inflection, or pitch) clues–not simply from spoken words (or, signed language). If we only hear or see communication, we can miss out on important information conveyed through body language and other non-discursive forms of communication.

As a public speaker or as a listener, then, it is vital that you develop your audience analysis and listening skills. These skills will serve you both within the context of public speaking and in your everyday life. For example, being hired into a new job, starting or maintaining a romantic relationship, or excelling in a class–all necessitate effective audience analysis and listening skills. In this chapter, we start by detailing the psychological and cultural components of audience analysis. Then, we explain how listening occurs and how to ensure that you practice skills that increase the effectiveness of your listening skills.

Audience Analysis

When Zahra agreed to give a presentation at the dedication ceremony for her village's new school for girls, she knew it would be a risky affair. When the Taliban had ruled the country from 1996-2001, all women were banned from education and employment. Between 2001 and 2020, opportunities for women and girls were expanded. However, when the Taliban retook control of the country in 2021, the government had banned high school for all female students

and began curtailing their privacy and autonomy. Despite this, many female students, including Zahra's daughter, were hopeful that they could make a difference after getting an education. The village's new school was an important step for her and other girls on their road to realize their dreams.

"Here is a copy of your presentation," Tajj said, handing a few pieces of paper to her. "Make sure to change the parts that I have underlined. "Make sure to read this word for word. We don't want to offend anyone."

Zahra quickly scanned over the edits. "Wait," she said, holding up one hand while gripping the sheets. "This looks like you've cut nearly everything important out of this presentation."

Tajj sighed, "It wasn't me. The council of elders looked over the presentation and they think these edits will make it consistent with the teachings of Islam. There is nothing I can do."

Tajj turned to leave, but Zahra put a hand on his shoulder, turning him back around. "How can you say that? Look at this!" she waved the papers in the air. "This means nothing now. How will my daughter learn how important this is, how important she is, if this is the presentation I have to give?"

Tajj grew red in the face, his voice rising, "You should be grateful you can speak at all. Many in the audience will be offended just by your presence. Don't risk everything by throwing a tantrum."

Zahra's mouth dropped at his words. Tajj looked remorseful, but then abruptly turned on his heel and left her standing alone. Zahra knew the words she wanted to say would offend others–they might even get her into serious trouble. "How am I going to get my message across without angering the elders?" she thought. "I need to be brave for my daughter, for the other girls. What am I going to do?"

When giving any public presentation, you need to **modify your message to the audience**. Adapting your presentation includes carefully choosing the **content** of the presentation (e.g., the organization, topic, and word choices) as well as practicing your paralinguistics and **body language** (e.g., pitch, tone, hand gestures, and stance). Presentations will be ineffective (at best) if you neglect to analyze your audience properly and fail to adjust your presentation appropriately. Every decision you make in your presentation should be grounded in audience analysis.

For example, 54% of the adult population (16-74 years old) of the United States—roughly 130 million—lack literacy proficiency (Rothwell, 2020). The conclusion we draw from this statistic is that in most public speaking opportunities in your day-to-day life, your audience will not have the information literacy, vocabulary, or reasoning skills that you have developed as a college-educated student. This does not mean that most people are stupid or ignorant, but it does mean that the difference between being effective or ineffective as a public speaker is recognizing the lacunae (or, in everyday terms, the gaps) in peoples' knowledge and crafting your presentation accordingly.

Audience analysis makes you a better communicator, whether in public speaking or interpersonally. You should ask yourself questions such as, "How much information will be appropriate for my audience?" "What terminology or materials should I use to make my topic easier to understand?" and "What do I expect my audience's reaction to be and how will I handle it?" In order to address these questions, you should think about the psychological profile of your audience and imagine yourself in their shoes. As Azjen and Fishbein (1980) detail in their *Theory of Reasoned Action*, people are motivated to change their behaviors, or engage in new ones, when a speaker can account for all the components that go into decision making.

Below are five concepts that you can address when you engage in audience analysis:

1. **Attitudes:** the audience's subjective feelings, positively or negatively valanced, about a specific person, place, idea, phenomenon, or thing. Although attitudes can be general (e.g., "I generally don't like eating at restaurants"), they provide less insight into how to perform, inform, or persuade in ways that might be effective (e.g., "What are your attitudes toward eating at this particular restaurant?"). Your audience's first impressions about your trustworthiness, status, and attractiveness are made in as little as 33 milliseconds–about the length of an eyeblink (Palomares & Young, 2017)! Therefore, you need to make sure you're doing everything you can to ensure a positive attitude from your audience. This includes the clothes you're wearing, words you use, comfort of the venue, and a host of other concerns. An audience that has a positive attitude toward you or your topic is on its way to listening deeply and attentively to your message. One with a hostile attitude might just show you the door!
2. **Norms:** the audience's belief about whether significant others think that they should engage in the behavior or believe the idea in question. By significant others, we mean those people who an audience member is concerned with obtaining their approval, fitting in with, or continuing having a relationship with. It is incredibly rare for a person to do or believe things that are out of step with their norm group. These groups can be found in your friends, family, religious institutions, political affiliations, or careers–any group that you are part of that you wish to remain a part of. As such, you will probably speak and act differently in a circumstance where you know you are talking to others who share your norms as opposed to those who don't (and you wish to convert) or are hostile.
3. **Beliefs**: the audience's acceptance or rejection of ideas, information, or insights based on their perceived truth or falseness. Belief in an afterlife, that the Earth is round, or that the Eiffel Tower is 1083 feet tall are all propositions that conjecture whether or not something is or is not true. Some beliefs are ones that can be tested, such as the Earth's shape or the height of buildings and can become facts. Others, such as, "When does life begin?" or "Where do we go when we die?" cannot become facts because they cannot be tested in an objective way. Despite not being able to test knowledge in every instance, people believe a wide variety of ideas or insights because it fits with their extended worldview, connects with their norm groups, or because it is psychologically satisfying. Recognizing your audience's beliefs will help you avoid saying or doing these things that might be culturally insensitive or out of step with the group's understanding of the issue.
4. **Values:** the audience's understanding of morality, ethics, and their understanding of what is right or wrong, beautiful or ugly, just or unjust, and desirable and undesirable. For example, the idea that we should treat others as we want to be treated is a value that is found in almost every major religion and culture. Peoples' values are often deeply held and difficult to change; however, they can be powerful motivators if you can connect your presentation to them. Alternatively, giving a presentation that challenges the values of your audience must be taken with care. Challenging (or worse, attacking) your

audience's values can make your presentation ineffective.

5. **Efficacy**: the audience's conviction that they have the abilities, resources, and knowledge to act on information. It is important to remember that even if an audience's attitudes, norms, beliefs, and values are congruent with your own, they may not feel that they can do anything about the issue you have raised. For example, passing federal legislation is an incredibly time consuming and resource intensive process–one which the average citizen has little to no power to control. As such, giving a presentation proposing new federal legislation may not be as effective as giving your audience options for action in their communities or at the state level. It is up to you to make sure you know if your audience feels efficacy toward your presentation and to provide them with the knowledge and resources necessary to act on your message.

Taken together, these five components of your audience's psychological profile make up their intentions to act on the information you have given them (Azjen & Fishbein, 1980). Although the intention to act does not guarantee that your audience will act or agree with you, it does provide us with a good set of tools to motivate your audience toward goals. Of course, you won't be able to give your audience members an extensive set of psychological tests before every presentation, but by researching your audience, the context, and the purpose of your presentation, you can increase the effectiveness of your presentation.

In addition to the psychological elements of your audience, you will need to attend to their cultural elements as well. As we discussed in Chapter Two, the culture that your audience is a part of will influence their identity. You can address the identity of your audience by utilizing the different perspectives of identity. In obtaining their demographic information, you can make conjectures about their tastes, habits, or preferences. Or you might be a part of, or research, the rituals of your audience to make sure our presentation attends to their cultural norms and doesn't violate deeply held beliefs.

Finally, in recognizing how your presentation can create or reinforce impressions about others' cultures, you can be mindful of our representations of others and resist violence. As we attend to these understandings of identity, we can connect them to the broader patterns of culture that animate identity formation.

In this case, we use **Hofstede's Five Dimensions of Culture**, to articulate broad generalizations of cultures that are useful starting points for audience analysis:



High power cultures tend to have more clearly defined lines of hierarchy and authority. Audience members are more likely to listen and internalize messages that they feel come from sources of authority, such as high-ranking government officials, medical experts, or religious leaders. Low power cultures are less likely to respect authority simply because of position or rank. Audience members are more likely to listen to friends, family, or known associates (even, or sometimes especially, when they don't have expertise in a particular subject area).



Individualistic cultures put higher emphasis on the individual and downplay or ignore responsibilities to family, friends, or community. Audience members will respond better to presentations that emphasize benefits for themselves or that play to their sense of egoism and entitlement (e.g., flattery). Collectivist cultures place more importance on friends, families, communities, or the society as a whole. Audience members are more likely to listen to appeals that make it seem that their refusal to do so will inconvenience or harm others and lead to their own ostracism.



Competitive cultures promote norms of assertiveness, ambition, and personal wealth/status attainment. Audience members from these cultures tend to respond best to appeals of strength, winning, and machismo and use metaphors of sports, battle, and struggle. Nurturing cultures stress the importance of relationships, quality of life, and care for the environment and others. Audience members from these cultures are more likely to listen to presentations that show care, humility, and equality and use personal appeals to family, friends, and the responsibility to care for others.



High-uncertainty avoidance cultures strive to avoid ambiguity, miscommunication, or uncertainty through direct communication. Audience members appreciate clear organization, detailed information, and explicit dialogue. Low-uncertainty avoidance cultures tolerate or even prefer ambiguity. Audience members are more likely to respond to stories and personal experiences, especially when those devices invite audience interpretation (rather than having a singular “point” to the story, which is more common in high-uncertainty avoidance cultures).



Long-term orientation cultures tend to value long-term planning, structure, and status as well as practicing future-orientedness. Audience members will most likely want to know how all the pieces of a plan fit together, the long-term implications of an action, and the benefits for successive generations. Short-term orientation cultures will respond best to appeals that privilege short-term gains, quick results, and instant gratification.

Audience members will be more interested in how to maximize their reward for the least amount of investment and will not know or care about how present actions may cause future problems.

Of course, **no culture is completely on one side or the other on the spectrum**. Furthermore, there are regional and even personal differences within a given culture. For example, rice farmers in southern China (who rely on joint irrigation of crops) tend to be more collectivistic than their northern, wheat farming counterparts (whose crops need less irrigated water [Talhelm et al., 2014]). Assuming that someone will act, think, or value things in exactly the same way based on their cultural background will most likely lead you to make choices in your presentation that are ineffective or even offensive. However, by identifying and planning for their cultural backgrounds, you can increase the likelihood that you will give an effective presentation.

Overall, knowing the psychological and cultural factors of your audience gives you insights in a host of presentation choices. For example, your choice of what clothes to wear, terms to use, stories to tell, or sources of information to cite should all be shaped by the findings of your audience analysis. Although some of these issues may seem readily apparent or even prescribed by your instructor (e.g., what clothes to wear on presentation day), it is important that you begin practicing your audience analysis skills right now. Do an inventory of your classmates, major, or college–think deeply about their desires, beliefs, and values, and let those insights shape your presentation. Doing so will ensure that you're prepared for any contingency and able to give an effective presentation.

Listening

"What? Say that again? Denise said, bent over her laptop. She was working on her essay for her English class and was deep in thought about what she was going to write next. Their report summarizing A Brave New World, was due in two days and she had two more essays due soon too. She had been typing furiously since meeting with Chris, barely listening to him as he discussed the parts of the book, he liked the most.

"Say that again?" Chris mimicked, with a smile on his face. "C'mon, that's the third time I've told you about the symbolism between soma in the book and the wellness industry of today."

Denise blew her bangs out of her eyes in exasperation. "I'm sorry," she muttered, only half listening to Chris. "I'm just concentrating right now."

"Oh, I get it but…" Chris said, circling the table and reading over her shoulder. "We're not going to get a good grade if you keep spelling the main character's name John Max, and not John Marx, like it should be."

Denise's eyes quickly scanned the page. Chris was right, she had misspelled the character's name throughout the essay. With a sigh, she put her head down on the desk.

Chris sat next to her. "Hey, it's no big deal. Easy fix, no worries. But let's talk about the plot again to make sure we have the same understanding of the book."

> *"Okay," Denise said. "This time, she firmly shut the lid of her laptop and met Chris' eyes. "You go first."*

Listening is not simply a physiological phenomenon; rather, it is a complex process involving both your physical and mental abilities to execute effectively. A Bodie et al. (2008) assert, listening is a process whereby a person: "(1) selects information, including the effects of schemata and attention regulation; (2) organizes and interprets information based on prior knowledge, motivation, and cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies; and (3) integrates and responds" (p. 106).

As you can see from this definition, listening requires intentional effort and cannot be reduced to simply listening or seeing another's communicative signals. Listening is a **dynamic process**, meaning it doesn't occur in a simple linear fashion (e.g., someone speaks, you listen, you respond, they listen). Rather, as you are speaking, you are also actively analyzing your audience's body language, nonverbals, and other subtle clues that they are communicating to you. This back and forth play between you and your audience is what makes the difference between a presentation that you give *at* or to an audience and one that you make *with* an audience.

Listening helps us build relationships with our friends, families, romantic partners, colleagues, and other professionals. Good listening, as a cognitive and not just physiological activity, should invite you to take the perspective of others and critically evaluate others' messages. In order to be an effective speaker, you need to understand the process of listening and how people process information. John Barth (2017) wrote:

> In life…there are no essentially major or minor characters… **Everyone is necessarily the hero of his own life story….** From the groom's viewpoint he's the major character; the others play supporting parts, even the bride. From your viewpoint, though, the wedding is a minor episode in the very interesting history of your life, and the bride and groom both are minor figures.

In other words, all humans are predisposed to think of themselves first, and to (at best) think of others in relation to our aims, goals, and obstacles. However, by developing our listening skills we can resist our inclination to put ourselves first and, instead, develop a sense of perspective taking and understanding that will be vital to the success of ourselves, our relationships, and our communities. As such, it is vital to understand the process of learning, so we can be more mindful of our efforts to improve it.

Drawing on Bodie et al. (2008), we explain three stages of listening:

1. **Presage Stage:** The presage phase consists of the personal and contextual factors that influence your ability to listen. These issues will influence the ability of the listener to listen, retain, and act on information before communication has even begun. The personal factors include specific knowledge (i.e., what does the listener know about the issue being discussed?), world knowledge (i.e., what does the listener's knowledge about the issue connect to their larger background knowledge), ability (i.e., physical capabilities of listening), memory span (i.e., how much can the listener retain?, motivation (i.e., does the listener want to listen?_, and listening capacity (i.e., what is the listener's ability to store short- and long-term knowledge in their memory?). In addition to the personal factors, the listening context will influence listening behaviors. The context consists of the objectives (i.e., what does the listener hope to

do with the new knowledge?), purpose (why is the speaker communicating and the listener listening?), climate (i.e., is the listener comfortable?), interactivity (i.e., is the listener interacting with the speaker or expected to simply receive information?), status (i.e., what is the relative status difference between the speaker and listener?), power (i.e., what is the relative power difference between the speaker and listener?), conversation rules (i.e., what is expected of the speaker and listener?), and speaker characteristics (i.e., is the speaker physically, emotionally, or cognitively attractive or dynamic?). As you can see, there are a LOT of factors that go into listening–before the speaker has even had the chance to talk. As such, it is important that you strive to attend to these issues as a public speaker before you ever get on stage to speak.

2. **Process Stage:** In the process phase, the listener engages the mental and behavioral processes necessary to meet the level of attention they wish to give to the message based on factors of the presage stage. For example, a listener who knows little about the subject and doesn't want to know more about it, is uncomfortable in a situation, and relatively the same status and power as the speaker may opt out of listening whereas if those things are all true but the listener is of lower power/status then they might try hard to listen for fear of reprisal. Taken together, the personal and contextual factors will influence the listener's choice to do one of the following things: ignore the speaker, pretend to listen to the speaker, selectively hear parts of the speaker's message, or attentively listen to the speaker's message. As the listener exerts more cognitive effort into listening, they are more likely to act on the information that is relayed–whether by disagreeing or agreeing to what is said.
3. **Product Stage:** The product phase of listening is characterized by the benefits the listener obtains through their listening behaviors. First, and most obviously, the more cognitive effort that is put into listening, the more likely it is that the listener will obtain new knowledge or understanding from the speaker. Although certainly, the listener could learn misinformation or disinformation, this would still constitute them knowing new knowledge. Second, the listener can build or dissolve relationships through their listening behaviors. Highly attentive listening, when reciprocated between two or more people, is often a foundation of a satisfying relationship. Conversely, poor listening will often lead to frustration, loss of intimacy, and anger. Finally, listening is associated with affective bonds, including empathy for others and motivation to act on information. The more one listens to a speaker, and puts cognitive effort into understanding their message, the more likely a listener will identify with the speaker and be inclined to uphold their same worldview.

Listening is a complex process, one that consists of a variety of contextual, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral factors. However, listening is also a cultural issue, one that reflects and reproduces the power between groups. For example, Gonzalez (2022) writes about how in moving from her urban, Black/Puerto Rican neighborhood to an Ivy League college, she was struck by how White students and authority figures would always try to shush or minimize the music, laughter, and perceived loudness of her and her friends. Her experiences are corroborated by a great deal of evidence that suggests that White middle/upper class people prefer, and often seek to impose on others, a level of noise that is comfortable to them. Often, these demands are couched as appeals to appropriateness, politeness, or decorum, when they actually function to privilege one group's sense of comfort over others.

Other researchers have shown that people can differentiate among socioeconomic classes and language use (e.g., the formality of chosen words) and are less likely to hire those who they perceive as having a low-class accent (Kraus et al., 2019). Furthermore, low tonal vibrations are often viewed as more dominant and

commanding their higher tones, which discriminates against people with higher-pitched voices (especially women) (see Schild et al., 2022). To address these issues, you will need to develop your understanding of how to be an effective listener and speaker in a variety of situations. To do so, we recommend that you practice intercultural competence, develop your communication style, use intentional nonverbal cues, and interact with the speaker/listener.

Practice Intercultural Competence

As Lane (2019) reported, approximately 11% of U.S. citizens have never left their home state, and 40% have never been out of the country. That is to say, many U.S. citizens have had little to no experience interacting with people from other cultures outside of the context of those people being in the U.S. As you might imagine, a person from Japan or France may act differently in their own country interacting with a U.S. citizen as opposed to being in the U.S. As a result, many U.S. citizens get very little experience practicing their intercultural competence or developing a sense of intercultural sensitivity. To do so, you should try to understand what cultures of people may be in your audience, and research the rituals, proverbs, rules, and norms that characterize their communication. Most importantly, recognize and appreciate that people who speak multiple languages, or who speak with an accent, are trying to juggle a variety of linguistic, physiological, and cognitive demands when communicating instead of denigrating or ignoring them. Often, the inability or unwillingness to deeply listen to others' accented communication is an indicator of one's limited linguistic skills (i.e., they speak only one language) and racial/ethnic prejudice.

Develop Your Communication Style

When you are in a situation with audience members who are not English first speakers, you will need to be mindful of your paralinguistics. That is, make sure that you are speaking at a slower conversational pace, articulate your words, avoid using idioms or jargon, and (when needed) don't be afraid to repeat or rephrase what you are saying. Native speakers often believe it draws attention to, and embarrassed, non-native speakers of a language to correct, repeat, or rephrase, which can be true if a native speaker does these things with the intent to shame or in a situation where they do not have a relationship with the non-native speaker. However, if clear communication is imperative then it is more important to ensure that communication is effective.

Use Intentional Nonverbal Cues

U.S. English native speakers often accompany their communication with a variety of nonverbal messages, but those gestures can quickly get you into trouble. For example, many people around the world hold up their pointing and middle fingers facing outward in a "V" for peace, but if they are facing inward then they have the same rude effect as the raised middle finger in countries such as United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa (Anderson, 2019). Conversely, other cultures may use different gestures to convey affirmation, negation, or surprise than U.S. speakers. For example, in Greece and Bulgaria, nodding one's head means "no" whereas shaking their head from side-to-side means "yes" (Sherman Media, 2020).

Interact with the Speaker/Listener

Probably the most important point to practice is the ability to observe and change your interaction patterns based on the dynamics of your communication in the moment it is occurring. This requires you to be able to know what you wish to say, monitor your audience, and change/adapt your message on the fly–a incredibly cognitively taxing process. Watch your audience for looks of confusion or consternation at your messages. This might include eye and facial expressions or whispering among your audience as they try to glean the intent of your communication. If these actions are occurring frequently, you may need to pause and ask for clarifying questions or take a short break. Do not fall into the trap of believing that "because I said it, the audience understands it." Rather, it is imperative that you display situational awareness of the issue and work to address it quickly and effectively.

Listening is a skill that is extremely difficult to master. There are a great deal of distractions, noise, and environmental factors that can make high-quality listening almost impossible. Furthermore, listening requires ethics of care, responsibility, and empathy, which are not traits that are universally shared or practiced. However, being a good listener is one of the most important skills that you can develop. From interpersonal relationships to the boardroom, the ability to be cognitively and emotionally present while others speak will help you find success.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have reviewed how audience analysis and listening skills will enhance your life. Audience analysis requires you to be attentive to both psychological and cultural aspects of your audience and to develop a repertoire of skills that can enhance the effectiveness of your communication. Likewise, an expertise in listening will ensure that you are able to be a good conversational partner, and work toward a sustained relationship with others. Take note of your audience and those you speak with–are they making gestures of affirmation (e.g., head nodding), smiling, making eye contact, etc.? Or, do they look confused, angry, or frustrated? Adjust accordingly and work to develop a style of communication that is informed and flexible.

Chapter 4

Storytelling and Public Speaking

Hasina walked to the front of the classroom to give her speech. She wiped her sweaty hands on her pants, stood up straight, and then popped into character and began with a story…

> *"Shh…" Emma whispered to her boyfriend Sam.*

Hasina looked up at her audience and continued…

> *It was midnight on Halloween and Emma was doing research for an article she was writing for their high school newspaper on the Black Angel of Death, a tombstone located at the Oakland cemetery in Iowa City. They had come to see the famously cursed tombstone with their best friends Autumn and Adam.*
>
> *"It is all moldy looking and ugly," Sam lamented.*
>
> *Emma sighed, "Don't make fun of it. You'll die. Some guy made fun of it in 1982 and he was struck by lightning the next week."*
>
> *"There's no way that is true," Adam said.*
>
> *"It is!" Emma exclaimed. "There are several stories of people getting struck by lightning after interacting with the tombstone. That's how it turned black. The stone was struck by lightning."*
>
> *"I thought it turned black because the woman, Theresa or whatever her name was, cheated on her husband," Autumn chimed in.*
>
> *"I heard the woman was killed and every year the angel turns a shade darker on Halloween."*
>
> *"I don't believe any of the stories," Sam declared. "I'm kissing it," and he began to climb up the tombstone.*
>
> *"Nope. No way. I'm going back to the car," Autumn said as she turned and began walking quickly to their car.*
>
> *Emma pulled on Sam's shirt, "Get down, Sam. Come on."*
>
> *"Do you really believe if I kiss this thing, I'll die in a week?" Sam asked and then planted a kiss on the angel's face.*
>
> *"Oh my God, did you see that?" Emma asked. "The angel's eyes turned white."*
>
> *"No way!" Adam said.*
>
> *"Let's get out of here!" Emma cried.*

"Come on, you all!" Autumn yelled from the car.

Adam and Sam looked at each other with a smirk.

"Wait a minute," Adam said to Sam, "If the eyes turn white, does that mean you are a virgin?"

The class laughed, as Hasina paused and looked around the classroom. Just as she had hoped, her classmates were on the edge of their seats and enjoying the story. Hasina began again…

"Today, I'm going to teach you about adolescent legend trips, beginning with a locally famous one…"

In the above example, Hasina began her presentation with a popular Iowa urban legend: *The Black Angel of Death*. Urban legends are impactful stories full of concrete details, emotions, and surprises that make them easy to remember and pass on to others. Like other types of stories, an urban legend may inform, advise, warn, or entertain. For this reason, urban legends also are effective attention getters in a presentation. In this chapter, we will talk about why storytelling is a powerful communication tool. We will share common dramatic structures and story arcs, provide you with tips on how to tell a captivating story, and point to the best places in a presentation to integrate a story.

What is a Story and Why do Stories Matter?

One thing we all have in common is stories. We tell stories with our families and friends, we tell stories at work, at home, and in the spaces between. But what is a story? Donald E. Polkinghorne (1988) defines story as "a meaning structure that organizes events and human actions into a whole, thereby attributing significance to individual actions and events according to their whole" (p. 18). In other words, a **story** is how what happens affects someone or something. Stories can be fictional, hypothetical, personal or, as with the case of urban legends, collective creations. Stories reflect and create values and norms, and they help us make sense of the world. Stories are useful tools to use in public speaking situations because they help you connect with your audience, make you or your topic more relatable to your audience, and ultimately make your presentation more memorable.

Stories make you human. At the *2016 Democratic National Convention*, Michelle Obama shared a powerful story about sending her children off to school for the first time as children of the President of the United States of America. She said:

> *I will never forget that winter morning as I watched our girls, just 7 and 10 years old, pile into those black SUVs with all those big men with guns. (Laughter) And I saw their little faces pressed up against the window, and the only thing I could think was, "What have we done?" (Laughter) See, because at that moment, I realized that our time in the White House would form the foundation for who they would become, and how well we managed this experience could truly make or break them. (Obama, 2016).*

Although there are elements of Michelle Obama's story that are unique to her position as the First Lady, much about this story is relatable. Any parent or caregiver, for example, can connect to the profoundly complex

emotional experience of sending your child off to school for the first time. Stories that tap into meaningful moments of the human experience and can help speakers connect to their listeners in powerful ways.

One way stories tap into the human experience is through empathy. **Empathy** is the ability to take on the perspective of others. Pelias and Shaffer (2007) define empathy as "a qualitative process in which individuals understand and share the feelings of others" (p. 99). This definition recognizes that empathy is something you can learn and suggests that empathic responses may vary in their degrees of understanding. Stories help people gain an awareness of other people's state of feeling and may even transport people into the story in a way that invites them to take on another's emotional state. In this way, stories become an intercultural encounter or a way to begin understanding someone who is different from you.

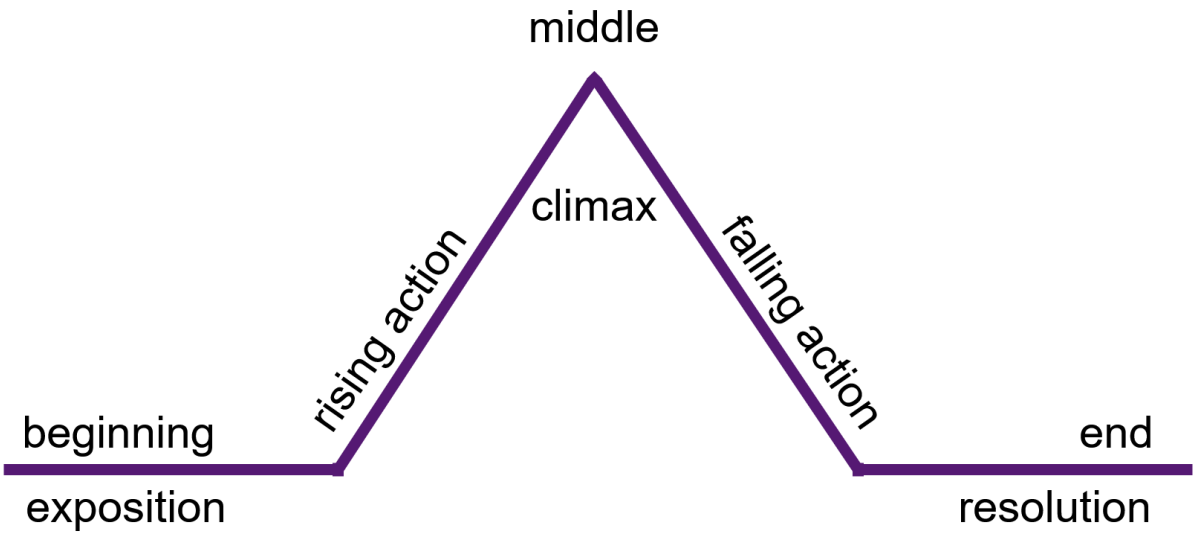
Stories can also make complicated material or abstract ideas more **accessible** and attainable. Stories not only bring information to life, they also offer an organizing structure to new experiences and knowledge. In a book on children and learning, Wells (1986) stated, "Constructing stories in the mind– or storying, as it has been called– is one of the most fundamental means of making meaning; as such it is an activity that pervades all aspects of learning" (p. 194). Visual learners appreciate the mental pictures stories evoke. Auditory learners are engaged by the speaker's voice and choice of words. And, kinesthetic learners will gain knowledge through the emotional connection and feelings stories provoke. By tapping into various types of learning, stories have the ability to make knowledge accessible.

Finally, stories matter because they make ideas stick. Multiple studies have shown that stories make information more **memorable** than facts alone. In 1969, students at Stanford were asked to memorize a list of 12 words. One group of students was instructed to study the words for 2-minutes. The second group of students was told to create a story using the words in the 2-minute time period. When asked to recall the words, 93% of the people in the story group were able to recall words, while only 13% were able to in the other group (Bower & Clark, 1969). In 2001, Banister and Ryan published a study that demonstrated that children remembered abstract science ideas more effectively when taught in a story format (Banister & Ryan, 2001). And in 2007, the Heath brothers conducted an experiment where students gave presentations and then 10 minutes later their audience was tested to see what they remembered (Heath & Heath, 2007). When it came to remembering the presentations, only 5% of the audience could recall any individual statistic, but 63% of the audience could remember the stories.

Stories have the ability to bring your presentation to life. By using stories in your public speaking, you will seem more relatable to your audience, cultivate connections with and for your audience, evoke empathy, as well as make information more attainable and more memorable. In the next section, we will teach you various dramatic structures and story arcs to aid you as you construct stories to include in your presentations.

Dramatic Structures and Story Arcs

Many scholars, philosophers, and scientists have attempted to understand how stories work throughout time. German novelist and playwright, Gustav Freytag developed what is now known as **Freytag's pyramid** in the 19th century. It has become a common tool for storytellers; perhaps you have seen it before?



Freytag's pyramid contains **five parts**: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and dénouement or resolution.

- **Exposition**: The beginning of the action is called exposition. This provides listeners with background information about the story, such as the setting in which the story takes place and character introductions. Usually, the exposition paints a picture of what "normal" life is like before introducing a conflict that disrupts the "normal" and sets the story in motion.
- **Rising Action**: Now having entered a new "normal," the protagonist or main character establishes a goal. Rising action is the set of complications or obstacles the protagonist encounters along the way.
- **Climax**: After encountering a series of complications, the protagonist must face the situation head on. The story reaches a turning point. Here the situation may go from good to bad or from bad to good.
- **Falling Action**: After the climax, conflict unravels. Life slowly returns to "normal" as the protagonist faces the consequences of their decisions. Things are still happening in the story, but action is deescalating.
- **Dénouement**: Dénouement is the French word for "untying." During this final stage of the story, loose ends are resolved, questions are answered, and a new normal is established.

Although some believe the dramatic structure laid out in Freytag's pyramid is best suited for tragedies, many stories incorporate the dramatic elements. Consider recent books, movies, or television shows you have watched recently. How many of them use a similar structure?

Another common story structure is credited to William Labov and Joshua Waletsky (1967), two researchers who studied narrative. This model was developed for personal narratives and included six parts: an **abstract** (what, in a nutshell, is this story about?); an **orientation** (who, when, where, why?); the **complicating action** (then what happened?); an **evaluation** (so what? how is this interesting?); a **result or resolution** (what finally happened?); and a **coda** (that's it, I've finished and am bridging back to our present situation). You might notice the similarities between this model and Freytag's pyramid.

In addition to understanding dramatic structures, it may be helpful to familiarize yourself with typical story arcs. A **story arc** captures the flow of the events or the plot of your story. Author Kurt Vonnegut (1981) wrote a famously rejected Master's thesis in which he identified commonly used emotional arcs in stories. "Man in

a hole" and "Cinderella" are two arcs that emerged from his work. The idea of finding commonalities among stories caught on. In 2017, Andrew James Reagan built on Vonnegut and others' work in his dissertation by examining 1,327 books. Reagan (2017) found support for 6 different story arcs:

1. "Rags to riches" (rise)
2. "Tragedy" or "Riches to rags" (fall)
3. "Man in a hole" (fall-rise)
4. "Icarus" (rise-fall)
5. "Cinderella" (rise-fall-rise)
6. "Oedipus" (fall-rise-fall)

Each story arc contains the elements of dramatic structure but how they are arranged differs. For example, "man in a hole" story arc begins with a protagonist whose life is going pretty well. Then an event or a series of events occur, and the protagonist's life takes a plunge. The rest of the story details the protagonist's life improving or slowly rising back up from the hole.

Understanding dramatic structures, story arcs, and their relationship to each other can help you determine the purpose of your story. ***Why are you including this story in your speech?*** What point is the story helping you make? It can also help you clarify your character's motivations, consider the pacing of your story, and highlight the thematic components of your story so that you can better connect it to the rest of your presentation. Now that you understand why stories matter and some basic dramatic structures and story arcs, we will provide you with tips on how to tell a captivating story.

How to Tell a Captivating Story

> *A professor of philosophy stands before his class with an empty jar. He begins to fill the jar with rocks. Once the rocks reach the top, he asks his class if the jar is full. The class agrees, the jar is full. Then the professor picks up a handful of pebbles and begins to pour them into the jar of rocks. The pebbles shift and tumble filling up the empty spaces in the jar. The professor asks the class again if the jar is full. The class laughs and agrees that, yes, now the jar is full. The professor then picks up a box of sand and pours it into the jar. The sand shifts and tumbles filling up the remaining gaps in the jar. The professor then tells the class that the jar represents their life. The rocks are the most important things in your life, such as your family, community, or health. The pebbles represent other important things in your life like school or work. The sand is little things in life that have less significance than the rocks and pebbles. If you put the sand in the jar first, there is no room for the rocks and pebbles but if you prioritize the rocks then you can fit the pebbles and sand in as well.*

Perhaps you've heard this story about rocks, pebbles, and sand? This story has been used in books, blogs,

TikTok videos, and podcasts on time management to help emphasize the importance of prioritization. It is unsurprising that the story is so successful. It uses a powerful and vivid metaphor to help readers visualize prioritization. But what makes this story stick? Why has it been repeated over and over again? To conclude this chapter, we will offer several principles for making a story stick and several additional tips for telling a captivating story.

In Chip and Dan Heath's 2007 book, *Made to Stick*, they outline principles that make stories stick: 1) Simplicity, 2) Unexpectedness, 3) Concreteness, 4) Credibility, and 5) Emotions. Consider the story about the professor and prioritization: The simple structure of the professor adding items to a jar makes the story easily repeatable. And yet, the story also piques your curiosity. Is the jar full? What is the lesson the professor is trying to teach?

In the story, the professor violates expectations by proving that the jar is not actually full. Next, the story makes the abstract concept of prioritization concrete. You can imagine taking a jar and conducting the same actions the professor does in the story. This not only makes the story concrete, but it also adds to its credibility. In the story of rocks, pebbles, and sand, the expertise of the professor is highlighted but the story also earns credibility because of its **believability**. Finally, a story sticks when you make your audience feel something.

Did this story compel you to consider your own life's rocks, pebbles, and sand? Which do you put in first? Have you struggled to "fit it all" into your life's jar? When composing stories for your presentations, consider if they meet the principles of:

1. Simplicity,
2. Unexpectedness,
3. Concreteness,
4. Credibility, and
5. Emotions.

If your story meets these criteria, it is more likely to stick with your audience long after your presentation.

> Having a good story to share is not enough. *How* you tell the story matters. In order to consider how best to tell a story, you must first recognize that some*body* tells a story. A story comes from a person with a physical body. Based on that body, audience members may make assumptions about a person's sex, race, class, age, ability, and so on. These aspects of a person, as well as the assumptions made about that person, may impact the performance and the interpretation of the story. **Prior to telling a story, consider your own identity and how it may influence the telling of the story you have chosen to share.**

For example, imagine your story includes a character with an Appalachian accent. Will you perform it with the accent? How does performing that accent affect how people perceive the character? Is it appropriate or ethical for you, based on your own identity, to take on that voice? By taking into consideration your own identity/culture (see Chapter 2), you will better be able to choose appropriate stories to share as well as thoughtful and ethical ways to share them. Recognizing that some*body* tells a story encourages you to think

about how your audience may perceive you as a speaker. Then, you can craft your stories and presentation in a way that is responsive to those perceptions.

By acknowledging that some*body* tells a story, you also identify how voice, gestures, bodily postures, and other nonverbal aspects impact storytelling. What would happen if, for example, Hasina lowered her voice and leaned in as she shared her story? Or, made eye contact with her audience? How one delivers a story can impact how it is received by the audience. To captivate an audience with storytelling, you must have strong delivery skills, which is discussed in Chapter 5 of this textbook.

Taking into consideration where in a presentation to include a story is an important element to consider. Stories can be integrated throughout a speech. They make fantastic attention getters, as demonstrated with the example of Hasina sharing an urban legend to start her presentation. Stories can also be used within the body of a speech to emphasize a point or help explain a complex idea. They may also be used at the end of a presentation to bring all your arguments together or to synthesize your material. Sometimes a speaker will tell a story across the entire presentation, placing the exposition and rising action near the start of the speech, the climax of the story within the body of the speech, and leaving the falling action and dénouement for the conclusion of the speech. Regardless of where you decide to include a story, it is important for the story to have a clear purpose and to be clearly connected to the rest of the material in the presentation.

Conclusion

Consider the story that opened this chapter: “The Urban Legend of the Black Angel of Death.” This urban legend, like many others, is simple. Teenagers go to a cemetery to test if the tales are true and get spooked. Hasina shared the story with a clear purpose: To gain the attention of the audience and introduce the concept of adolescence legend trips, the topic of her speech. The story immediately connected to her audience with an example of an experience they could relate to and, in the process, made the concept of legend trips concrete. Throughout this chapter, we have examined why storytelling is a powerful communication tool. We shared common dramatic structures and story arcs, provided you with tips on how to tell a captivating story, and pointed to the best places integrate a story into a presentation. You now have the tools to bring your presentations to life with the power of story.

Chapter 5

Vocal Delivery, Physicality, and Managing Anxiety

"Do you feel depressed or that you cannot find joy in life? Maybe, you feel like you want more, but it feels like the more you get the more you want. This creates an endless cycle of gluttony and want, where you always feel like you are either overwhelmed or under-resourced," Rama's voice is low and earnest as he speaks, his red robe flapping in the wind. He waits a few seconds as he sees the audience nod and feels their anticipation before continuing.

"Your suffering is not because you cannot get enough, it is because you want more in the first place. You suffer because life is painful, because change happens all around you without your consent or comfort, and because you think you and you alone can control your surroundings. It is your desire to change the world around you, to force it to conform to your wishes, that makes you suffer." Rama's gaze seems to encompass the whole crowd. There are a few hundred people who have joined the university's Religions of the World Festival that day, each listening to various religious leaders speak about their particular belief system.

"My friends, I have good news. You can stop your sufferings if you focus on living a life that renounces desire and focuses on connections among all living things. This is the Eightfold Path, and the Buddha showed that following it can lead to fulfillment and harmony in this life." Rama continues explaining the eight tenets while the crowd listens. Some stay the entire sermon, while others come and go, but Rama's voice never waivers.

A female student, Allison, stays after the sermon to ask Rama questions. They find a shady tree and sit beneath it, and Rama answers her queries while maintaining his low, earnest tone. By the end, Allison doesn't ask for directions to the temple or a copy of their holy text, the Tipitaka. But he reflects, that is okay. His task was to share his joy with others and hope they could find their own paths. His karma, or intentions, were pure and he knew his actions would help others. To him, there was no greater peace to be found.

When watching someone else give a public presentation–whether at a religious ceremony, private company, or a Ted Talk–what draws your interest? Certainly, their topic might be of interest to you and in fact may be the reason you chose to listen to that particular speaker in the first place. However, we would wager that a bad speaker can make even the most interesting of topics into a boring, horrible experience. Good public speaking is created by more than just its content; its medium and mode of delivery can greatly influence an audience's perception. As a public speaker, you will need to hone your public speaking skills in order to encourage your audience to listen and act on your words.

Broadly speaking, we refer to the physical attributes of a speaker as their **dynamism**. To be a dynamic speaker, you need to know when and how to use physical gestures, body movement, tone, pitch, and a host of other attributes that will be the difference between a boring and engaging presentation. In this chapter, we introduce you to three overarching components of a dynamic speaker: vocal delivery, physicality, and anxiety.

Vocal Qualities

Teresia sat at the coffee shop writing her class essay. She enjoyed the bustle of baristas and coffee-lovers, the inoffensive music, and sound of the bagel-slicer. She found she could focus on her writing better with the low-level noise than with complete silence and relished the opportunity to sit alone with her thoughts and a good cup of coffee.

As she hunched over her computer, she felt a tap on her shoulder. "Yeah," said, startled, and then angry with herself. Teresia was in the middle of transitioning from her assigned male sex at birth to female and sometimes slipped into a lower pitch of presentation when startled.

"Oh, sorry," the stranger said. They looked male, but Teresia noticed the low-cut top and make-up, marking them as fem-presenting. "I just didn't know if you needed that chair. Do you mind?" They gestured from the unoccupied chair to the table where they were sitting with others, conveying their intent of where they were taking the chair.

"Sure, of course," Teresia said, sweetly, remembering her vocal lessons. She saw the stranger's eyebrows raise, but they didn't say anything as they took the chair over to their friends.

"Stupid, stupid, stupid." Teresia thought to herself. As she had come to understand her gender identity as a woman who was assigned male at birth, she strove to make sure her body performed and looked as she thought about herself as a woman. At the same time, she often worried that she was doing too much work to fit in with others in order to be accepted by her cisgender coworkers and family. It was in these unscripted moments in public that she felt the most vulnerable. What if others started harassing her for being a trans woman in public?

She continued trying to write, but the incident kept intruding on her thoughts. Eventually, she went to the restroom. As she stood in front of the mirror, she recited "The Rainbow Passage" (a paragraph developed by speech pathologists) using the feminine voice she hoped to master. After repeating it several times, she walked back to her table to her belongings. As she packed up, the stranger walked up to her again.

"Um, sorry, hey, my name is Charlie. Sorry to ask, but, um, do you mind telling me if you're trans?"

Teresia paused, looking Charlie over suspiciously–they looked safe to talk to. "No problem, yeah, I started transitioning about three years ago. Why?"

Relief flooded Charlie's face. "Oh, that's great, congratulations! Yeah, I've been thinking about transitioning too. I just wanted to know: how did you get so good with your voice? Like, was it surgery or something else?"

Teresia smiled, "No surgery for me, although I have some friends who have had it. I've been using a vocal coaching app that a speech language pathologist recommended to me. Here, let me show you."

As Teresia's story shows, vocal delivery is an important part of how others perceive you. **Vocal qualities** can influence audience members' perceptions of your honesty, talent, intelligence, morality, and a host of other attributes. Fortunately, vocal delivery is something that you have a great deal of control over. With practice and time, you can begin to develop vocal qualities that match the type of work you wish to do—whether you want to lead, comfort, or entertain others.

There are a variety of vocal qualities that you can begin to practice to make sure you are meeting your public speaking goals, including pitch, volume, rate, pause, pronunciation, articulation, and vocal fillers.

Pitch

The **pitch** of your voice refers to the perception of a sound's highness or lowness based on the frequency of vibration of the vocal cords producing them. Vocal cord length can influence the pitch of your voice. For example, men tend to have longer and thicker vocal cords, which vibrate at a lower rate and thus lower frequency than most women. However, it should be noted that Klofstad et al. (2012) found that participants stated they were more likely to vote for people who spoke in a lower pitch than those who spoke in a higher pitch. That is, speaking lower is seen as a vocal quality of leaders regardless of gender. Additionally, the more stressed or anxious you are, the more likely you are to tighten your vocal cords and speak at a higher pitch. You want to avoid speaking at an even pitch, which is called being **monotone**. You should vary your pitch to match the emotional energy you are trying to convey to your audience. For example, speaking in a low and slow voice to convey seriousness or a fast higher voice for entertaining can signal to your audience your emotional energy through this vocal quality.

Volume

Your **volume** refers to the loudness or softness of your voice and is measured in decibels. Typically, whispering is about 30 decibels, talking normally is about 60 decibels, and a loud engine is about 90 decibels. Noises above 70 decibels can cause damage if you are exposed to them for long periods of time whereas noises above approximately 120 decibels can cause immediate damage. You should match your volume to the situation you are speaking to– a funeral is a much different context for volume than being in the stands of a football game. Varying your volume can provoke your audience's engagement. For example, you may speak in a softer voice to draw your audience in or speak in a loud voice to excite them.

As with other vocal qualities, you should avoid staying at the same level of loudness throughout your presentation as it can be boring or off-putting to your audience. If you are in a large room with a microphone, you should always use it. People with hearing loss are more likely to be able to hear you through a well-done sound system than by yelling (plus, it will save your voice from straining!).

Rate

A person's **rate of presentation** denotes how quickly or slowly you speak. Most speakers will talk at a rate of about 120 to 150 words per minute. However, this can be influenced by the region you are from (e.g., East Coast vs. the South), familiarity with the language, vocabulary, and gender. In most situations, you will want to adopt a conversational rate of presentation so you're not asking your audience to either process too much too quickly or become bored by speaking too slowly. If you feel like you are out of breath, you may be speaking too

fast and not taking proper breaths (i.e., breathing from your diaphragm). This can make you sound breathless as well as make you feel more anxious because you're starving yourself for oxygen. Make sure your rate and breathing are done in a deliberate manner.

Pause

One of the most effective vocal techniques you can use is to **pause** in certain parts of your presentation. You may wish your audience would ponder on a well-timed question, laugh at a joke, or draw their attention back to you. Whatever the reason, learning that sometimes silence is just as important as presentation is an important lesson to learn if you wish to be an effective speaker.

Pronunciation

The correct pronunciation of a word or phrase is based on what is commonly held by the majority of listeners in a communication event. For example, the difference between saying AppaLATCHa vs. Ap-pa-LAY-cha when referring to to the Appalachian Mountains may indicate whether the speaker is from Tennessee, Kentucky, or the Carolinas (AppaLATCHa) or from Maryland, West Virginia, or Washington DC (Ap-pa-LAY-cha). Although it may be tempting to say that there is a "right way" to pronounce the word, a better way to think about the issues is to match your speaking to what will be most effective to your audience. For some people around the world, certain vowels, consonants, and consonant blends (e.g., the -th sound) can be difficult. In order to ensure you are being an effective speaker, it is important to practice in an effort to mimic the broadly based practices of your audience.

Articulation

Closely related to pronunciation is the concept of articulation, which refers to how clearly, cleanly, or precisely you say a word or phrase. For example, in places such as Oklahoma, Arkansas, Tennessee, and West Virginia, it is typical to hear someone say "Mon-dee" or "tah-mah-ra" instead of "Mon-day" or "too-mar-row." Like pronunciation, it is important to that you articulate your words in a way that is consistent with your audience. Going to a place that has their local customs of articulation and speaking with a different articulation can lead people to think you are are "puttin' on airs" or "talkin' down to them" (i.e., being arrogant) or speaking in a way that is viewed as "backward" or "earthy."

Vocal Fillers

One of the most common, and problematic, vocal qualities you can adopt is to use vocal fillers. These include unscripted pauses; saying phrases like "uh," "um," or "like;" or other extraneous sounds that do not convey intended meaning. Usually, speakers rely on vocal fillers when they are anxious, stressed, or unpracticed. They also may be a part of your normal speech habits that are influencing your public speaking skills. Regardless, effective speakers reduce or eliminate vocal fillers from their presentations to give a greater sense of confidence to their audience.

Vocal qualities, while influenced by your body, can be **changed, improved, and tailored to address the needs of your**

audience. To do so, though, you will need to practice deliberately and often to obtain your desired presentation. Practicing your presentation is no different than practicing a difficult piece of music or a technically challenging basketball strategy–all require the repetition of good practices until they become natural parts of your execution.

We recommend practicing in front of a mirror, video recording device, and/or close friend to get the most out of your practice time. These types of activities have the benefit of allowing you to see and intervene into your public speaking practices and improve or correct them before your presentation. Do not simply write your presentation out and read it many times in order to try to memorize it. Not only does this not help you practice your vocal qualities, but it also makes you cognitively rely on your notes which you may not have access to when giving your presentation. Instead, practice like you want to perform–as a dynamic, engaging, and engaging speaker.

Physicality

Yakiv liked to dance. No, liked was too simple a word–he loved it, was obsessed with it, needed it. From a young age Yakiv was known in his village Baranivka, Ukraine as "the dancing boy." He practiced each day, throwing himself into the physicality of the folk dances of his village and people. He especially loved the Hopak, a dance that was developed in the 15th century by Cossaks and has had a rich history since then. Traditionally danced by men, the hopak was characterized by acrobatic feats, improvised moves, and rigorous physicality.

Yakiv had been invited to dance the hopak along with men from surrounding villages for a local festival. Their dance would be at the end of the ceremonies, hopefully igniting the passion of his friends, relatives, family, and neighbors.

As he got ready, one of the other dancers and his friend, Andriy, came up to him. "Are you ready?" He asked, excitement in his eyes.

Yakiv smiled, "Of course! I can't wait to get out there!" He could hear the ceremonies as they progressed and knew that it was getting close to their time to go onstage.

Good! Andriy replied. "Make sure you have everything you need. We need everything to be perfect."

Yakiv nodded and as he was about to agree, he heard the local mayor introduce their set. He and the other dancer filed out on the stage and took their places.

Suddenly, the music started, low and forceful and the men on the dance floor began to squat low, legs kicking out. As they continued, the tempo of the music increased, going faster and faster. The dancers in turn, began jumping, kicking, pirouetting faster, their physical feats becoming more and more impressive as the songs continued.

Yakiv was lost to the music. He closed his eyes and gave a particularly powerful kick, only to have his shoe fly off and hit an audience member square in the face. Although apparently

> *uninjured, the audience member began yelling and Yakiv, face red in embarrassment, didn't know what to do. Someone picked his shoe up and threw it back to him and, with a split-second decision, he flipped high in the air and caught it as he came down. He then put it on to the thunderous applause of the audience (even the man who got hit with the shoe grudgingly clapped) and continued dancing. It may not have been perfect, but he knew their dance would be the talk of the town for years to come!*

The physicality of a public communicator can greatly influence an audience's perspective of their message. Sometimes, as in Yakiv's case, a flying shoe can be embarrassing, and may have very little impact on the communication event–especially if the speaker (or, in this case, dancer) is able to recover quickly. Conversely, physical gestures, facial expressions, and body language can amplify messages in a presentation and make them more entertaining, sad, or frightening. Developing a strong physical presence in public speaking is not easy and requires patience and practice. However, the difference between a presentation with well-timed and well-rehearsed physical movement and one that lacks such movement is the difference between success and failure.

There are five areas that you can work on to develop a better physicality when public speaking: 1) appearance, 2) eye contact, 3) facial expressions, 4) gestures, and 5) movement.

Appearance

As we have discussed earlier, some parts of your appearance are a part of your body and identify and are difficult, if not impossible, to change or alter. However, there are many parts of your appearance that are under your control that you should make sure to check before you give a public address. Removing your jewelry and pinning long hair up will ensure that you don't fidget, tug, or stroke them when you are nervous. If you are in a professional setting, you may spend extra time grooming or styling yourself to make sure you look credible to your audience. You should dress for the occasion by wearing clothing that is **appropriate for the situation** (i.e., typically at least as well if not a little better than your audience is dressed). If you are presenting through video, avoid harsh or colors (e.g., hot pink or yellow) or busy patterns (e.g., stripes, plaid, or polka dots). Make sure to take the weather into consideration if giving your presentation outdoors!

Eye Contact

Your eye contact with your audience is one of the most important aspects of public speaking. If you are constantly reading your notes or reading off a PowerPoint slideshow, your audience will quickly become disengaged. Although some may suggest looking out over the head of your audience to make it appear as if you are making eye contact, we stress that you should avoid this strategy. Audience members will be able to tell you are not looking at them and will wonder if you are looking at something more interesting than your presentation (which will prompt them to turn around and look instead of listening to you). Likewise, you should avoid looking only at your best friend or the one person who is nodding. This will exclude the rest of the audience and make them bored. Instead, you should practice looking at the members of your audience, letting your gaze slowly focus on an audience member for 1–2 seconds before moving to the next audience member. Do this as you look across the audience throughout your presentation, so all members of the audience get your

attention. This will make sure that your audience members feel included in your presentation and increase the likelihood that they will pay attention.

Facial Expressions

Your use of facial expressions can be a great way to convey the tone and feel of your presentation to your audience. For example, you can have a large smile (and, maybe a pause!) when telling the punchline of a joke or frown when giving a statistic that is particularly troubling. It is difficult for your audience to appreciate the emotion of the situation if you do not use appropriate facial expressions. Much like a voice that is monotone, a face that does not change expression to match the emotions of the content of the presentation is boring and off-putting. You should strive to keep your facial expressions neutral and open when not making an intentional facial expression, especially if you feel like your natural or resting facial expression is uninviting.

Gestures

Many gestures are made with your hands, but others utilize your shoulders, legs, arms, and head as well. Some gestures are considered **emblems** (i.e., gestures with a culturally unique meaning). For example, an upraised middle finger is a rude emblem in the United States. However, as we have previously noted, emblems are culturally unique, which means that the same gesture can be interpreted differently depending on your cultural context. Therefore, it is imperative that you research your audience to ensure that you use culturally appropriate gestures. Similarly, you may use gestures called illustrators, which emphasize or clarify a point. Opening your arms wide can be an illustrator of invitation or openness whereas crossed arms may indicate standoffishness or disagreement. Make sure your gestures are at an appropriate height (typically at around chest high), otherwise it may look as if your hands are moving at or below your waist level (which can be embarrassing!). Furthermore, your gestures should be big enough that all members of your audience can see them. Gestures that cannot be seen are gestures that are ineffective to your presentation!

Movement

The way you use the space–whether behind a podium, in front of a class, or on a stage–can be an important factor in the effectiveness of your presentation. Often, novice speakers (who are nervous) either lock themselves in a single spot and never move or pace back-and-forth like a caged tiger. Neither strategy, as you may imagine, is effective. Instead, you should move on key parts of your presentation including transitions from one main point to another, to emphasize a point, or to convey meaning. In other words, your movement should be deliberate and rehearsed.

Posture

The position of your shoulders, back, hips, and knees relative to each other make up your body's posture. Your posture can communicate a great deal of information, even if you are not conscious of it. For example, having hunched shoulders over a podium, which you grip tightly, may indicate that you are extremely nervous. As a neutral position, you should stand, body facing forward toward your audience with your shoulders, hips, and knees parallel to each other. Your knees should be slightly bent (do NOT lock your knees or you may faint). If

behind a podium, your hands should be slightly elevated off the lectern (do not simply rest your hands on top of it) so they are ready to make gestures.

As we have written many times already, it is important that you **practice your physicality** in order to ensure that it is effective for your audience. However, one challenge you may encounter is being **over-rehearsed**, which can make your physical movements seem scripted and inauthentic. Once you have practiced your presentation to the point that you feel confident in your presentation, we recommend you practice it a few times with drastically different physical movement, gestures, and vocal qualities. Doing so will increase the likelihood that the presentation remains fresh and interesting to you, which your audience will feel when you present it. Finally, make sure your physical gestures, facial expressions, and body language are BIG. When people are nervous, they tend to be more reserved, which means that what they perceive to be a normal amount of physicality (or vocal variety) is quite subdued. Practice being bigger, louder, and more physical than you think you need to be so you can better match the level of energy you audience experts.

Managing Anxiety

Noel shifted nervously in her chair. Her professor had requested that all the students make their informative presentation about their own identity. They were supposed to pick two identities that were important to them, research their background, and share what they found out about themselves to the rest of the class. Noel had picked being adopted and a first-generation college student as her identities.

She looked down at her notes, rereading the bullet points she had made about her life: her biological parents, her adopted parents, struggles and triumphs, obstacles, and the means to overcome them, all condensed into three little cards. She smiled as she reread what she felt when her foster parents had finally been able to adopt her: joy, underlined three times with an exclamation point next to it.

Noel? You're next," Dr. Myers said, jolting her out of her reverie.

Yeah, of course, I'm ready. Noel said as she hurried to the front of the room. She looked out at the rest of the students and began telling her story.

Imagine yourself at eight years old. You haven't seen your dad in two days, which is pretty typical. Your moms at work and won't be home for another couple of hours. It's 8 PM. You're hungry because you haven't eaten since lunch at school. You decide to make mac 'n cheese on the stovetop. You've seen mom do it before–how hard can it be? You get the water in the pot, spilling it everywhere because everything is too high for you." At this point, several students in the audience chuckle at the mental image of a young Noel comically sloshing water everywhere.

She continues. "You put it on the stove and wait for it to boil. Once it goes, you reach up to move it so you can put the boxed noodles in it but when you touch the handle it's too hot because you didn't set it right on the stove top. This scares you; you jolt the pot too hard, sloshing the boiling water all over your face and hands. You're not seriously hurt, but now you're hungry, hurt, and most of all scared of what you know could have been a lot worse and also scared at the mess

you've made. Mom doesn't come home that night from work. You go to sleep, not knowing whether the burns or the loneliness hurts worse. You start to feel…" But at this point, Noel can't go on anymore. She starts crying, deep racking sobs as her childhood feelings resurface. She feels more than sees the other students' eyes on her. Is it with pity? Anger? Boredom?

"Get it together," She thinks to herself. "You've gone through worse than this and now you're here!" She takes a deep breath, and restarts. "You start to feel like you don't belong. Anywhere. But, the next day, you meet a nice lady, Maria, from Child Services. At first, you're afraid to leave your home and your parents. But that was when you met your foster parents, Cindy and Bill, who will later adopt you legally. That's my life, and how I started my journey being the first in my family to go to college." She finished the rest of her presentation, cheeks still damp with tears, but smiling at the warmth she felt when she thought of her adopted mom and dad.

When she finished, the students and Dr. Myers applauded. "Great job Noel," Dr. Myers said as she took her seat. "Way to stick it out and finish your presentation. I know that was hard for you, but we're all grateful you shared your story."

Communication and public speaking apprehension are perhaps the most well-researched concepts in communication and media–and for good reason. Many people suffer from both forms of anxiety and everyday life—from your family to your job–is characterized by communicative interactions. Communication apprehension is an individual's "level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons (McCroskey, 1978, p. 192). A person with high communication anxiety is someone we might refer to as shy or awkward. Communication apprehension is anxiety a person feels regardless of the situation–whether the context is one person or one hundred, they will feel stress. Public speaking apprehension, as you might expect, is anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with people in a public situation (Dannels, 2014).

Almost all speakers report feeling some amount of public speaking anxiety before, during, and after giving a public presentation. In fact, some speakers believe that they do better when they experience a low level of anxiety than when they experience no anxiety at all. This indicates that it may not be possible, or even desirable, to eliminate your public speaking anxiety. Rather, it is to reduce and mitigate it to a manageable level so you can focus on the content, vocal qualities, and physicality that make up a great presentation.

As such, we recommend five ways that you can identify and reduce your public speaking apprehension (Dannels, 2014):

- **Systematic Desensitization:** This technique focuses first on the type of physiological response you might have to public speaking anxiety. For example, does your heart rate increase, hands get sweaty, vision become blurry, or breathing become fast and shallow (or, most likely, a combination thereof)? Then, you identify what causes your physiological reactions–is it the number of people in the audience? The type (e.g., friends or family are fine, but strangers are more stressful)? Mode (e.g., face to face as opposed to video recorded)? After taking this inventory, you need to put yourself in situations where you feel safe, but a little uncomfortable vis-a-vis the physiological trigger. For example, if a large audience gives you anxiety, then give your presentation to a smaller audience first, and then to progressively larger

audiences. As you do so, check in with yourself and your physiological and cognitive reactions–how's your breathing? Your heart rate? As you continue to practice, you should experience less and less anxiety with every performance as you gradually reteach your body to be desensitized to the external stimuli that were causing you stress. You can also practice this method through visualization if you cannot give your presentation in different contexts (e.g., give your presentation while imagining larger and larger audiences) while practicing muscle relaxation. Eventually, your body will learn to associate public speaking with relaxation (rather than danger) and you will feel less nervous.

- **Cognitive Modification or Rational Emotive Therapy:** In this approach, you should identify the negative or irrational thoughts you might have about your audience that causes you to feel stress (e.g., "I'm ugly," "I have a funny voice," "I don't know anything about this topic.") You should then imagine yourself replacing those thoughts with positive thoughts or with coping statements. For example, changing "Everyone will think I'm dumb" with "I've done a lot of research on this topic and others need to know this information" is a great start. It not only replaces a negative thought with a positive one, it also reminds you that you know more about your topic than your audience and that they will benefit from your knowledge.
- **COM Therapy:** Oftentimes, the people who are the most nervous about public speaking are stressed because they put a lot of pressure and importance on giving a perfect performance. The problem with this approach is that as soon as you make a mistake–mispronounce a word, skip a line you memorized, or forget a date on a citation–you get extremely embarrassed and then stressed. It is important to remember that if you–not your audience– have memorized parts or all of your presentation; that is, if you miss a word or phrase or mess up there is a good chance that your audience will not even be aware of it unless you say something. To that end, COM Therapy teaches that approaching a public presentation as a conversation rather than as a performance, makes it feel more casual and less high stakes. As a result, making minor errors is something that is expected, and not noticed, by the audience and should be viewed as less stressful to you.
- **Visualization:** You may have heard of the old advice of imagining your audience naked; however, we do not endorse this prescription. Instead, visualization is taking the time to imagine you successfully giving the presentation, achieving your course goals, and making connections through your presentation. Much like cognitive modification or rational emotive theory, you should try to replace images of failure or errors with these more positive thoughts. Associating public speaking with rewards, rather than punishments, can help reduce stress and increase your chances for success.
- **Skills Training:** Sometimes people feel nervous about public speaking because they do not have, or have not practiced, the skills to be good at it. Public speaking, like any other activity, is not something that people are naturally good at; even people who have a talent or knack for it have to train and practice in order to excel. In this way, public speaking is no different than learning a sport, hobby, or musical instrument; that is, your performance will be directly related to the amount of time and effort you put into developing your expertise. If you feel that you are anxious about public speaking because you have limited experience or instruction in it then you should strive to give yourself opportunities–in your dorm room, at your family gatherings, or religious ceremonies–to practice.

Past research indicates that none of these strategies is inherently better than the others; rather, you need to **identify**

what kind of anxiety you are experiencing and why before choosing the strategies (or strategies) that best address your needs. For example, if you feel intense anxiety, stomach cramps, or profuse sweating at the thought of public speaking then you may be best served through desensitization and cognitive modification training. Conversely, if you feel like you don't have anything to offer your audience then you may need skills training or visualization. If you feel public speaking anxiety to the point of tears, fainting, or vomiting, then we suggest seeing a trained therapist who can work with you to develop more strategies for addressing your needs.

Conclusion

Vocal quality, **physicality**, and **public speaking anxiety** are three areas that speakers need to develop in order to give an effective presentation–regardless of situation, topic, or audience. As we have mentioned, the only way to improve in any of these areas is practice–try out different voices, experiment with different body positions, and develop your public speaking persona through intentional and deliberate practice. We find that students that give boring or uninteresting presentations, or are incredibly nervous through their presentation, are often those who practice the least. Do not develop your presentation the night before and expect to give a great performance the next day. Plan and visualize success and you will be surprised at how naturally it comes!

Chapter 6

Identity, Culture, and Communication

One day, a scorpion wanted to cross a river but couldn't swim, so it asked a frog to carry it across. The frog hesitated, saying, "I can bring you across, but I'm afraid you might sting me once I start to carry you."

"I would never hurt someone who tried to help me!" the scorpion exclaimed, "Besides, if I did sting you, you'd die, and then we would both drown."

The frog considered the scorpion's words and couldn't find a reason it would sting him. "Okay, climb on me then," said the frog and they began to cross. Midway across the river, the scorpion stung the frog, who began to seize up and drown as the poison ran through it.

The dying frog gasped, as it began to sink, "Why would you sting me? Now I'm going to die and you're going to drown!"

The scorpion replied "I am sorry, but I couldn't help it. It's in my nature." – Russian Fable

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What is identity? What makes you, you? Is it, as the fable might suggest, traits and dispositions hardwired into our very being? Are we determined by our biology to be certain types of people with little or no recourse for change or growth? Although certainly our genetics and physiology influence our behaviors, there is still a great deal of our personalities, attitudes, and beliefs that are a part of the society, family, and time period we are born into. For example, U.S. **culture** tends to be more extroverted, individualistic, competitive, and more likely to have loose-knit family structures when compared to other countries around the world.

One area where this manifests most is the way that older people are treated in our society. Whereas it is common in some countries to live with elder relatives and have as many as three or four generations living under one roof, many older people in the U.S. live by themselves until they either die or are unable to take care of themselves and enter elder care facilities. As a result, many U.S. Americans spend a great deal of time and resources making sure they can be independent in their later years, which shapes the way they approach work, family, and relationships over their lifespans. Culture influences our understanding of ourselves and our place in society, giving us important clues into how to live and be in the world.

The belief that who a person is or will be is determined by only nature or culture is, unsupported; Rather, it is only by understanding the two that we can develop a holistic picture of our potential as humans. One of the

most important lessons about nature and culture is that the way we communicate about the two influences how we understand **identity**. What makes identity so complicated is how easy it is to believe that who we are is just natural and not the product of social and cultural norms.

For example, in the U.S. a person who is 17 years and 364 days old is still considered a child whereas an 18 is endowed with the rights and responsibilities of an adult. The difference between the two can be a matter of seconds and the criteria of 18 years (rather than 16, 21, or 25) is a social mandate not a biological one. However, we treat these two people as separate classes and act as if such a distinction is obvious and immutable. Truth be told, there is probably much more difference between an 36-year-old and an 18-year-old, and yet both are legally and socially speaking, both considered the same things—adults. Genetic traits, environmental factors (e.g., pollution), family dynamics, personal triumphs and trauma, social norms, and everyday decisions constitute who you are and who you can or will be. When we confuse cultural conventions for biological processes, we can quickly find ourselves with a language for identity that is insufficient for appreciating the complexity of the human experience across time and geography.

When studying identity, culture, and communication, we must understand that there is no right or correct way to approach the topic. Rather, there are a variety of approaches, each with its strengths and weaknesses, that are appropriate to different contexts. You'll need to know all three because each offers different insights into the way that communication shapes and constrains our ability to imagine and pursue who we are and want to be.

Identity/Culture as Demographics

Keisha starts to smile as she sees the "Social Media Manager" placard they just hung outside of her new office. She graduated from college just a few years ago, but it seems like it was an eternity before she landed her dream job at Widget Tech. As she enters the office and sits behind her desk, she looks around and silently revels in her new found life.

Her thoughts are interrupted by a knock on the door. It's Steve, who is standing in the doorway, grin on his face, and a load of binders in his arms.

"Feels good, right?" he exclaims. "Sorry that I can't let you enjoy it longer. But, we need to work on our media campaign ASAP.

"Of course," Keisha says, bringing out her laptop. "Let's get to it!"

After a few hours of reviewing the products that they want to highlight in the campaign, they decide it's time to think about who they want to target with their social media outreach.

Steve says, "So, normally, we reach out to the demographic that buys the most widgets–white or Asian, between 25-35, urban, married with a family of 1-2 kids, and with a household income of $100K or more. What do you think? Is that still our target audience?

Keisha looks over the data from the public relations firm that produces their demographic reports. "I think we might be able to increase our market share if we look at the 30-35 African American and Hispanic

> *groups. Especially those that are single with an income of $80K or more. If we can start to gain ground there, then we can start to expand to other subgroups within those categories."*
>
> *Steve gives her a pleased, appraising look, "See? This is why we hired you! I totally agree. Let's plan on that being our next big outreach push."*

Perhaps the most common way to think about identity is as **demographics**. From political surveys to governmental forms, people fill out information regarding who they are. This information ensures businesses that they aren't wasting money trying to build relationships with people who do not want or need them. Similarly, governmental data helps local, state, and federal agencies direct resources to communities, promote tourism, or develop new programs. Without demographic data, a great deal of time and money would be wasted by non-profit groups, political campaigns, and businesses as they try to meet the needs of their clientele.

Although each person can be understood as an individual (with their own unique sense of tastes, habits, and needs), demographic analysis helps us understand the broad trends that characterize groups or **market segments**. Demographic analysis allows individuals to effectively craft their messages for their audience. Once an audience is identified for communication messaging (e.g., public relations, political campaign, etc.), an organization can begin using targeted messages to encourage purchases, change or reaffirm opinions, or develop brand loyalty.

For example, Dove's recent shifts away from using thin, white models to showing models with a variety of body sizes, shapes, and colors are a direct result of recognizing the demographics of their target audience. Although you may not think of yourself consciously as a series of demographic boxes, the truth is that who you are demographically can be used to make predictions about what you will buy, who you will marry, where you will live, and a host of other issues. Below are some of the most important demographic characteristics that organizations base their decisions on various factors.

Sex

A person's sex is the assigned, legal status of a person based on physical attributes, such as genitals, skeletal structure, brain structure, and chromosomes. Traditionally, Western countries have recognized "Male" and "Female" as the two categories of sex. However, this tradition is quickly changing. In the United States, over 20 states recognize a third option on government documents as does the federal government. This is consistent with other cultures/nations, who recognize third options of sex, such as two-spirit (some Native American tribes), Muxe (Mexico), Hijras (India), and Bakla (Phillipines) (BBC, 2016).

Gender

An individual's gender is the ways a person identifies or presents their sex. Gender consists of the behaviors, rituals, habits, and norms that people perform to be recognized as their desired identity. This can range from traditionally masculine to feminine forms of communication; that is, ways of communicating that society typically associate with one's sex. For example, painting nails, wearing dresses or slacks, length of hair, and vocal pitch can all be ways of expressing one's gender.

Race

When a person identifies with a race, they are typically attributed their identity based on physical and geographical attributes. In the United States, individuals usually pick some combination of African American/Black, Asian, Hispanic/Latinx/Latino-Latina, Native American, Pacific Islander, and White. Although we might think of race as self-evident and biological, they are better understood as broad social categories used to differentiate groups of people. For example, a Black woman born in Ethiopia may not think about herself as "Black" instead, she might think of herself as a "woman" or "Ethiopian" or part of the "Hamer tribe." However, if she were to travel to the United States, many people would perceive her as "Black" and interact with her based on that identity.

Ethnicity

The ethnicity of a person refers to the cultural, social, religious, and linguistic experiences and expressions that characterize their ethnic identity. Taking the example from above, the Ethiopian woman–although physically looking like a Black person–probably has different cultural expressions than a typical African American. That is, her ethnicity is influenced by her nationality, tribal identity, gender, and a host of other factors that influence her norms, habits, rituals, and linguistic attributes.

Age/Generation

Generations are generally understood as groups of people in similar age, and have similar ideas, experiences, expectations, and attitudes. Typical names for generations include Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Zoomers. There are broad trends that can be ascribed to different generations, such as the desire for material possessions (Boomers) as opposed to life experiences and travel (Millennials) (Bacon, 2015).

Socioeconomic Status

A person's socioeconomic status (SES) is their earning potential, income, occupation, wealth (e.g., stocks, property, or financial assets), and educational attainment. This status can be portrayed in different ways, such as Low/Medium/High or Poverty/Working-class/Professional/Wealthy. There is no one way to measure SES nor agreed upon labels. Furthermore, most U.S. citizens do not describe their SES as a part of who they are. However, their SES is an important indicator of their lifestyle, financial choices, and leisure activities.

Location

Whether globally, nationally, or locally, a person's location can predict important components of their life, such as homeownership, socioeconomic status, nationality, and dialect. Furthermore, where a person lives can be a strong indicator of what types of goods and services they may wish to purchase. Not only are consumer patterns correlated with location, individuals' regionalisms, sayings, and dialects change as well. For example, if you wanted to order a Dr. Pepper in the U.S., you would order a "soda" on the coasts, a "pop" in the Midwest, or a "coke" in the south (Business Insider, 2018).

Political Affiliation

Within the U.S., party identification is a strong predictor of a person's moral, religious, and familial beliefs. The role of spirituality, occupation, friendship, and recreation in a person's life are valued differently based on one's identification with the Republican or Democratic party (or with a third party). In fact, the types of differences, and their magnitude, between people who identify with the two parties in the United States are much higher than the differences found among people from other countries based on their country's political parties (Pew, 2021). Additionally, studies consistently show that an individuals' party loyalty rarely changes, even in periods of uncertainty. For example, since 2018, only about 1 in 10 Republicans switched to the Democratic Party and about the same amount of Democrats switched to Republican (Pew, 2020).

Brand Loyalty

Ford vs. Chevy, Coke vs. Pepsi, PC vs. Mac–the types of products one uses can send a powerful message to others about their values, attitudes, and beliefs. Some products capitalize on this phenomenon through marketing. For example, some products tout their environmental benefits, others assure the consumer that charitable donations are made with their purchase, and others tie their product to peoples' desire to be perceived as strong, beautiful, or intelligent. Importantly, people often unthinkingly communicate their brand loyalties (and, as a result, parts of their lifestyle) to others everyday through their clothing, jewelry, food, and transportation.

As communicators, demographics provide us important information about ourselves and others. For example, in giving a speech, we might do an inventory of our own demographics–are our attributes valued by our audience? And, what are the audience's demographics? Are they consistent with ours as the speaker? In order to inform, persuade, or motivate others, it will be important for you to understand the answers to these questions so as to **craft your messages to be best received by your audience**. Whether creating a public relations campaign, informing others about an important political issue, or overseeing the work of a group within an organization, knowing the demographics of your audience can be the difference between success and failure. Although certainly not guaranteed, conducting a demographic inventory of your target audience and yourself will increase your chances for success.

One of the strengths of this approach to identity is that it provides very clear rubrics for ascertaining success within a communicative event. A person should evaluate what demographic information is relevant to their communicative purpose and conduct the necessary surveys, polls, and research to obtain their information. Identity, in this view, is readily apprehendable, standardized, and stable–a series of boxes to be checked. As such, it makes it easier to describe, explain, and predict human behavior based on their demographic information. At the same time, the principal weakness of this approach is that it does not give us a very nuanced understanding of identity, particularly as it relates to culture.

For example, although we might know a person identifies as Latinx, and they may enjoy guacamole, demographic analysis will not help us learn about the role of guacamole as a part of culture and identity rather than just a form of food. Guacamole is a dish with a deep history, starting in the ancient Aztec society (the Nahuatl word for it was āhuacamolli, meaning avocado sauce) where it was eaten for its nutritional

value as well as used as an aphrodisiac (Food Origins, n. d.). How one makes guacamole may be connected to the region the family came from in Mexico; it may also be a part of their family recipe passed down over generations–with differences based on personal hardship, creative flair, or a funny anecdote. To get at these specific and nuanced details, we'll need an approach to culture that is more sensitive to the ways people create identity.

Identity/Culture as Social Constructions

> *Darrin looked down at his white robes and then back across the congregation room to his friend Sam. Sam was wearing the same robes, although he hadn't noticed Darrin's gaze; instead, he was staring out across the congregation with eyes that seemed to encompass everyone. Both men had recently turned 18 and had been given the task of passing out the communion wine and wafers.*
>
> *"We are gathered today to take communion, rejoicing in He who died for our sins. Darrin, Sam, please pass out the wafers," intoned Pastor Bob, with hands lifted high.*
>
> *Both men quickly walked around the room, passing out the wafers. Each person took one, many people using both hands to cradle it until the proper moment. When everyone had been served, Pastor Bob recited, "Jesus said, 'This is my body which was given for you, do this in remembrance of Me," and, as one, the entire congregation ate their wafer.*
>
> *"The blood of Jesus was shed for our sins, let us rejoice for his sacrifice," Pastor Bob declared. "Darrin, Sam, pass out the communion wine."*

To understand identity and culture as a social construction, we must think of the rituals, norms, proverbs, and rules of humans as contextual and historically based. That is, who we are is inextricably linked to the people who came before us and who surround us. Take Darrin–he identifies as a Christian, but what socially constructs him as such? Most obviously, he is partaking in a ritual that is common in many churches (although practiced differently according to denomination or sect): communion. But, also think about the specific ways that it is practiced in his congregation: his attire, his age, the pastor's speech while it is given, the way people hold or consume the wafer, the order by which they consume the bread and wine, and more. All of these practices have deep, communicative meaning–they create or constitute Darrin's identity as a Christian.

As communication scholars such as Philipsen (1975) might assert, identity as a social construction relies on two important components: avowed and ascribed identities. **Avowed identities** are a person's self-perception, and encompasses all of the beliefs a person has about their own sense of self. On the other hand, **ascribed identities** are those perceptions that others have of a person based on that person's group membership. The communicative interplay between avowed and ascribed identities–what communication scholars call **intersubjectivity**–is the way that communication builds or creates identities. That is, the way that we come to know who we are and where we belong is through the dynamic, ongoing process of communication with our peers.

An important component of understanding identity as socially constructed is to treat culture as a historical and dynamic process. Unlike the demographic approach, where a person may be labeled as gay, white, or Muslim and that identity is perceived to be uniformly understood, a social construction perspective is

interested in understanding how those cultural groups mold, change, and adapt to influence people in their day-to-day lives. Take, for example, the idea that identity is associated with one's lineage. Many people in the U.S. might say, "I'm 3/4ths Japanese" or "I'm half Italian on my mom's side."

However, looking at lineage is not as straightforward as it seems. Take the history of Native Americans and African Americans as it relates to lineage or, as it was called, blood quantum laws. For many Native Americans, proving that one's blood quantum is high enough to merit enrollment into the tribal records and be recognized as a part of the tribe is important. Conversely, African Americans were subject to the one-drop rule, where any lineage of Black people in the family automatically made that person Black (and, as a result, disenfranchised through a host of Jim Crow laws). In this case, many people would deny or hide their Black ancestry because of discrimination and racism against Black people. In short, what appeared to be self-evident about identity (lineage), is in fact, historically and contextually driven.

Treating culture as historical and dynamic means we must understand how groups of people come to establish the parameters of in-group membership. These include rituals, proverbs, rules, and norms.

Rituals

A ritual consists of a social performance of patterned behavior to effect or participate in serious life (see Rothenbehuler, 1998). There are few components to unpack in this definition. First, we can think of ritualized communication as a performance–that is, that it has a script that a person either follows (and is most likely rewarded) or doesn't (and is most likely punished or seen as deviant). These scripts manifest in all aspects of human life and become ingrained over time to appear as normal or natural. Take the example of communion, many denominations believe that the bread and the wine are not just symbolic representations of Jesus' body and blood, but actually become those things upon consumption (i.e., transubstantiation). To an outsider, the idea that people are literally eating a person's body and drinking their blood may seem barbaric or weird, but to many Christians, it is a routine and normal occurrence. Second, the idea of *serious life* is to say that rituals occur where social standing can be won or lost through one's adherence to, or rejection of, ritualized behavior. Refusing to take communion or drinking communion wine to excess may be viewed as sacrilegious or an affront to the Church or God. Rituals can be designated formal rites (e.g., wedding ceremonies) or everyday routine forms of interaction (e.g., handshakes). Overall, rituals are powerful forms of communication that often are impervious to changing quickly.

Proverbs

Whether called sayings, stories, parables, fables, or riddles, proverbs are forms of communication that often impart wisdom, offer advice, or reinforce morals. Proverbs such as The Boy or Cried Wolf, The Little Red Hen, or the Fox and Grapes help guide human behavior by offering truths that each new generation discovers. Proverbs are viewed as a part of serious life because they are often handed down from generation to generation, making them historically and culturally weighty. This differentiates them from jokes, since jokes are usually not viewed as advice or nursery rhymes, which are often memorized but impart no moral truth. The proverbs of a society reveal its political, social, and economic structure. For example, in the U.S., people may say "time is money" in reference to the belief that all activity should be bent toward maximizing one's investment by moving quickly. This proverb reveals the structures of the U.S. political economy and explains why many U.S. citizens choose faster forms of travel, communication, or food than other countries.

Rules

Social rules are explicitly codified guides for actions, behaviors, or beliefs. The most obvious form of social rules are the laws of a country. In this case, there is little ambiguity, and the process by which one is accused of, tried, and sentenced may be relatively transparent. Rules may also govern organizational communication (e.g., an Employee Code of Conduct) or activities such as sports. The most important characteristic of social rules is that they are arbitrary (in the sense that a rule could be created to promote/prohibit any action) but are almost universally understood, if not always accepted, by the population. In other words, a rule has moral or legal force either because a population believes it does or because there are other social structures (e.g., courts) to enforce social consequences.

Norms

Social norms, unlike rules, are usually tacitly or implicitly understood guidelines for actions, behaviors, or beliefs. For example, your classroom teacher may not have a rule in their syllabus about talking during class, but most likely, you will raise your hand if you wish to be called upon to contribute to discussion. Furthermore, you will most likely wait with your hand raised while someone else is talking to both signal your desire to contribute while also showing that you are not being impolite by speaking over or on top of the other person. Finally, you will not start talking until the teacher has acknowledged you (and not someone else) as the next one to speak. These behaviors reveal a series of norms that guide classroom talk like turn taking, politeness, and deference to authority. Violations of norms usually don't carry explicit consequences, but that doesn't mean they can be transgressed easily. Failing to adhere to norms can result in social death– and sometimes literal death– if a person does not follow the norms of a particular culture.

By understanding the rituals, proverbs, rules, and norms of a society, we get a good idea of what its culture is and what the values of its people are. Broadly speaking, societies can be scored on a continuum between **collectivist** and **individualistic**. Collectivist cultures have rituals, proverbs, rules, and norms that both exemplify and perpetuate the notion that groups are more important than the individual, that social standing within the group is based on homogeneity (i.e., aligning with the group and not rocking the boat), that deference to seniority or elders is preferred, that familial structures are the most important relationships, and that decisions should be made in the interest of group cohesion (not necessarily success). In studying Chinese culture, you can see how their rituals, proverbs, rules, and norms demonstrate that it is a highly collectivist culture.

For example, a common ritual at dinner would be a Chinese woman serving food to a grandfather before serving others in the household due to his age and sex. If she lets people serve themselves, she puts herself at risk of being looked down on or ostracized by others because she is not supporting the traditional group structure. Conversely, individualistic cultures tend to display rituals, proverbs, rules, and norms that privilege the individual over the group. These cultures are characterized by beliefs such as individuals' rights are the most important, social standing is based on personal responsibility and effort (i.e., meritocracy), that authority must be worthy of power, and that decisions should be made to maximize the chances of success (even at the expense of the group). The United States is a highly individualistic culture, which can be seen in the informal ways that people get food at large family gatherings. Often, the food is spread out over a large table and each person gets in line and takes their turn serving themselves with less regard for age or status.

One of the primary strengths of the identity/culture as a social construct perspective is that it offers a rich, nuanced understanding of what a culture is and who a person is and can be by studying their rituals, proverbs, rules, and norms. In this way, we can see people not just as a series of demographic characteristics, but as "real people, humankind alive" (Conquergood, 1985, p. 2). That is, our love, trust, deference, disgust, anger, or hatred are all influenced by the contextual and historical forces that shape our communicative choices. Practically, application of this perspective would entail thinking about how you can use rituals, proverbs, rules, and norms to create community in the workplace, in a classroom, for an event, or among an audience during speech, and how that community might create change for the better. Although these strengths are important, this perspective is not without its limitations.

Most importantly, this perspective does not do a good job of accounting for how identities are often not taken up, practiced, or performed by a group of people, but are, instead, imposed on one group to another as an expression of power. For example, the belief that Jewish people control all media and banks or hold world governments in thrall are antisemitic beliefs. In this case, identity is ascribed, but with no concern for the truth or accuracy of the depictions; rather, they are stereotypes used to demonize, humiliate, and oppress a group of people. To better understand this component of identity/culture, we need to understand them as a function of hegemony.

Identity/Culture as Hegemony

When exploring identity and culture as hegemony, it's important to realize that everyone's perception of the world is shaped and constrained by power. The relationship between culture and identity within this perspective is called **constitutive**. That is, culture sets the terrain for what kind of identities are possible, anchoring those practices in the material and economic realities people experience. Identities, then, are the ways that people take up, defer, reject, or subvert those cultural conventions to create a coherent sense of self. Culture and identity are always mutually informing one another, which is why styles, habits, and tastes in fashion are always changing. Influencing this relationship is the exertion of power, where the struggle for what is *normal, neutral, necessary, or natural* occurs in ways that are large and small, overt or covert, individually and socially.

For example, in the United States, a person's understanding of gender may be informed by anti-trans hate speech–by media outlets, podcasts, or web sites–who then will act on those ideas by passing anti-trans laws or rules, committing acts of violence, or making insults to gender non-conforming people. All of these acts add to the constitutive process of identity and culture and have the effect of casting gender non-conforming people as *abnormal*, *deviant*, *evil,* or *unnatural*. Power can be used for **oppression** or **liberation**; that is, the hegemonic beliefs of a society are ones that can curtail or promote people's ability to live free from fear and deprivation.

Importantly, the use of oppressive power is not done simply because of fear or anxiety. To extend on our example, anti-trans sentiments are not always, or even primarily, about transphobia or the fear of trans people. Instead, oppressive power is used when a group of people identify a subgroup within their society that can be constructed as a threat and in need of control or elimination. In this way, a group of people can gain or maintain control over an organization, institution, or nation by making a group of people into a **scapegoat**. Typically, scapegoats are useful as **mystifications** of current political-economic arrangements;

that is, by blaming scapegoats as traitors, unnatural, or subversives, a group of people can lead the public to vent their anger, frustration, or disillusionment at the scapegoat and not the people in power.

As Genocide Watch (2020) details in their *Ten Steps of Genocide*, communication is an incredibly powerful tool for identifying how the subordination or elimination of a group of people is pursued by the dominant group in their effort to gain or maintain power: classification, symbolisation, discrimination, dehumanization, organization, polarization, preparation, persecution, extermination, and denial.

Classification

The first step of genocide is to emphasize the differences between groups, creating a clear "us" vs. "them" culture. It is natural for humans to have their own beliefs, rituals, or habits and to celebrate differences (e.g., Black History Month). However, classification occurs when a group of people is convinced that those differences are immediate cause for suspicion or alarm. This can occur when there are not enough opportunities for people of different groups to co-mingle and reduce their prejudice through intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). For example, white people who live in predominantly white communities often exhibit higher rates of racial resentment and stereotyping than those who live in more racially heterogeneous areas (Nelson & Petsko, 2020). This finding is true in many instances–that is, the more homogeneous a group tends to be (whether ethnic, religious, or political), the more likely they are to see those in different groups as threats, sinful, or enemies.

Symbolisation

The process of symbolisation details how a group of people is marked in ways that distinguish them from the oppressive group. Sometimes, this marking is done by a dominant group to a subordinate group, such as when the Nazis put stars on Jewish people (or, in the opening example of this section, green wristbands). To address this practice, people who are not a part of the targeted group can adopt the symbols of the oppressed to make it harder for the oppressive group to use it as an instrument of punishment. For example, Phil Rodriguez wore a crop top to his high school to demonstrate how dress code enforcement was sexist toward female students (Parker, 2017). Other times, a group has created symbols for itself and those are used against them by the dominant group. Black and African American people's hair–its upkeep, its style, and its texture–all have deep symbolic significance. The importance of hair is why white racists have targeted Black and African American people about their hair style–it serves to emphasize differences (i.e., classification) while trying to turn something that is a source of pride into a source of pain.

Discrimination

Although classification and symbolisation are present to some extent in any society, discrimination occurs when those norms are coded into rules or laws in ways that makes a group politically vulnerable or impotent. Same sex couples did not have their marriages recognized by the government and, as a result, were unable to enjoy the some legal protections as opposite sex couples until the *Obergefell v. Hodges* Supreme Court decision. Still, many LGBT people can be unfairly evicted from their home, barred from adoption, and denied partner benefits (e.g., insurance) because their relationships are discriminated against.

Dehumanization

The process of dehumanization usually occurs through government-sponsored propaganda or private/corporate hate speech. Government officials who dehumanize usually do so by promoting the idea that a group is dangerous, cunning, lazy, or sexually aggressive. This encourages listeners to see members of the dehumanized group as less than human and therefore undeserving of social support, legal protection, or even basic human rights. Private/corporate hate speech occurs when media outlets–most often social media outlets–use their platforms to attack a group's identity or promote violence. For example, as Media Matters (2018) documents, Tucker Carlson who was one of the most watched news pundits at Fox News, repeatedly made dehumanizing statements after the U.S. invasion of Iraq:

> **May 30, 2006:** Carlson: I have "zero sympathy" for Iraqis because they "don't use toilet paper or forks."
> **March 11, 2008:** Carlson: The war in Iraq could turn around "if, somehow, the Iraqis decided to behave like human beings."
> **September 3, 2008:** Carlson: "White men" deserve credit for "creating civilization."
> **October 7, 2008:** Carlson: "Iraq is a crappy place filled with a bunch of, you know, semiliterate primitive monkeys – that's why it wasn't worth invading."

Notice how, in each instance, Carlson's rhetoric is about constructing the United States (and, in particular, white people) as human, benevolent, and civilized while describing Iraqis as inhuman. This type of rhetoric is especially dangerous because it can mobilize people to engage in violent and destructive behaviors.

Organization

Oppression and genocide eventually become organized, most often through the government, but also through paramilitary organizations and self-proclaimed militia. Historically, the Nazi SS were the arm of the government responsible for the rounding up, detention, and extermination of millions of Jews, Poles, disabled people, Romani, and homosexuals. More recently, the U.S. Border Patrol has been accused of engaging in this practice by detaining immigrants and asylum seekers in detention centers. There have been allegations that these centers have deprived immigrants of basic services and have performed forced hysterectomies on immigrant women (Treisman, 2020). These types of practices–rounding people up into a single area, depriving them of basic necessities, and carrying out violence against them–all constitute organized genocidal impulses.

Polarization

A key factor in carrying out oppression or other genocidal practices is to ensure that individuals who are not explicitly targeted (e.g., moderates within the dominant group or members of non-targeted groups) are unable to stop violence from happening. Governmental and political party propaganda is used to intimidate, silence, and incite violence against moderates who speak out against the dominant groups. Polarization makes it to where the dominant group views any dissent, compromise, or second-guessing as weakness or insufficiently loyal to the cause and therefore the grounds for punishment. This, in turn, ensures that people within the dominant group become increasingly radical as their group rewards the most extreme behavior. As

a result, the group becomes disconnected from the majority of the public, which in turn, leads them to be more draconian in asserting their power over others in an effort to maintain control.

Preparation

The next step toward genocide is the dominant group mobilizing their forces and weaponry in order to get ready for the call to violence. Propaganda about the threat from the oppressed group is amplified in order to make the population more fearful, thus justifying the use of extreme measures as acts of defense. Preparation rhetoric is often euphemistic (e.g., the Nazi's calling their program of genocide the "Final Solution") or or exalted (e.g., right-wing paramilitaries and QAnon conspiracists calling their treasonous acts against the government "The Storm"). However it occurs, what is important is that the oppressive group obtains the means and motivation to exercise violence on those they see as enemies or insufficiently loyal.

Persecution

Armed and angry, the dominant group is now able to execute their genocidal plans. Often, the dominant group will first enact laws to expropriate the homes, business, and assets of the oppressed groups or sympathizers. Little or no pretext is given as the dominant group rounds up, detains, or kills members of the oppressed group. Public protest against the dominant group is virtually absent because most dissidents have been killed, jailed, or cowed into fear.

Extermination

Now that the dominant group has complete control over the mechanisms of society, they can begin to make their genocidal ambitions more efficient and effective. Members of the oppressed group and their sympathizers are killed in a systematic fashion whether through gas chambers, mass shootings, chemical/biological weapons, targeted bombings, or drone strikes.

Denial

The most crucial component of genocide is denial. Throughout all the early steps, the oppressive group assures others that they are acting prudently, carefully, and out of an abundance of caution. The proponents of so-called "Bathroom Bills' utilize this rhetoric when introducing anti-trans legislation. When confronted with the fact that there has been no documented cases of a trans person assaulting women or children in bathrooms, they often reply "Sure, they haven't…yet. So, let's make sure we keep women and children safe by passing this law. Law-abiding citizens won't be affected by it anyway." As the stages move toward more explicit violence, the oppressive party denies their aggression by painting themselves as the victim. After mass violence has taken place, the dominant group will try to erase their deeds from history whether by changing curriculum in schools, utilizing mass unmarked burial sites, or destroying evidence of their crimes.

In the face of oppressive forces, people within a society have tools for **resistance** at their disposal. Some of these tools are so ingrained in our society that we don't even realize that they have the power to counteract oppression. For example, organizations such as public schools are places where young people from various walks of life can congregate and learn from each other. This has the effect of promoting social cohesion and mitigating genocidal tendencies because it makes demonizing a group difficult when there is ample and free

intergroup communication. Other types of resistance are more explicit and can take the form of social protest, demonstrations, or acts of civil disobedience. Regardless of the type of resistance you feel comfortable engaging in, being able to identify and challenge the 10 steps of genocide is a moral responsibility shared by all people.

One of the strengths of the identity/culture as a hegemony perspective is that **it provides a clear language for individuals to use in understanding how communication can be used to harm people or heal our society.** In doing so, it asserts that our obligation to each other is best realized in creating a culture where no identity is targeted and, instead, we can all learn and grow together. For example, organizations that promote civility, address racial injustices, identify patterns of gender violence, or other groups can all be a part of a wide-tapestry of connection that serves to promote social and community cohesion, to set cultural expectations, and to push back against institutions that promote racism, anti-LGBT sentiments, and gender oppression. The weakness of this perspective is that it is less useful in planning a public relations campaign or building a demographic database.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter we have shown three ways of studying identity, culture, and communication. We have discussed identity/culture as demographics, as social constructions, and as hegemony. As we have said before, there is no right or correct way to approach the topic; however, each of these perspectives has its strengths and weaknesses, which are appropriate to different contexts. By learning all three, we hope you can be and be successful in college, career, and civic life–although what success entails will differ based on the approach you are using as you seek to inform, persuade, and motivate people.

Chapter 7

Informative Speaking

Have you ever wondered: What is the world's ugliest animal? *HowStuffWorks* did. They learned that the blobfish was declared the world's ugliest animal by The Ugly Animal Preservation Society (yes, that is a real organization) in 2013. Shields (2022), who authored a fun and educational piece on the blobfish for *HowStuffWorks*, details why the blobfish is "so blobby," what blobfish eat, and explains why the blobfish is a solitary creature.

The *HowStuffWorks* website and its accompanying podcast, *Stuff You Should Know*, is in the business of informative speaking. The website reads:

> Have you ever wondered what causes that post-rain aroma (it's called petrichor) or how often your car actually needs an oil change? HowStuffWorks answers these questions and explains the curiosities of our world, delving into everything from cyber security and housecleaning tips to the physics of black holes and the history of slang. We provide factual, unbiased content that's fun to read. (*About Howstuffworks*, 2000).

The podcast averages 30 million monthly downloads and the accompanying YouTube channel boasts 683 thousand subscribers (Ha, 2017). What makes this company so successful at sharing information? In this chapter, we will teach you the art of informative speaking and sharing information. You will learn the goals of informative speaking, the different types of informative presentations, and some strategies for speaking well. And, you just might learn why *HowStuffWorks* has become so popular.

What is Informative Speaking?

> *Did you know that white light is a mixture of all colors of the rainbow? Red light can make you stop. Green light can make you go. The rest of the lights can make you disco! –Bill Nye the Science Guy, Season 1, Episode 16*

Bill Nye the Science Guy dances on the screen. Upbeat music blares from your television. You are 8 years old, and you laugh as he gets the lights turned out on him. You lean in as a large prism appears on your television screen. You are transfixed as you learn about light bouncing and absorbing and are shocked to know that white light is all the colors mixed together.

One of the most popular educational television programs in the nineties, the show *Bill Nye the Science Guy* combined humor, spectacle, and science to peak kids' interest in science. And the show must have been doing something right because it was nominated for 23 Emmys (Schaefer & Slichter, 1993).

Simply put, to **inform** is to share information with others. Informative speaking should strengthen your audience's knowledge or understanding of information, concepts, or ideas. Bill Nye, as an informative speaker,

took on the role of a teacher to define, illustrate, clarify, and elaborate on science related topics. As an informative speaker, you will do the same, enhancing your audience's understanding, capturing their interest, and working to make information memorable.

Choosing an Informative Topic

Choosing an informative presentation topic may seem overwhelming. After all, the potential topics are limitless! We will guide you through a simple process of reflecting, imagining, and narrowing to help you develop a clear and evocative topic.

- **Reflect**: It is important to choose a topic that matters to you. In order to know what matters to you, it may help to engage in the practice of reflection. Reflection allows you to use your "life stories and experiences to understand and interpret 'connectivity between self and others'" (Roy & Uekusa, 2020, p. 386). Consider what you enjoy. Do you have favorite sights? Smells? Sounds? Flavors? What are a few of your favorite things to do? What are things you enjoy learning about? What have you learned about recently and felt the urge to share that knowledge with others? Try journaling, or keeping a record of your thoughts and feelings, for several days and see what ideas emerge.
- **Imagine:** After taking some time to learn about yourself and your interests, it is time to brainstorm. Without censoring yourself, make a list of every potential informative presentation topic you can imagine. It may be helpful to create categories to prompt you. Example categories may include important issues, events in the news, topics from frequently visited websites, historical events, new inventions, discoveries, or technologies. Aim to list at least 5 items under each category. You may refer back to your reflections for inspiration.
- **Narrow:** After generating a generous volume of possibilities, it is time to narrow your options. You may begin this process by simply circling or marking the ideas that most interest you. You can also narrow your options by considering which topics will matter most to your audience. There may be items on your list that are very interesting to you but may not appeal to the particular audience with which you will be speaking. In this case, it is important to review your audience analysis (see Chapter 4) and mark topics that are more directly relevant to your anticipated audience.

Another way to narrow your informative presentation topic is by considering any constraints that have been placed on you. Your presentation may be limited by time, space, and/or occasion. For example, if you have been assigned a 5-minute presentation, selecting "the history of Europe" as your topic is not a good idea. Given your time constraints, either the topic will need to be narrowed (for example, "the history of Europe" may become "the renaissance" or, even more specifically, "the impact of the renaissance on scientific thinking in Europe") or you should select an alternative topic from your list that is more appropriate in scope. The location you are presenting in may also create constraints. If you do not have access to a projector, you should not select a topic that will rely on visuals or videos. Or, if you want to teach your audience how to bake cookies, then you will need a space with a table for you to set and mix ingredients. Consider any limitations placed on you due to time, space, and/or the occasion and narrow your topics accordingly.

Finally, you should select a topic that lends itself to speaking aloud. Some topics, particularly ones that are highly technical, are best shared in written form where readers can move through the material slowly and

have the option to reread information if needed. Make sure the topic you select is appropriate for sharing with others through a presentation. After reflecting, imagining, and narrowing, you are ready to determine your informative goal. The process of declaring your informative goal may help you further narrow your topic selection.

Declaring Your Informative Goal

There are multiple types of informative presentations that span an endless number of topics. To avoid getting lost in all the options, it helps to determine your informative goal(s). An **informative goal** articulates the desired result of your informative presentation. For example, a presentation about Chicago's Haymarket Square may have the goal to teach an audience about the history of U.S. labor movements. Or, perhaps the goal is to describe the various stories surrounding the Haymarket Riot. Or, maybe you want to take your audience on a virtual tour of the square and teach them how to best prepare for a trip to the location.

By defining your informative goal(s), you will be able to pinpoint the type of informative presentation you need to construct. Knowing your informative goal(s) will help you determine what type of information to gather (see Chapter 8), which organizational pattern best meets your needs (see Chapter 10) and may even lead you to consider which presentational aids (see Chapter 13) are best suited for your presentation.

Although there are a wide range of informative goals, most fall under 5 categories: to define, demonstrate, illustrate, clarify, and/or elaborate.

- **Definitional** informative presentations aim to discover the meaning of something.
- **Demonstrative** informative presentations guide the audience through a process, usually in a practical way.
- **Illustrative** informative presentations describe vividly to paint a clear picture of a subject.
- **Clarification** informative presentations make a complicated topic comprehensible.
- **Elaborative** informative presentations complicate a subject originally thought to be simple or uninteresting.

These goals are not distinct; They may overlap and/or complement each other. Definitional presentations aim to discover the meaning of something, and, in the process, may offer clarification. For example, a presentation about gaslighting would provide the meaning of the word, offer clarification on how gaslighting is distinct from other concepts such as manipulation, and may even offer advice on how to spot gaslighting.

In addition to pinpointing the goals of your presentation, it may be useful to name the category of your informative presentation topic. Are you giving a presentation about an object? A place? Event? Person? Or procedure? Or is your topic about an idea?

Objects and Places

Presentations about objects and places help audience members *understand something tangible*. An object may be animate or inanimate, visible or invisible, moving or still. Object presentations may cover topics ranging from engineered metamaterials to saxophones to a piece of jewelry handed down in your family. Presentations about places teach your audience about an interesting location such as a historical site, a museum, or a vacation spot. Topical, spatial, or chronological organizational patterns (see Chapter 10) are usually the best suited for presentations about objects or places.

Ideas, Theories, and Concepts

Some informative presentations explore ideas, theories, and/or concepts. Consider the following examples: What is justice (idea)? What is expectancy theory (theory)? What is detachment in yoga (concept)? Relevance is particularly important for presentations falling under this category. Speakers must make clear why it is important for their audience to learn about this and create a connection between their audience and the idea, theory, or concept. It is also important for informative speakers to make sure their presentation either clarifies or elaborates on the idea, theory, or concept. Typically, presentations in this category use topical organizational patterns, although some topics may be better served by a chronological development (See Chapter 10).

Events and People

Remarkable people and events in history capture our attention and, as such, they make for good informative presentations. A presentation about an event may cover something that happens regularly (a holiday), something that happened once (The Battle of Little Bighorn), or something that left us with a lasting impression (the Columbine shooting). You might choose to discuss an event you witnessed (March on Washington 2020) or study an event from the past (Detroit walk to freedom). Either way, your goal is to bring the event to life for your audience. Similarly, speaking about a person requires you to bring them to life for your audience and to help the audience understand the impact and importance of this person. Presentations on both events and people lend themselves to chronological, topical, or causal organization patterns (See Chapter 10).

As you consider your informative presentation topic, also think about what your **informative goal** is and what **category of informative speaking** your topic falls under. By pinpointing the primary goal as well as the category of your presentation, you are better able to apply the appropriate strategies. In the next section, we will share the various strategies for speaking well.

Informative Speaking Strategies

There are many strategies to enhance your informative speaking skills. Some strategies are implemented as you prepare your presentation at the research, outlining, and writing stage. Other strategies are implemented

while delivering your presentation. In this section, we outline 8 different strategies for informative public speaking. **All of these tips require you as the speaker to consider credibility, clarity, and connection.**

Be Accurate

"That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." Everyone is familiar with this Neil Armstrong quotation. You can even buy socks with this saying on it. Yet, whether this is what he actually said or even meant to say is up for debate. According to Armstrong, he said: "That's one small step for *a* man, one giant step for mankind" (The Associated Press, 2022; *emphasis added*). Apparently the "a" was not picked up by the microphone. And yet, we continue to remember the saying without the "a." Blunders and gaffs happen all the time in public speaking. Mistakes are part of being human. However, it is our responsibility as speakers to make sure the information we are sharing is as accurate as possible. Not only is accuracy an ethical responsibility, it also is an important part of gaining credibility. Credibility is especially important in informative speaking. You want your audience to believe and trust you. Sharing information with others is exciting but with it comes responsibility to be as accurate as possible.

Be Balanced

By balanced, we do not mean "fair and balanced," although we will address bias in informative speaking later in this chapter. Rather, it is important to prepare the right amount of information for your audience. Consider the amount of information your audience is capable of processing in the time you have been allotted to speak. Avoid **information overload**, which occurs when a speaker delivers more data about a topic than an audience needs or wants. Information overload can also occur when a speaker presents information in an inaccessible manner. In either case, audience members may find themselves overwhelmed and then tune out.

Information underload, on the other hand, happens when a speaker fails to share any new or challenging information with the audience. As an informative speaker, you want to offer listeners new information or provide a refreshing perspective on things they already know. If you underestimate your audience's intelligence, you will fail to engage them.

Be Clear

Clarity is a necessity in informative speaking. As you prepare your presentation, identify points of possible confusion from the perspective of your audience. Ferguson (2008) suggests speakers answer the following questions:

> What could be confusing to audience members? Has their past experience led them to believe something different from the information that I will present to them? Does my information war with common conceptions of reality? Will they accept my explanation if I do not explicitly recognize their preconceived notions on the topic? (p. 239).

By answering these questions, you can anticipate which parts of your presentation may be confusing or counterintuitive for your listeners. Then you can develop strategies to enhance understanding. For example, you may make abstract concepts concrete or overtly address misconceptions your audience may have about your topic.

Be Novel

Another strategy to use in informative speaking is to entice your listeners with novelty. Know your audience and then craft information in such a way to rouse their curiosity. You may do this by taking on a **unique point of view** or approaching information from an **unusual direction**. The podcast *Decoder Ring* does this in an episode called "Mystery of the Mullet" (Paskin & Frisch, 2020). Given the topic already generates interest, the podcast hosts could have simply walked listeners through the history of the mullet, providing fun facts about how the mullet has changed over the decades. Instead, they frame the podcast as a mystery: who named the mullet? Turns out answering this question is not easy and they take their readers on a fascinating journey as they attempt to solve the mystery of the mullet.

Be Memorable

Most of these informative speaking strategies will also lend themselves to making a presentation **memorable**. In Chapter 4, we outlined principles for making stories memorable. They are: 1) simplicity, 2) unexpectedness, 3) concreteness, 4) credibility, and 5) emotions (Heath & Heath, 2007). The same principles apply to making an informative presentation memorable. You want to share information with your audience that they will remember and then apply to their own lives.

Be Relevant

You may notice a trend among the strategies for informative speaking: being a good informative speaker requires you know your audience (see Chapter 3). Knowing your audience is a must, but you cannot stop at knowing your audience. You need to design and deliver your information in a way that connects to your audience. **Relevancy** is "the importance, novelty, and uselessness of the information to the audience" (Pearson et. al, 2021, p. 327). As a speaker, you must make an audience feel like this information was specially prepared and presented for them. You can do this by crafting examples and stories with them in mind. You explain why this information is important and necessary to this audience specifically.

Be Immediate

Have you ever attended a concert where the musician begins by saying, "Good evening, Des Moines!"? By acknowledging the specific place the concert is happening, the musician is also referencing concert goers' home city. This is an immediacy technique. Immediacy closes the psychological distance between the speaker and audience. Immediacy strategies should make your audience feel *included, engaged, and present*.

Immediacy techniques include referencing your audience, self-disclosing or sharing personal information, asking questions, and using conversational language. These techniques involve the audience, making them active participants in the presentation and create a sense of closeness between the audience and the speaker. Use immediacy strategies as you prepare and deliver your informative presentation.

Avoid Bias

At the start of this chapter, we shared an excerpt from the website *HowStuffWorks* that read, "We provide factual, unbiased content that's fun to read" (*About HowStuffWorks*, 2000). Informative speaking is tricky

because it is not *not* persuasive. You have to convince your audience to pay attention and believe you. You may even coax them into seeing a topic from a perspective they never have before. And yet, there is also the expectation that informative speaking is objective and free of bias. Objectivity requires that you put aside your own personal feelings, experiences, and judgment. But research shows, "we do not see the world completely separate from our point of view" (Morales, Bax, & Firestone, 2020, p. 14873). In other words, pure objectivity is not possible. Later in this textbook, we will argue that all language has the ability to direct our attention and, as such, is persuasive.

So, what separates informative speaking from persuasive speaking? The primary goal of informative speaking is not to persuade or advocate. As an informative speaker, your goal is to **locate information of value and to share it with your audience**. You attempt to do this as objectively as possible, which requires a commitment to a process which avoids bias. A process of informative speaking that is committed to avoiding bias means not advocating for specific outcomes, being thoughtful about how your language might direct your listeners, sharing information about your sources, providing multiple perspectives whenever possible, and being transparent about the biases you do have. Complete objectivity may not be entirely possible, but you can commit to a process of researching, preparing, and delivering information that honors accuracy, diverse viewpoints, and is transparent in its biases.

Conclusion

Bill Nye the Science Guy combined his quirky sense of humor with flashy special effects and fast paced information to peak kids' curiosity and increase their knowledge about science. In this chapter, you have learned the art of informative speaking. We have helped you select an informative presentation topic, set an informative goal, and locate the category of informative speaking your topic falls under. Then, we provided you with strategies for informative speaking that equip you with the skills to give a presentation performance as Emmy worthy as any episode of Bill Nye.

Chapter 8

Choosing Topics and Gathering Information

Kallia fiddled with her pen as she listened as Professor Mir explained the persuasive speech assignment. She was so lost in thought that she almost missed it when Professor Mir said, "Okay everyone, get in pairs and talk to the other person about your topic."

Kallia turned in her seat to face Emily. They hadn't interacted much in class, but she was usually pretty quick to answer questions when the professor called them out.

"So, you wanna work together?" Kallia asked.

"Sure!" came Emily's quick reply.

Emily started talking about her intent to talk about puppy mills. Kallia thought it would be a good topic—it was an easy thing to ask people do to and there would be lots of pictures of cute puppies. As Emily explained her idea, Kallia listened intently, nodding where she thought was appropriate.

After talking through her idea, Emily asked, "Well, what about you? What are you going to give your speech on?"

"I don't know," Kallia said. "I hadn't given it much thought."

"What about your hair?"

"My hair?"

"Yeah, hasn't there been some stuff in the news about a school that banned Black people from certain hairstyles?"

"Really? Dang, that's messed up. Yeah, I could talk about the history of Black hairstyles." Kallia said thoughtfully. Then, she grinned, "And, I could tell people to stop touching my hair all the time!"

"Sounds like a good 'call to action' to me!" Emily laughed. "Do it!"

Perhaps your professor has assigned the next speech assignment to you or will soon. Either way, you may feel a little bit nervous about coming up with a topic or with finding resources for it. The topic you choose, and the sources you use for evidence, need to attend to a variety of concerns. First is your topic one that is interesting, engaging, or provocative for your audience? Making sure you pick a topic that is relevant to your audience—but that is also interesting to you—can be challenging. However, by completing a good audience analysis (see Chapter Four), you can make sure you have a good idea about what might be appealing to your audience.

Second, and just as important, you need to make sure that the topic you choose is complex enough that it warrants your time and effort to find research. Some topics may be interesting to enough for you to good-naturedly argue about with your friends but are not important enough to merit serious research. Choosing a topic that challenges to you find and learn new information is an excellent way to begin developing new ways of thinking about the world.

Although you may believe that choosing a topic or gathering information is something you would only do for a class assignment, the truth is that you need to develop these skills in almost every facet of your life. Whether you are giving a sales pitch, arguing for a better grade, negotiating a salary for a position, buying a new car, speaking at your local town hall meeting, or officiating a religious ceremony, you should think about what you are going to talk about and the evidence you will use to support it. Otherwise, you will find that you aren't as successful in informing, persuading, or motivating others about the things that are important to you and, as a result, will be less successful in college, in your career, and in your civic life.

Choosing a Topic

Choosing a topic for your speech (or essay, presentation, or research paper) can be a daunting task. On one hand, it seems like there are so many possibilities that it feels overwhelming. On the other hand, you may feel like no one does or will care about topics that are important, interesting, or fun to you. As Kallia found out in the opening story, just talking to her classmates was a great way to start thinking about a topic for her speech. Figuring out what is important to your audience is the hallmark of a great speech. But, sometimes just coming with an idea, any idea, can be difficult. Luckily, there are resources around you that you can use to help!

Read the Assignment

The most important starting point is to figure out what the assignments are asking you to do and making sure you meet their requirements. Are some topics encouraged while others are restricted? What are its time limits? What are its requirements for sources in terms of quantity and quality? Whether in the classroom or in a professional meeting, you need to make sure that whatever you want to talk about, sell, or pitch, that it is appropriate to the context and requirements. Otherwise, no matter how good your speech content is or how well you deliver it, your audience will not be informed, persuaded, or motivated about the topic.

Explore Library and Online Resources

There are some resources that are dedicated to helping students come up with strong topics. Here, we'll talk about two prominent resources that you can access through your library or through an Internet search. The first is *CQ Researcher*, which is an organization of researchers, journalists, and fact-checkers that publishes on topics, such as "health, social trends, criminal justice, international affairs, education, the environment, technology and the economy" (para. 1). You can choose from dozens of topics and get highly vetted reports—helping you both find a topic and start your research about it.

The second resource is *Gale in Context-Opposing Viewpoints*, which is operated by *Cengage Publishing* and is made available to libraries all over the world. This resources not only provides research about the topic, but it also shows the counterpoints to those arguments, no matter the side you take on an issue. This can be helpful

when you are trying to figure out what those from other viewpoints might think about your stance and how you may best respond to them (or change your mind based the strength of their arguments!). Again, this is a great resource not only for coming up with a topic, but for starting your research about it as well. These resources can be found through your university or public library, so you will almost always have access to them.

Talk to a Librarian

Most universities have a librarian who is dedicated to helping students research topics as well as having a librarian who concentrates in research for your area of study (e.g., Biology, Communication, or Psychology). As such, they can be tremendous resources for choosing a topic that will be engaging and pointing you in the right direction for good sources to use for evidence. Librarians are trained professionals in finding, collecting, and vetting information—if they can't find it, then it doesn't exist!

Practice Brainstorming

Purposeful brainstorming is difficult for many people because they don't see the value in writing down their thoughts. They are (after all) your thoughts, so what's the point of going to the trouble of writing them out? However, research indicates that intentionally brainstorming your ideas can increase the quantity of ideas you come up with as well as the quality of the ideas (Baruah & Paulus, 2008). If you are doing a group speech or project, it is especially important to come up with ideas independently and then come together to develop the ideas if you are working in a group or committee. All too often, people get in groups and try to brainstorm, which can reduce idea quantity and quality because people are more concerned with their peers' evaluation than with idea generation.

These approaches to idea generation can be excellent starting points for you in a variety of classes and contexts. Make sure to take these processes into your jobs and community organizations to ensure that they are being maximally effective. And, of course, use them in your class assignments (like the ones in this class!) to develop ideas that are engaging to your audience, interesting to you, and appropriate to the assignment's purpose.

Search Strategies

Now that you have a topic (or two!) that you have chosen, it is time to start thinking about gathering research on it. In the next chapter, we'll discuss how to vet your sources and make sure they are reliable, accurate, and credible. **But, for now, let's just focus on some ways of finding information:**

Search the Internet

When you are on the Internet, you can use search engines to quickly find information across a variety of websites and repositories. Some, such as *Google*, *Bing*, or *Yahoo*, are called **webcrawlers**, which search across the whole Internet and bring up results based on a variety of factors such as the search terms you used, how much traffic the website receives, and (in some cases) whether the website has paid for preferential treatment by the search engine company. You can either go to these websites (e.g., *Google.com*) and enter your search term or type it into your web browser's address bar and it will use whatever your default search engine is.

Although webcrawlers can bring up a great deal of information, there is a greater chance that it will not be vetted or reviewed in a way that ensures its accuracy. This is because the top results for your searches may be influenced by the outlet buying ad space or highly used keywords, which artificially places them above better sources in your search.

Another way to search for information is to use **academic databases**, which are collections of scholarly writings on a particular subject. These databases are usually only accessible with a university, college, or public library subscription. These databases can be daunting for new users because searches often need to be more specific and limited in order to obtain the best results. However, you are much more likely to find reviewed, vetted, and credible information through these databases than through a traditional webcrawler search. Finally, there are **hybrid search engines**, such as Google Scholar, which utilizes webcrawler technology, but focuses more on academic literature. Google Scholar's strength is in the wide net it casts to find scholarly writing, which typically brings up more results than any one database. However, *Google Scholar* doesn't do a great job in differentiating among different outlets and, as a result, there sometimes a lot of results from pseudo-research sites, which look like research but are not, in actuality, reviewed and vetted in a substantial way. Therefore, it is important to be mindful when using search engines such as Google Scholar by itself.

Use Your Library

Although certainly a great deal of information is on the Internet, not all of it (or the best of it) will be online. A great deal of scholarly work, expert opinions, and opposing viewpoints can be found in textbooks, edited collections, video repositories of scholarly interviews, and theses/dissertations. You may be able to find any of these sources through searching your library's website, but you may need to obtain them by actually going to the library and checking them out. In these instances, you may ask the reference librarian to help you find sources such as books if you are unfamiliar with how your library collects and catalogues them.

Select Keywords

When searching for content one of the most important things you need to get correct are your search terms. For example, if you search for "Common mistakes when using a search engine" in Google the vast majority of results you get back are how content producers can make sure their content (e.g., website, YouTube channels, or blogs) is able to be found quickly and easily. However, "common mistakes when searching for information on the internet" brings up more results about how users can better search for information rather than how creators can showcase their work. In other words, even though both phrases may be similar in our everyday use of them, they can bring up some pretty dramatically different results. If you are getting frustrated with the content your search terms are bringing up, try to make your request in as many different ways as you can (don't be afraid of using a thesaurus to come up with similar words/phrases!). If you are still not finding what you need, many webcrawler search engines have "Additional Searches," which shows how other users have made similar search requests. These can be great ways of expanding your search.

Limit Year of Publication

Sometimes it is important that you focus on a specific set of years. In some cases, you may want the most recent research on a topic. For example, if a situation is rapidly developing (e.g., the Russia's invasion of Ukraine) or if a field is developing quickly (e.g., cutting edge research about a medical procedure), then it is

vital that you get the most current information. Many search engines allow you set parameters of a search's publication date by clicking on which years you want. You may also want to use this feature to see how information has changed or evolved over time. For example, setting the search terms on medical information about COVID-19 for only 2020 to 2021 will allow a person to see how medical science research developed over time as more testing was conducted.

Employ Boolean Operators

Boolean operators sound complicated but are very easy to use. They direct the search engine to proceed with its search in a specific way. For example, if you write in a search engine *communication theory* the search engine will search for communication, theory, and communication theory which may give me a lot of results, but those results may not all be useful for my research. However, if you search with the phrase *Communication AND theory*, then the search engine will know that you are only interested in content that contains both terms (excluding content that only has *communication* or *theory* by itself). Or, if you wrote a search as *communication or media theory*, it would bring up sites that connected to communication as well as media theory as two separate categories. If you wanted to find theories from communication or media scholars, you would use the phrase *(communication OR media) AND theory*. This phase will direct the search engine to look for instances of communication theory or media theory. Some search engines, such as EBSCO, have the Boolean phrases as drop-down menu options next to the search terms whereas other search engines (e.g., *Google* or *Bing*) will require you to write them into your search.

Read the Literature Review/Reference Lists

Once you have found an article or book that is pertinent to your research topic, you can look at the literature review and reference list to see all of the previously conducted research that informs the work you are currently reading. You can start your search by going back and reading this work to make sure you know the literature that is informing your current project and if you agree with the conclusions that the article or book you are reading came to based on their reading of the same literature. You can also look across multiple research articles or books to see which studies are used the most by the majority of scholars—those are usually foundational pieces, controversies in that field of study, or highly influential studies that have laid the groundwork for that area of investigation.

Use Analytics

When you access an article or when you search on *Google Scholar*, you are sometimes able to see the research that has cited the article or book you are currently reading. This data is an excellent place to start because it gives you a glimpse into how influential the research has been (often, the more it has been cited the more influential it has been) and how subsequent research has built upon, extended, or refuted the findings of your research article. Some research that cites the article or book doesn't address the work in a substantial way, so not all of the work you find in this way will be useful. Additionally, more recent work may not have been cited yet or have a low citation count because other scholars haven't had a chance to read and respond to the research yet. But, this is a still an excellent first step of identifying the scholarly conversation. And, if you have already looked at the article's or book's reference list and started reading that work, you now have an excellent

viewpoint of all the research conducted prior to the article or book you are reading (through the reference list) and has subsequently used the article or book you are reading (through the analytics).

Using these tips will help you obtain the most, and most relevant, information for your topic. However, it will not necessarily ensure that you get the most reputable, verifiable, or credible information. We'll talk more about how to vet your information in the next chapter. For now, though, practice these skills so you can start to obtain information that is pertinent to specific to your topic.

Types of Sources

Have you ever played the telephone game? You sit in a circle and the first person whispers a word or phrase to the next, who then whispers it to the next, and so on until they reach the end of the circle. By the time it gets to the end, what the last person recalls as the word or phrase is usually quite different than the one that started the game. The same is with sources. The further you get away from the primary source–that is the one that originally conducted the study or made the original claim–the more likely you will get information that may be distorted, incomplete, or inaccurate to what was originally said.

This is NOT to say the original claim was true, factual, or correct; however, it is important that you know what was originally said so you can see if it agrees or disagrees with other sources on the subject. It's okay to rely on secondary sources (e.g., literature reviews, summaries, Wikipedia, Encyclopedias, or textbooks), which are sources that report, analyze, synthesize, describe, or explain the content of the primary source but are not—themselves—the originating source of the information. These sources are a great way to get a broad understanding about the topic or to find out where to start researching, but you need to make sure you don't over-rely on them, or you might inadvertently report inaccurate information.

There are a wide variety of sources that you can use to get information about your topic or to use as evidence. Although some forms of sources tend to reflect certain standards of knowledge production (e.g., journal articles usually have higher standards than say, a web blog), we want to stress that the type of source you use does not always correspond to its value or rigor. **However, we want to make sure you don't immediately pass over some forms of information because of the type of source.**

Expert Testimony/Interviews

Sometimes, people who have extensive knowledge in an area—whether through long study or experience—may offer their insights on a radio or television show, podcast, YouTube channel, blog, or the opinion page of a newspaper. Expert testimonies or interviews can offer good insights, especially if the expert very clearly cites their sources (Check out Chapter Nine for how to verbally cite information). However, it's important to remember that testimonies and interviews are the opinions and viewpoints of a particular person at a particular time—it has most likely not been vetted by an unbiased third party before it was said. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Kay Allison (Kate) Shemirani (a UK-based nurse) claimed that COVID was spread through 5G Internet networks and that vaccines were poison. Many of us may see nurses as medical experts—a fact that Shemirani exploited by constantly referring to herself as a nurse and wearing scrubs in her social media videos—but her views were wildly out of step with the medical research about the virus. So, be careful to not over-rely on expert testimony or interviews as your only or primary source of

information. However, expert testimony/interviews can be useful because often they are easy and engaging ways to start learning about a new topic or ideas.

Dictionaries

There are different types of dictionaries, which can be useful for a variety of situations. The dictionary you may have used in the past is called a "generalized dictionary," which usually lists all the lexemes or root words (e.g., swim is the root word of swims, swam, swimming) of a language in alphabetical order and describes the way or ways the word is used. This type of dictionary is appropriate when you want to know how a word is defined and used by everyday people and its origins. Common general dictionaries for US English include the *American Heritage Dictionary*, *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, and the *New Oxford American Dictionary*. Other dictionaries are called "specialize dictionaries," which are used to describe theories, terms, concepts, or ideas that are specific to an area of study. This type of dictionary is more appropriate when you are defining terms that necessitate knowing proper terminology, jargon, or technical language. Common specialized dictionaries include *Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary* and *Black's Law Dictionary*. When you have a choice between using a general or specialized dictionary, you should always choose the latter. Specialized dictionaries provide more detailed, comprehensive, and specific information, which makes your speech more informative and credible. Just think—you wouldn't want someone to conduct a medical operation on you or defend you in court with knowledge from a generalized dictionary!

Encyclopedias

Much like dictionaries, encyclopedias are commonly used by students who are learning about a new topic or issue. However, encyclopedias (sometimes spelled, **encyclopaedia) often provide more information than simply a definition of a word**. Encyclopedias are collections of information, often giving broad summaries about terms or issues. Similar to dictionaries, there are general encyclopedias, which provide a short synopsis about major events, people, topics, or issues. For example, the *World History Encyclopedia, Oxford World Encyclopedia,* or the *Encyclopedia Britannica* are regarded as reputable general encyclopedias. There are also specialized encyclopedias, which are more comprehensive examination of information in a given area of study. For example, the *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory* is an amazing repository for the most important scholars, theories, and ideas in our discipline of study.

Social or Alternative Media

As you might imagine, social or alternative media is usually not a reputable source to rely on for information. At best, many of the claims you'll encounter in this area are them fulfilling a secondary source function—they are merely reporting on what primary sources have originally found or argued. At worst, you can quickly find yourself listening to a lot of conspiracy theories, clickbait, misinformation, half-truths, and just plain stupidity. If the social or alternative media account is associated with a reputable organization, such as the *American Psychological Association*, then there is a better chance that it will be reliable. However, we recommend that if you find information on social or alternative media that you want to use, your best course of action is to find out the primary source (e.g., a research article) that first proposed the information.

Traditional or Legacy Media

Traditional and legacy media can be reputable when used and vetted properly. The first thing to understand is that everything that is published under traditional or legacy media is not considered "news." That is, some outlets report news (e.g., the *Associated Press*), some provide analysis (e.g., *The Atlantic*), and others provide a mixture of the two (e.g., *CNN*, *MSNBC*, or *Fox News*). You need to be able to discern if the article is news, analysis, opinion, advertisement, or a combination thereof. The second thing to remember is that many media organizations must sell ad space to stay profitable (some, such as the *BBC*, *PBS*, *NPR*, *ProPublica*, or *The Guardian* rely on donations or taxes and are non-profit entities). Therefore, those news organizations identify and serve a particular demographic or market share in order to maximize their return on investment. For example, AllSides (2023), an organization that tracks media bias, showed the headlines from articles about the creation of a federal office to oversee and report on access to clean water and air—the *Office of Environmental Justice*. In reporting on the announcement, *The Daily Wire* (a far-Right news outlet) reported "Biden Signs Executive Order to Make Entire Government Focus On 'Environmental Justice.'" Notice how The Daily Wire's headline assumes its reader is aligned with their far-Right, anti-government beliefs by framing the issue as the "entire government" will focus on this one issue which is, of course, an absurd premise for a number of reasons (e.g., the President doesn't control the entire government, the government will continue operating programs like the military or social security, and the new office has an extremely small budget and limited scope). This headline will most likely agitate like-minded people who will then be more motivated to click on other links on the Daily Wire's website—increasing their revenue.

Non-Profit Organization Reports

Some non-profit organizations are excellent resources for gathering information about a topic. Some organizations provide information on a wide variety of topics, such as the *Pew Research Center*. Others focus on specific issues and publish information on a limited number of topics, such as *RAINN* (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) or *NAMI* (National Alliance on Mental Illness). However, just because an organization claims to be non-profit, non-partisan, or charitable does not mean that they necessarily produce reliable information. Non-profit organizations that focus on research are often called think tanks. Some think tanks are highly regarded and have a history of finding and representing facts in a credible way, such as the *Brookings Institution*, which is one of the oldest think tanks in the United States. Unfortunately, to be a think tank an organization simply needs to be a non-profit, non-partisan organization—there are no criteria that their research must be reputable, factual, or vetted in a substantial way. For example, the *Heartland Institute*, *Heritage Institute*, *Cato Institute*, *Americans for Tax Reform*, and the *Family Research Council* have downplayed the harms of smoking cigarettes, hydraulic fracturing (i.e., fracking), climate change, and/or attacked LGBTQ rights and families—unsurprising positions given that many of their donors have ties of tobacco, oil, and gas industries or conservative religious groups.

Professional/Trade Magazines

These types of magazines are usually produced by organizations in a specific area of study. These sources are best used in two instances. First, they can provide excellent summaries of past research and are often written in fun, exciting, or simplified ways. This makes them less daunting than reading the technical literature on the issue and broadens their appeal. The second way to use this source is to find out cutting edge information

on a topic. Often, scholarly journal publications can take months or even years of vetting and review before they are published, which means there is serious lag-time between new information being discovered and publications reporting those results. Professional/trade magazines bridge this gap by providing information on the topic with a much shorter publication timeline from submission to print. However, as you may imagine, getting content out quicker doesn't always mean the information is better, so it's a good idea to remember that magazine content can be partial, incomplete, or tentative. Typical professional/trade magazines include *Psychology Today*, *Harvard Business Review*, *WIRED*, *The Economist*, *Bloomsburg Weekly*, and *Forbes*.

Textbooks

Textbooks are often solid choices for information for a number of reasons. First, most scholarly textbooks go through an expert peer-review process before they get published. This process is especially true for textbooks that are published by a university publishing press (e.g., *Oxford University Press*), but can apply to textbooks from a variety of publishers (e.g., *Cengage*, *Sage*, or *Waveland Press*). When writing this book, for example, we contacted nearly a dozen experts in communication studies from across the nation to read and vet our work! Second, most scholarly textbooks are written by experts in that particular field of study. Some books are even collections of expert writings (called "edited collections" or "handbooks"), featuring experts from a wide range of insights in a field of study.

However, we do want to issue a few cautions. First, when you read a textbook, you should differentiate between primary and secondary sources. Some textbooks are original, primary sources that develop new insights or knowledge. Others function more like encyclopedias; that is, they are secondary sources that are reporting or summarizing previously produced information (like this book!). Again, although there is nothing inherently wrong with a secondary source, it does mean that you are relying on the author's summary of a concept or idea instead of finding the original, primary document. Second, although highly reputable publishing companies produce well-researched and rigorously vetted books, there are some publishing houses that do not have such high standards. Many will publish anything as long as they think it will make money (often the more sensationalist the better) or they will require the author pay them up front to produce the text. In either case, the publishing house puts profits above rigorous knowledge production, which can catch the unwary who may erroneously believe that because it is a textbook, it will necessarily have credible information.

Government Outlets

There are a number of government outlets that may have information that is pertinent to your search. For information in the United States, typical outlets include the *U.S. Census Bureau*, *National Bureau of Labor Statistics*, *National Center for Education Statistics*, and *Justice Department*. There are, of course, many more governmental outlets than this small list. Almost every major topic has a government body that oversees the collection of data on the subject. As with any other source, it is important to cross-reference any governmental organizational content with other available information to ensure you are getting credible information.

Scholarly Journal Publications

Ideally, academic journals are repositories of information created, reviewed, and vetted by experts in a particular field of study. Journals are published a little as once per year, to as many as 12 per year. Each journal

publication is an issue, which contains a number of articles written by authors. All the issues published in a year are called a volume. Articles within each journal are written *by* experts, *for* experts, which is why they often rely heavily on technical language that you may be unfamiliar with at first. Well-conducted studies are reviewed by a panel of experts—often as many as five—whose identity is anonymized from the author (the author's identity is also anonymized to the reviewers). This process, known as anonymous review, ensures that research isn't accepted or rejected due to who a person is, only the merits of their work. Scholarly work proceeds over time, with no one study or research article 'proving' anything. Rather, it is in the cumulative knowledge on a particular subject that scholars tend to accept some premises as foundational. However, even foundations can change! For example, the change from the Ptolemaic system of astronomy (i.e., the Earth is at the center of the universe) to the Copernican system (i.e., the sun is at the center of the universe) was not 'proved' overnight, but required decades of testing and retesting by scholars until it was assumed as foundational. Although scholarly journal publications should uphold the highest standards of knowledge production and rigor, bad actors abound. Some journals do not review or vet articles well, other will publish anything in exchange of payment, and others are fronts for misinformation campaigns.

We cannot stress enough that **no one source automatically guarantees that you will get valid, reliable, or credible information**. For every source that promotes reliable content, there are many others that produce misinformation and disinformation. Our purpose for now is to introduce you to the range of sources that you could use, so you don't close yourself off from sources that might be helpful or that you didn't know about before now. As we get into the next chapter, we'll talk more about how to develop a system for vetting the information you get from these sources. For now, though, start looking at all of these sources for information about your topic. See what others—rightly or wrongly—are saying about it. You may learn new reasons for your beliefs or change your positions on something when you encounter new information. That's great! The purpose of a college education is to bring you into contact with content and ways of thinking about information that you may not have considered before. The hallmark of an educated person is their ability to engage with a lot of viewpoints and come to evidence-based conclusions.

Conclusion

Figuring out your topic and gathering information on it can be daunting, but it can be exciting as well. Your assignments in this class, and beyond, are opportunities for you to learn new things, encounter new ideas, and refine/change your beliefs. What most important is that you start to develop the skills to find information from a wide variety of sources—sources that represent a range of beliefs and modalities—to begin shaping your views. There is no one source that is objective or perfect; rather, it is only through working through a range of ideas and talking with others that you will become a knowledgeable, well-informed person.

Chapter 9

Media and Information Literacy

Oreva had nearly two dozen tabs up, showing various websites, videos, and journal articles on her research topic. At first, she was excited by all the information she was findings on the Mali Empire, a Western African Kingdom that flourished from about 1200 to 1600 ADE, that she wanted to present her informative speech on for class. However, as the night deepened, and it dawned on her that she might be pulling an all-nighter at the library, she became more and more despondent. Now, she just listlessly clicked from tab to tab, unable to concentrate on any source for long because there was just so much to read on the topic. A hand on her should startled her out of her reverie:

"Hey, are you okay," said a woman with glasses and brown hair, standing behind her and looking over her shoulder. "Wow, it looks like you have quite a lot of work ahead!"

"Tsh-yeah," Oreva grumped. "I'm going to be here all night at this rate."

"Do you know how you're going to organize all of those sources? Do you have some system?"

"If you mean, 'Do I have enough coffee to stay awake all night reading' then yes," Orevea joked.

"Nah, I mean an actual system," the woman laughed. "Do you mind if I gave you some tips?"

"Sure, but why are you being so helpful? To I look that clueless?" Oreva asked.

"Oh goodness, no," the person reassured. "I'm sorry, I should have introduced myself. My name's Rebecca and I'm a research librarian. I'm here to help!"

Have you faced the same trouble as Oreva when looking for credible information? On the surface, it seems like it has never been easier to find material on any topic, whether on politics, fashion, science, relationships, or culture. To get this information, most people turn to search engines. *Google* search is the most used search engine on the internet, constituting nearly 92% of search engine market and processing nearly 9 billion requests per day (Mohsin, 2023). Although Google is an amazingly efficient search engine, as we talked about in Chapter Eight, it is a *webcrawler program*—meaning it picks up anything on the web that it detects is similar to your search keywords as well as other considerations such as advertisements and traffic. As such, search engines such as *Google*, *Bing*, *Yahoo*, or *DuckDuckGo* do not, and cannot, evaluate whether the information your search gets is necessarily factual, reliable, or credible, only what is related or paid for.

Another way that many people get their information from is their preferred social media platform. As Walker

and Matsa (2021) found, *Facebook* still has the largest share of U.S. Americans who get their news from that platform (31%). However, for adults between 18-29, the preferred platforms are *Snapchat* (63%), *TikTok* (52%), *Reddit* (44%), and *Instagram* (44%) (Walker & Matsa, 2021).

Social media platforms also inhabit a grey area in media laws—on one hand they are not content producers of the news and have little legal obligation to ensure what is shown on their platform is credible information. On the other hand, they have enormous influence on how people interact with the news because it is the primary way people do engage with media content. Some social media companies have tried to—with varying degrees of success and effort—to combat **misinformation**, but since their revenue is advertisement generated, they have a monetary incentive to push information that promotes engagement (no matter the reason) not facts.



Collectively, approximately **79% of U.S. Americans reported getting news through social media websites**. Much like the Google search engine, these searches may lead you to what is viral, popular, or trending, but not necessarily what is factual. (Image Source: Brett Jordan via Pexels)

Unfortunately, there are many bad actors who take advantage of this weakness in search engines or social media platforms. For example, China's "*Great Fire Wall*" serves to keep out content produced outside of their country while its *50 Cent Army* (or wǔmáodǎng) amplifies pro-China propaganda abroad. Russia's *Internet Research Agency* is a well-known troll-farm, spreading **disinformation** and propaganda in an effort to increase tensions, unrest, and dysfunction within enemy countries (including the United States) (Craig Silverman, 2023) while cracking down on Western internet traffic as it pursues its unjust war against Ukraine (Bandurski, 2022). Elon Musk, the owner of Twitter, has cut down on Twitter's infrastructure to identify, track, and remove untrue, malicious, and unsubstantiated content (Drapkin, 2023) while Facebook has banned university professors studying the spread of disinformation on its platform (Bond, 2021). Entire platforms, such as *The Parlor*, *Truth Social*, *4Chan*, and *8Kun* pride themselves on having little or no content moderation, allowing users to spread everything from targeted hate campaigns to weird or malicious conspiracy theories such as *QAnon*.

Social media influencers use their vast networks to sell their products, generate advertisement revenue, and run morally and legally dubious operations, such as Stephen Crowder, Gwyneth Paltrow, or Andrew Tate. All of these problems, and more, are even more frightening in the context of research that has found that the top false news traveled through social networks faster and reach approximately *100 times* more people than true news (Vosoughi et al., 2018). Your responsibility, as a content consumer and producer, is to make sure that you can identify, avoid, and create information that is rigorously made and vetted. In a democratic society, people make decisions, and their decisions can only be as good as the information they have to inform them. Spreading or consuming bad information (whether intentionally or not) makes it impossible to come to the best decisions for laws or policies for our communities.

Vetting Sources

The challenge of today is not finding information—it's finding *good* information. Unfortunately, most people

do not develop their **information literacy skills** and, instead, rely on mental shortcuts to make their decisions. For example, McGeough and Rudick (2018) found that students in public speaking classes made appeals to authority (e.g., "I found it in the library so it must be credible"), appeals to form/style (e.g., "The article was professionally formatted and in a print newspaper so I thought it was reliable"), appeals to popularity (e.g., "A lot of people use this source so it must be good"), and appeals to their own beliefs (e.g., "I am pro-guns and 2nd Amendment, so I searched for information on 'problems with gun control'") when making their presentations.

There are many reasons people rely on these shortcuts—lack of formal education, time constraints, stress, or unwillingness to develop ideas that are contrary to their important social groups (e.g., their religion or family). These shortcuts can influence how you vet, read, and use information for your presentations. Many times, students make decisions to choose their information sources because they have limited time (e.g., waiting until the night before an assignment is due) and cognitive bandwidth (e.g., they are stressed due to other class's demands on time and attention). However, now is the time to develop these skills. If you do not know how to identify or create factual content, then you are more likely to make information choices based on convenience instead of rigor.

In this section, we offer one way that you can start to develop a stronger set of information literacy skills. We wish to be clear—this is not the only way to vet information, nor should this be the end of your journey on being a better information consumer or producer. You will need to routinely practice, revise, and update your skills. Doing so is especially important because internet trolls, online scammers, predatory corporations, and malicious governments are constantly updating their strategies for spreading misinformation and disinformation. Here, we'll use the information literacy program *SIFT* to offer some guidance on vetting your sources (Caufield, 2017), informed by the best practices of the *Association of College and Research Libraries*.

The SIFT Method

The SIFT method has been found to an excellent way for students to begin learning information literacy skills because it encourages **lateral reading** (Brodsky et al., 2021). SIFT includes four moves: stop, investigate the source, find trusted coverage, and trace back to the original.

Stop

Before you even begin searching the Internet for information, STOP. What is your research purpose (e.g., to persuade, inform, or motivate)? What are you trying to do with the information you are looking at? Are you being open to competing or opposing viewpoints or have you searched using keywords that will automatically limit what kind of information you are going to get? Often, novice searchers have a vague idea of what they are looking for and then land on the first source that seems to connect to their topic. If you search this way, you are likely to land on information that has a particular viewpoint and then find yourself over focusing on it and excluding other information. Worst case scenario, you may find yourself in an **echo chamber** regardless of the credibility of information.

Next, once you have found a source or a series of sources, STOP. Do you already think this source is credible, and if so, why? Relying on it because it is the first result of a search or because it agrees with your beliefs are poor reasons for relying on it. If you don't know if it is credible or not, what criteria will you use to ascertain whether the source is worthwhile? Here, you should look at the reputation of the outlet (e.g., the news media

corporation, academic journal, social media content producer, or individual expert or witness). Do they have a history of truth telling? Or, maybe they only have a history of reporting information that already affirms your beliefs or discounts/ignores competing views. If you don't know if the source has a history of disseminating credible information, then you need to execute the next moves to ascertain its reliability.

Investigate the Source

If you have encountered a source that you never have before and/or if you don't know if it is reputable or not, then you need to do some research on the outlet and/or author. What is their expertise and agenda? For example, many non-profit policy organizations such as the *Heartland Institute*, *Heritage Institute*, *Cato Institute*, *Americans for Tax Reform*, and the *Family Research Council* receive millions of dollars in donations from tobacco, oil, and gas industries or conservative religious groups. As result, a great deal of their policy downplays the harms of smoking cigarettes, hydraulic fracturing (i.e., fracking), climate change, and/or attacks LGBTQ rights and families.

Many people might believe these are reputable sources because they are .org sites instead of .com sites, but .org simply means that it is an organization—there is no obligation on the part of that organization to give better information due to its .org status. This is not to say you should never visit these sources. There might be a need to know what a problem is or why it hasn't been solved yet, and going to sources that promulgate bad information is a way to trace how untrue, harmful, or hateful content can negatively affect decision-making about a variety of issues. However, sources that are biased because of politics, faith, money, advertisement, or personal relationships must be approached with caution. By figuring out not just what a source says, but why it says it and who benefits from its advocacy, you can be a better content producer and consumer for your community.

Find Trusted Coverage

Next, is their advocacy in line with other outlets and, if not, why? That is, you should go to websites that offer information on the same topic to see if there is broad consensus or disagreement about the topic. For example, maybe the source you are using is older than a more recent source, indicating that knowledge in this field has changed. Or, the author has a fringe or minority view within a field that has broad consensus about an issue.

To be clear, we are not saying that information that is generally agreed upon is always correct. However, when there is broad agreement on a topic then it requires a greater burden of proof for those who advocate against the established position. For example, *NASA* reports that approximately 97 percent of scientists agree that climate change is occurring, is affected by human pollution, and will negatively affect people around the world. But, don't just take NASA's word for it—*The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, the *United Nations*, *World Health Organization*, and hundreds of other governmental, corporate, non-profit, and academic sources agree on these propositions. To disagree with this, a person would need to demonstrate climate change is not occurring, that if it is occurring humans aren't the cause for it, and/or that climate change will not harm people—an extremely high burden of proof given the number of sources that agree these things will occur or are occurring.

Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence and refuting generally agreed on propositions is

considered an extraordinary claim. All-too-often, people promote misinformation or disinformation by claiming to have insider knowledge that "they" (i.e., *Big Government*, *Big Pharma*, the *Illuminati*, the *Lizard People*, etc.) don't want you to have. This type of discourse is especially useful on U.S. Americans because, culturally, most of our media and history is shaped by the idea that brave truth-tellers, patriots, or morally clear-eyed individuals are often a lone voice against a throng of the evil and ignorant. However, it is important to remember that real-life decisions should be based on facts and facts are something that can and should be agreed to and recognized by the majority of experts on a given topic (no, your uncle posting bad memes information from *FreedomEagle.net/patriotsforcoal* is not an expert!). Those who cannot meet this burden of evidence only use this cultural idea to hide the fact that they simply cannot meet the evidential burden of their position and do not want you to draw on other sources that might disagree with their analysis.

Trace the Original

Finding the original source of information is more and more important as it becomes easier to share content and information across the Internet and social media. For example, in response to a medical study, news outlets reported: "Silent, not deadly; how farts cure diseases" (Burnett, 2018), "Sniffing your partners' farts could help ward off disease" (Sun, 2017), and "Scientists say sniffing farts could prevent cancer" (UPI, 2014). However, tracing their claims to the original study reveals a much different picture. The study (Le Trionnaire, 2014) showed how hydrogen sulfide, compound associated with (among other things) the disgusting smell of rotten eggs or human flatulence, may be delivered to the mitochondria of cells to as a way to fight disease and cancer. The study did not say farts cured disease or cancer or even that the compound hydrogen sulfide did; rather, the report made the more limited claim that the compound may be used as a tool in fighting disease and cancer and its efficacy is promising. Pictures, video clips, tweets, reactions, and even (as we see in this example) full medical studies can be condensed into clickbait titles that are meant to provoke anger, frustration, laughter, or sadness—because in the world of social media algorithms all of those emotions translate into engagement which means more advertisement dollars. You must be able to trace information to its original source and then evaluate whether the information that you have read is accurately reported and credible. Otherwise, you may find yourself sniffing farts for no reason!

It is important to remember that no one, single study, article, podcast, or YouTube video proves or disproves anything. Rather, it is only in reading laterally multiple sources or studies published over years that a clearer picture of credible information emerges. Using SIFT, you can begin to develop the skills that allow you to see information claims as part of a wider network of efforts moving from ignorance to knowledge. For example, the non-profit group *Center for Scientific Integrity* that tracks retracted academic articles (i.e., articles that have been published but later removed because of research misconduct or fabrication) shows how some scholars have abused their responsibilities as researchers. In one case, Yoshitaka Fuji, a Japanese researcher in anesthesiology and ophthalmology, was forced to retract 183 published papers (Stromberg, 2015)!

On one hand, it is chilling to know how long Fuji was able to elude detection. On the other hand, catching errors (whether intentionally made or not) is exactly why scholars engage in lateral reading. Researchers may review the findings of a study against other studies to see if their findings agree with past work or conduct the same tests to see if they get approximately the same result. If they don't, then it raises questions about the surety of the previous study's claims, inviting scrutiny and changing knowledge claims as more evidence supports or doesn't the original study—which is ultimately how Fuji's research was found to be fraudulent.

All of this is to say, there is no magic bullet, no one good type of source that will ensure that you have good information. It is a constant practice and one that encourages you to not take mental shortcuts. Working to make sure you are informed, demanding that your sources provide factual information, and informing others with high quality information are the only ways that all of us live in a healthy information ecosystem. As the old saying warns, "Garbage in, garbage out," or, when you consume bad information, you'll likely produce bad decisions or conclusions. So, don't settle for garbage!

Reading Journal Articles

You've found a variety of sources, used *SIFT* to test them, and feel confident that they offer a clear picture of the side or sides of an issue. Great! But, as you begin trying to read the journal articles, you find them to be incredibly dense and difficult to get through. Don't worry—this is a common problem experienced by novice researchers. We find that one of the challenges of reading research articles is that novice researchers try to read the entire article from start to finish to ascertain if it is worth using or vetting. We wish to be clear—not all journal articles follow the format guidelines we explain here. Some articles are opinion pieces, reviews of books, arguments with fellow researchers, or creative pieces that aren't easily captured in the type of organization we outline here. Therefore, we implore you to go beyond the advice we give here and develop a wide set of tools for reading a variety of research articles.

However, we do believe this approach to reading articles a great place to start and can provide the foundation for being a good researcher. Therefore, we encourage you to follow this order of reading your articles as you begin researching so you can reduce your time searching for articles, increase your comprehension, and utilize the most valuable knowledge in the manuscript. As you develop as a researcher in your area of study, you will most likely need to develop new skills until you reach mastery in your subject.

Title/Abstract

The **title** of a research article will contain the major concepts, ideas, theories, method of analysis, or insights from the study. For example, the study "Highlighting the intersectional experiences of students of color: A mixed methods examination of instructor (mis)behavior" by Vallade et al. (2023) describes the research participants (i.e., students of color), major concepts (i.e., intersectional experiences and instructor (mis)behaviors), and research methodology (i.e., mix-methods or a combination of **quantitative** and **qualitative** research). You should also read the study's abstract, which appears on the first page of the article. The abstract is usually a 100–300-word outline of the study's purpose, relevant literature, research method/design, major findings, and implications. By reading the title/abstract, you can get a good idea on whether the article connects to the topic you are studying or not. If not, go onto the next article and read its title and abstract. If so, then you need to proceed to the next step.

Introduction

The **introduction** of the article is usually not notated or labeled as such. Rather, it is simply the first part of the article, which proceeds from the very start to the first major section heading of the article. The introduction of the article should detail the research purpose, which usually contains two elements. The first is the 'practical' issue or the actual challenge, issue, or topic the article responds to. This information lets the reader know

what problems they will be able to solve or mitigate by finding out what the researchers found. The second, is the 'theoretical' issue, which details the academic questions or gaps that the study tries to address. This content shows the reader how the researchers are building on past scholarship in this area and justifying the need for the present study.

Literature Review

The final section you should read is the **literature review**. Sometimes the literature review is named 'Literature Review,' but often it is not explicitly named. Instead, it is understood that the first major section heading after the introduction is the beginning of the literature review. The purpose of the literature review is to provide a summarization of all the past research that has been conducted in the past about the topic. The literature review should also show how the current research is meaningfully building on that information and should end with the **hypotheses** or **research questions** that the study will address. Remember, you should rarely, if ever, cite work from the literature review. Rather, when you find any important information you find in this section, you should find the literature being cited in the reference section and go read that particular study or source.

Method

The **method** section will describe who (e.g., the participants and their demographic information) or what (e.g., the documents, speeches, or content) they got data from. It will also detail what procedures were used to gather data (e.g., surveys or interviews) or texts (e.g., documents, speeches, or content). For example, in a statistical report, it will show what survey instruments were used and how reliable they have been in past studies as a way to justifying their use in the present study. Finally, the section will detail how the researchers analyzed the data in order to come up with new insights. This could be the author or author team's explication of their statistical procedures used to test a hypothesis. The method section is important to examine because even if the results and discussion are important, if the method section shows a poorly designed research project, then those insights showed be read with extreme caution.

Results/Discussion

Now you are going to skip everything between the introduction and the section labeled 'Results' or 'Findings' and 'Discussion' or 'Implications' in the article. Novice researchers often think that the whole research article is something that can be cited from. However, information in the introduction, literature review, or method sections is often a summary of past research or information on the topic. In other words, it a secondary source, since you are relying on the author of the present article to understand and convey the information from past studies to you. The information in the results section should be the statistical tests, interview excerpts, or other information that is produced through the application of the research method. The discussion section should summarize what the findings or results of the research article were as well as detail (or, discuss) the implications of the study for the production of knowledge on the topic. \

Much like the introduction, the discussion will most likely explain the 'practical' and 'theoretical' implications of the study. In other words, it will describe how the knowledge produced through the research should inform peoples' actions as they try to address the problems the research responds to (practical) as well as make a case for how it extends or challenges the existing research in that area for future researchers to build on in their own work (theoretical). The information in the article that is new, or is a primary source, is the information

in the results and discussion. Therefore, if you find something in the literature review that is helpful, important, or worth noting, you should go to the reference list, find the source, and read the original source so you can cite it in your own work. If you don't, and you cite information from the literature review in your own work, this is a form of **academic dishonesty** because you never actually read the original source.

We admit, **sometimes research writing is needlessly difficult to read.** We remember the first time we read an article that stated, "Due to the established lacunae in the field…" and were intimidated by the word "lacunae." What does it mean? How important is it? It sounds so daunting! Lacunae, however, just means "gaps" or "holes." The author, in establishing that there are missing answers to questions that were important to their field of study, used a word that immediately caused consternation and confusion from their audience. This word choice is an example of bad writing because it *needlessly confuses their audience*, which should always be avoided! However, sometimes, technical jargon is necessary. The difference between a vein or artery, mitochondrion or ribosomes, verb or adjective, or discourse and rhetoric are important distinctions within their respective fields of study.

Often, we find that novice researchers, when encountering a new or unfamiliar word, just pass over the word in their reading and don't use dictionaries to look it up because they: A) aren't motivated to; or B) they feel like doing so is an admission of ignorance. However, if you wish to be able to consume and vet knowledge from a source, you will need to be able to understand what is written and that burden, ultimately, falls on you (the reader) to do the work to figure it out. Passing over a word, whether due to laziness or anxiety, robs you of a chance to grow your knowledge on a subject and eliminates the possibility that you can use or refute the information in a meaningful way.

Verbal and In-Text Ways to Cite Sources

After you have found a wide range of sources on the topic, winnowed them down to the ones that are the most reliable and credible, and mined them for information regarding your topic, it is time to put them in your speech or writing. We find that citing information can be some of the most anxiety producing work that students do. Often, they report getting incomplete, conflicting, or erroneous information about citing sources. As a result, many students put little effort into their citation practices because they think, "I'm going to get it wrong anyway, so why try?"

Conversely, some students rely solely on computer apps, such as *EasyBib*, *BibTex*, or *Bib It Now* to do their citations for them. Relying on apps doesn't build your information literacy skills. Doing so means you never bothered to learn how to do it correctly since there was an app that you thought would do it for you and, therefore, you won't be able to tell if the program is producing a correct citation or not. As we'll see later, these programs often incorrectly cite work. In short, you need to learn how to properly cite materials and practice those skills.

We cannot stress enough that properly citing your sources is an incredibly important practice in your work. Not only does it ensure that you are sharing information with others in a responsible way by letting them know where you got your information from, it also increases your credibility with your audience because they recognize your effort to keep them fully informed. Citation guides provide standardized system for reporting your sources so that your listeners or readers know exactly how and where to find your sources. There are

a variety of ways to cite your information for your audience, but in this chapter, we'll focus on the two most common styles: the American Psychological Association (APA) style guide and the Modern Language Society (MLA) handbook.

Verbal Citation

When giving a presentation, you need to *verbally cite your sources* so your audience can ascertain the quality of your sources. Failing to do so can make your audience to doubt or disagree with the content of your speech even if your information is correct. To avoid this, you need to verbally cite your sources in a way that supports your work while not being overly cumbersome to your speech and interrupting your flow. We suggest you use three pieces of information every time you cite something verbally: *Name of Source*, *Credibility Statement of Source*, *Year of Publication*. **Here are a few examples of what you might say:**

> Dr. McGeough, who is a leading researcher in ancient Greek rhetorical philosophy, argued in a 2023 research article that…
>
> In 2022, the World Health Organization, an internationally renowned inter-governmental body that studies health and medicine, reported…
>
> In a research study spanning from 2015 to 2020, the internationally recognized data scientists at the Pew Research Center tracked voting habits of various groups and found…

Do you see the *Name of Source*, *Credibility Statement of Source*, *Year of Publication* in each of the examples? Although you can report the information in a variety of ways, each contains the information. Typically, you don't have to give more information than this because doing so makes your speech awkward and filled with a lot of extraneous information. If your audience wants more specific information about your sources, they can ask for your written citations. You should have a "References" (APA) or "Works Cited" (MLA) paper or (if using a slideshow app such as PowerPoint or Google Slides) on the final slide. In those case, make sure to write out the reference information based on our advice below.

In-Text Citation

There are two primary ways that you can cite information in text, or in the body of your writing. The first is called **summary** or **synopsis**. Luckily, we cite and report information the same whether it is a summary or synopsis. Let's take the following passage that we might find in an academic journal article (sometimes called a *periodical*): "After surveying 200 participants, the study found that people like dogs more than cats, hamburgers more than hotdogs, and cake more than pie." **Now, we'll create a summary in both APA and MLA:**

> McGeough and Golsan (2023) discovered that people like dogs more than cats.
>
> (APA)
>
> Researchers have discovered that people like dogs more than cats (McGeough & Golsan, 2023).
>
> (APA)
>
> McGeough and Golsan discovered that people like dogs more than cats (1).

(MLA)

Researchers have discovered that people like dogs more than cats (McGeough and Golsan 1).

(MLA)

The sentences can be written either way, but both contain information that is specific to their citation style. Notice how in APA, the in-text citation shows the authors' last names, the year of publication, and uses the ampersand symbol ("&") whereas the authors last names, the page number the information was found on, and the word "and" was needed in MLA (we made up the year of publication and page number for the sake of the example). Also, notice how the summary focuses on one finding, even though the research found peoples' preferences on three different things. If we had reported on all three findings, in our own words, then it would have been a synopsis. We can also write a **direct quote** if we cite it properly. **For example:**

Past research has found that "people like dogs more than cats, hamburgers more than hotdogs, and cake more than pie" (McGeough & Golsan, 2023, p. 1).

(APA)

Past research has found that "people like dogs more than cats, hamburgers more than hotdogs, and cake more than pie" (McGeough and Golsan 1).

(MLA)

Note, that in APA, we have now added the page number to help a reader find the information that we are quoting whereas citation in MLA doesn't change. In both cases, though, we use quotation marks to indicate that we are directly quoting material from a source. You must copy information from the source word-for-word if you are using a direct quotation.

Written References

Your references (APA) or works cited (MLA) pages are where you collect all of the information for your sources into one place. Doing this makes it easier for your reader to find the information you use in your writing. Let's use the article, "Academic advising as teaching: Undergraduate student perceptions of advisor confirmation" and see how to cite it properly in your papers. **First, let's compare out how the citation appears on the *article's first page*, *Bib It Now*, and proper *APA*:**

Scott Titsworth, Joseph P. Mazer, Alan K. Goodboy, San Bolkan & Scott A. Myers (2015) Two Meta-analyses Exploring the Relationship between Teacher Clarity and Student Learning, Communication Education, 64:4, 385-418, DOI: 10.1080/03634523.2015.1041998

(Article's first page)

Titsworth, S., Mazer, J. P., Goodboy, A. K., Bolkan, S., & Myers, S. A. (2015). Two Meta-analyses Exploring the Relationship between Teacher Clarity and Student Learning. Communication Education. Retrieved from https://www-tandfonline-com.proxy.lib.uni.edu/doi/full/10.1080/03634523.2015.1041998

(Bib It Now)

> Titsworth, S., Mazer, J. P., Goodboy, A. K., Bolkan, S., & Myers, S. A. (2015). Two meta-analyses exploring the relationship between teacher clarity and student learning. *Communication Education*, *64*(4), 385-418. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2015.1041998
>
> (APA)

Can you see the differences? The third citation is the correct way to cite it in APA. The differences you see are why it is so important to know how to cite information properly. If you just relied on the journal article or app, then your citation would be incorrect and you wouldn't be informing your audience of your information in the standardized way. **Let's try it with MLA now:**

> Scott Titsworth, Joseph P. Mazer, Alan K. Goodboy, San Bolkan & Scott A. Myers (2015) Two Meta-analyses Exploring the Relationship between Teacher Clarity and Student Learning, Communication Education, 64:4, 385-418, DOI: 10.1080/03634523.2015.1041998
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> Titsworth, Scott, et al. "Two Meta-analyses Exploring the Relationship between Teacher Clarity and Student Learning." Communication Education, 9 June 2015, www-tandfonline-com.proxy.lib.uni.edu/doi/full/10.1080/03634523.2015.1041998.
>
> (Bib It Now)
>
> Titsworth, Scott, et al. "Two Meta-analyses Exploring the Relationship between Teacher Clarity and Student Learning." *Communication Education*, vol. 9, no. 4, 2015, pp. 385-418, https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2015.1041998.
>
> (MLA)

Again, can you spot the differences? The final example is the correct way to cite an article in MLA.

The examples we just gave are for journal articles, but there is a unique way to cite almost anything: tweets, textbooks, websites with authors, websites without authors, YouTube videos, and a whole lot more. There are thousands of books, blogs, online writing centers, and YouTube/TikTok videos on citation. We suggest you visit a reputable website that offers sample papers so you can compare your work to what is the correct, standard way of citing and formatting your paper. We recommend (and often use ourselves!) the *Online Writing Lab* (or OWL) website from Purdue University, which offers sample papers in APA and MLA.

As you look at the sample paper and your own, sing the children's song from *Sesame Street*: "One of these things is not like the others/One of these things just doesn't belong/Can you tell which thing is not like the others/By the time I finish my song?" That is, if your paper looks different than the sample paper's formatting, in-text citation, or reference/works cited page, yours is most likely the one that is incorrect—fix it! When students turn in papers that do not adhere to proper formatting, then there are two primary explanations: either the student didn't take the time/energy to do the work properly or the student cannot follow *Sesame Street* rules and make corrections to their paper based on comparing their work to a sample paper. Frankly, neither is a good look, which is why your professors (and audience) will get frustrated if you don't take the time to properly reference your sources.

Conclusion

When you are trying to inform, persuade, or motivate your audience, you need to be able to communicate why you have come to the conclusions you have based on the evidence you have gathered. If you cannot explain *why* you believe something or *if* you believe something for poor reasons (e.g., “my family believes this,” “my friends all say this,” or “everyone knows this”), then you have not lived up to your responsibility to be a good, careful researcher. Being able to vet your evidence is the first step to not only demanding that you are an informed person, but that others around you live up to their responsibility to communicate in ways that are factually supported about important topics or problems you and your community may face.

Chapter 10

Organizing Presentations

Tee recently started a small Public Relations firm and is preparing to give a presentation to a group of potential clients who own a local sports team. The team contacted him because they want to change PR firms and know they are currently losing money because local fans are only attending 1-2 games each year. Tee has a degree in Public Relations and did multiple internships with sports teams. As he is preparing his presentation, he considers the various things he could talk about: the general value of PR professionals, his background doing PR for sports teams, future trends in the market, how companies that do not specialize in sports do not know how to connect with fans, how much money can be lost with an ineffective PR strategy, etc. The list gets long. Tee only has 15 minutes to make his pitch, so he knows his presentation would be rushed and confusing if he tried to cover every topic on his list.

After considering it further, Tee remembers that the company called him because they want to change firms and know their current strategy is not working. So, he decides to not spend his limited time talking about the general value of PR professionals or how much money can be lost with a bad strategy. They already know these things. Instead, he focuses on the problem his listeners are facing and how his firm can solve it.

Problem: The team is not selling enough tickets because local fans are only buying single-game tickets.

Cause: PR firms that do not specialize in sports do not understand how to connect with fans and sell season tickets.

Solution: They need a PR firm with experience promoting sports teams. They need HIS firm.

Knowing that his pitch speaks directly to the concerns of his audience and builds a strong argument to hire his firm, Tee walks into the meeting with confidence.

Organizing the Body of Your Speech

One of the most challenging parts of creating a presentation is choosing how to organize all of the information, ideas, and supporting material you wish to include in the presentation. Students often find this challenging precisely because there is not one right answer for how a presentation should be organized. As you will see in this section, a presentation on the same topic could be organized in a variety of ways. This does not mean you should just randomly dump all of the information you have on a topic together and hope it makes sense. There are particular ways of putting information together that we call **organizational patterns**. The patterns included in this chapter align with different ways that people are used to processing information.

Different organizational patterns are better for different purposes. So, when deciding on how to organize your presentation, your first question should be: **what is the purpose of this presentation**? Is your goal simply to inform your audience about a particular topic? Or do you wish to persuade them to act in a particular way?

Determining your purpose will help you determine which organizational patterns will work best for your presentation. In the following sections, we describe several commonly-used and effective organizational patterns. If your goal is primarily informative, you may wish to consider chronological, spatial, and topical organizations for your presentation. If your goal is to persuade your audience to act, you may decide upon a Cause-Effect or Problem-Solution organization.

Chronological Organization

A **chronological organization** means using time as your main organizational principle. Your main points represent different periods of time, and are sequenced in a way that should make it easy for your audience to follow and see the connections between points. Although it is possible to start with more recent times and move backward (which is called reverse-chronological order and is the kind of sequencing you might choose for your résumé), it generally makes the most sense to move forward through time. As we discuss in the chapter on storytelling, humans are storytellers—we like to follow how people and ideas connect and change across time—and a chronological organization traces your topic across time.

The amount of time between the main points of a chronologically ordered speech could vary dramatically, depending upon the topic. A speech on a historical topic might cover hundreds, or even thousands, of years between main points. For example, a speech on the evolution of communication technologies might have main points such as the development of written language, the invention of the printing press, the evolution of electronic communication such as the telegraph, and digital communication technologies. Such a speech would cover an evolution that happened across thousands of years.

On the other hand, the main points of a chronologically ordered speech might occur relatively close to each other. For almost any topic, you can find an online "how-to" video. These videos typically adopt a chronological organization by explaining how to do the necessary steps in a specific order. They might cover what to do at the beginning, middle, and end or before, during, and after. For example, cooking videos are an incredibly popular form of a chronologically organized how-to presentation. For virtually any meal you might wish to learn how to cook, there are videos explaining the process. The details change, but the organization is generally the same: an introduction followed by…

1. an **explanation** of what ingredients/preparation you need to begin cooking the dish,
2. a **set of actions** to take in a specific sequence,
3. a **display** of the finished meal.

Spatial Organization

A **spatial organization** means using space/location as your main organizational principle. Your main points are organized by what occurs or occurred in particular places. As with a chronological organization, the scale may be very different. The places in a spatially organized presentation may be large and quite far apart, or small and close together. For example, imagine you are giving a presentation on fitness. You might present on cultural practices of fitness in India, Japan, and the United States.

Or the spaces could be small or relatively close. For example, you might present on how fitness affects the health of different parts of the body. You could even organize your main points around how exercise affects

different areas of the human brain. Whether separated by miles or millimeters, a spatial organization focuses the main points of your speech on what is happening in different places.

Topical Organization

A **topical organization** means using specific topics as your organizational pattern. This is the most general organizational pattern, as it allows you to identify any two to four major subtopics related to your overall topic and building your speech around them. A topically organized speech on videogames might include main points such as

1. The history of videogames.
2. The cultural impact of video games.
3. The development of esports organizations.

Notice that those three points are all obviously related to the overall topic of videogames, but you could probably remove any one of them and replace it with a different main point about videogames and the speech could still work.



Depending on your chronological focus, your presentation on videogames might include arcade games like Pac-Man or it might skip to more modern PC and console games. Image source: Alexander Kovalev via Pexels

The strength of this organization is that it offers a lot of flexibility for you to focus on whatever information you deem most important and interesting to your audience. The weakness of a topical organization is that it requires more work on your part to help the audience understand how the chosen subtopics relate to one another.

Most topics could be divided into a surprisingly large number of subtopics, so part of your task in a topically organized presentation is to **demonstrate *why* the particular subtopics you chose are important and how they fit together**.

Cause-Effect Organization

A cause-effect organization helps audiences recognize connections. This organization can be used for informative speaking, but it is particularly useful if your goal is to change your audience's beliefs about a topic. By explaining how one phenomenon (the cause) led or leads to another (the effect), you can help listeners understand relationships between things they may not have recognized before. A cause-effect organization can allow you to explain how things happened in the past, are currently happening, or will happen in the future. This can help your audience see things in a new way and, if done well, rethink their existing beliefs. For example, you could explain how the spread of capitalism affected global living standards. Or you could focus on the future and explaining how things in the present will have effects in the future. For example, a cause-effect speech on climate change might be organized as follows:

1. Human activity has greatly increased the amount of greenhouse gasses released into the atmosphere.
2. Greenhouse gasses trap heat and contribute to climate change.
3. If this trend continues, the resulting climate change will lead to rising sea levels, extreme weather, massive disruptions to agriculture, and the extinction of many animal species.

Here you see a logical progression from an **initial cause** (humans releasing greenhouse gas), to a **general effect** (climate change), to **specific effects** (rising sea levels, extreme, weather, disruption to agriculture, animal extinctions). Depending on your topic, you could also potentially decide to reverse the order and start with the effects. You could tell your audience about a future of flooded cities, massive hurricanes, food-shortages, and animal extinctions. Then you could tell them that all of these are future effects of climate change. Then you could tell them that specific human actions are contributing to climate change.

This second presentation might be more emotionally impactful, but there are benefits and drawbacks to each approach. Progressing from causes to effects makes it easy to see the logical connections between your points. If you have provided good evidence that humans contribute to the release of greenhouse gasses, and that greenhouse gasses trap heat and contribute to climate change, then it is more difficult for your audience to reject or downplay the specific effects that you mention in the final point.

On the other hand, if you start by presenting the potentially shocking effects of climate change, you may create immediate interest and emotional investment in a presentation on a topic that most of your audience has likely heard about. However, if you don't first establish the cause-to-effect relationship, it might be easier for resistant audience members to downplay or dismiss the specific effects that you are describing.

This is an example of where **audience analysis** might inform your choices. If you think most of audience likely believes climate change is real, but they do not particularly care about the topic, starting with a vivid depiction of the effects might be an effective way to get them to care and be interested in the topic. If you think they likely disagree that climate change is occurring, you might be better served starting where you agree (no one doubts humans contribute to the release of greenhouse gasses), and then carefully making connections to the general effect and specific effects.

Problem-Solution Organization

A Problem-Solution Organization articulates a problem and advocates for a specific solution to that problem. It is an organization that works if you are trying to get your audience to act in a specific way. The main goals a speaker must accomplish are convincing the audience that 1) the problem is substantial enough to need solving, 2) the proposed solution is the best solution to that problem, 3) they should take a specific action to help enact the solution.

Audience analysis is an important part of preparing any presentation (see Chapter 4), but it is particularly important for persuasive presentations. This is because you goal is not just presenting your topic in a way that keeps your audience's attention; it is also to persuade your audience members to DO something after the presentation as a result of the information you present. This is not an easy task, and it requires you to craft your argument carefully. You should ask yourself a number of questions before deciding how to build your argument. These questions include the following:

- Does my audience agree this is a problem?
- What does my audience already know about this problem?
- How does my audience think this problem affects them?
- Are there ways this problem affects them that they might not realize?
- What kinds of actions could my audience realistically take to solve this problem?

You should try to answer each of these questions before writing your presentation. You will obviously not know everything your audience knows or believes about your topic. But you can at least make educated guesses based on what you know about your audience. The answers to these questions will guide how you choose to talk about your problem and what solutions you propose.

If your audience does not think the issue you are presenting on is a problem, your first task is to persuade them otherwise. To do so, you may wish to explain the variety of negative effects that result from this problem. This process begins in the **relevance statement** in your introduction, but it is worth covering further in your **description of the problem**. You should do your best to connect these negative effects to your listeners and how they experience the world. Unfortunately, it is more difficult to get people to act to solve problems if they do not believe the problem will affect them or people they are close to. However, many problems have some effects that are easily recognizable and other effects that are less-obvious and more far-reaching.

Consider a topic such as unpaid internships. It is unlikely that most audiences have spent a lot of time thinking about the ethics or effects of unpaid internships, and highly unlikely most audiences consider them a substantial problem. If you wanted to argue that they were, you might organize the main points of such a presentation by:

1. **explaining the scope of the problem** (how many students are working for free as part of internship programs),
2. **arguing that there are many negative effects** of this huge supply of free labor (lower paying jobs for college students and new graduates, further disadvantages for students who cannot afford to participate in unpaid internships), and
3. **propose a solution** (our university should require all internships to pay at least minimum wage).

If your audience agrees with you that the issue you are presenting on is a problem, you are facing a different persuasive challenge. The challenge you are facing is more about **efficacy**: Is the audience not already acting because problem you are discussing complex enough that your audience does not know what solutions are likely to work? Or are the commonly proposed solutions to the problem so large that audience does not know what they could do to make those solutions happen? If your audience already agrees that the problem exists, you can spend less time establishing the problem Instead, you need to focus on persuading them that you have the right solution for the problem and that they can act in a specific way that will help bring about your proposed solution.

Consider a topic like global hunger: your audience presumably agrees that huge numbers of children starving is a problem. So why are they not already acting to solve the problem? Global food access is a complex

problem, and most people have little idea what they could do to help solve the problem of hunger. So, you might organize the main points of such a presentation by

1. **explaining the problem**,
2. **clarifying the causes** (e.g. more than enough food is produced globally, but the distribution is very uneven), and
3. **proposing a solution** for how to get more equitable food distribution and letting your audience know about a particular organization that is doing important work to make that happen and how your audience can support that organization.

You may have noticed that the previous examples of presentations were organized to progress from problems to solutions, but both had three main points. The difference came in whether a second point was allocated to establishing the various ways the problem affects the audience or to focusing on the causes so that the audience believes you are offering the best solution. The choice to add a main point focusing on the causes or effects of a problem should be guided by your audience analysis and what you think is the biggest barrier to overcome in getting them to adopt your proposed solution.

When attempting to persuade an audience to act, you should begin by identifying your purpose, analyzing your audience, and determining which information is most important to communicate to that particular audience. This will help you select the organizational pattern that best focuses your presentation.

Other Things to Consider

When organizing your speech, you will need to make a pair of choices in terms of balancing sometimes competing options of how to allocate your speaking time. The first balance is between:

A. What is likely to be interesting to your audience vs.
B. What information your audience needs in order to accept your thesis.

In the course of doing research for your presentation, you are likely to find lots of information (such as stories or studies) that your audience would find interesting. Some of this information will provide important support for your thesis or main points. Some of it will not. Just because an audience might find something interesting does not mean you should include it in your speech. However, sometimes you may encounter information that is relevant to your speech and that you are certain your audience would find fascinating. Even if that information isn't essential to convincing your audience or supporting your thesis, you may want to find a way to fit it in your presentation as a subpoint or even as your attention getter.

The second balance is between:

A. Spending a roughly equal amount of time on your main points vs.
B. Allocating your time on the topics of your speech that are most important to establish.

Generally speaking, spending a roughly equal amount of your time on each of your main points is a good idea.

However, your audience will still be able to follow your speech if one point requires a bit more or less time than the others. If you are planning on presenting for eight minutes, you might set out to spend about two minutes on each of your main points and one minute each on your introduction and conclusion. As you write each section, you may realize that you are able to say what you want to say in your first two points in 90 seconds each, but that your third point requires two and a half minutes. This is probably an acceptable balance that will be understandable to your audience. On the other hand, it can be confusing to a listener if your points are too unbalanced in length. Audiences may struggle to follow your presentation if you say in your preview that your presentation will cover three main points, and you then cover the first two in 30 seconds and then spend five minutes on the third.

In both of these considerations, you should aim to find **a healthy balance**. A speech that is packed with interesting information that does not connect to the thesis is just random information. A speech that is focused solely on advancing the thesis, with no consideration of what will be of interest to the audience, is likely to quickly lose the attention of listeners. A speech that cuts out essential information in order to keep the main points exactly balanced will be less effective. A speech with a major imbalance in the length of the main points could be confusing to an audience. There is not a single right answer for how to navigate these considerations, but it is generally wise to avoid going to either extreme.

TRANSITIONS/SIGNPOSTS

Transitions are sentences or phrases that you place between the main points of your presentation. **Transition statements** serve multiple functions: first, they help your audience stay oriented and follow along by letting them know you are moving from one point or subpoint to the next. This is why they are sometimes called signposts. Second, they can help you establish the connection between the ideas in your speech. Because of this, they are essential to helping your audience follow along and understand your speech.

Transition statements generally contain two main elements:

1. an internal summary and
2. an internal preview.

An **internal summary** is a brief summarizing of the preceding main point. This should take no more than a sentence or two. It might even be done in half of a sentence. The goal is not to provide a detailed review of what you just said, but rather to summarize it in a sentence so that the audience can easily understand how the previous main point connects to the next main point. You then follow the internal summary with an **internal preview**, which provides a brief overview of what will be in the next point. Your internal preview should also usually be no more than a sentence or two.

A transition can be as simple as naming the main point that you are concluding and the one that you are about to start. For example, returning to the example topical speech on video games, you could say “now that I have described the history of video games, I want to tell you about their cultural impact.” This is not a particularly interesting sentence, but it gives your audience a clear sense of where you are in the speech and helps them follow along.

For the speech on climate change, where connecting causes and effects is important, you might say something like "As you can see, there is a clear scientific consensus that greenhouse gasses trap heat and contribute to climate change. So, what does that mean for our generation? If we stay on this path, the resulting climate change will lead to rising sea levels, extreme weather, massive disruptions to agriculture, and the extinction of many animal species." Notice that this is still basically a restatement of your main points. Simply putting them together with a brief question in the middle not only tells your audience that you are transitioning between points, it also makes the connection obvious.

From these examples, it should be clear that transition statements require very little additional writing and take little time out of your speech, but help your audience better understand and follow your presentations. As such, transition statements are amongst the most low-effort/high-impact ways to help your presentations be more effective. Yet they are often overlooked, or even left out entirely, by speakers who lack adequate training. Don't be like those speakers. As you move between the main points of your speech, you should always take a moment to include a transition.

Conclusion

No matter the topic of your presentation, it is important to consider how to best organize the information you are presenting. Most presentation topics could be sensibly organized using multiple organizational patterns. However, the resulting presentations would be very different.

When deciding how to organize your information, you should first identify your purpose. Is your goal to inform or persuade? If your goal is to inform your audience, you might organize your information **chronologically** (by time), **spatially** (by space), or **topically** (by subtopic). If your goal is to persuade your audience to change their opinion on an issue, a cause-effect organization might be most effective. If your goal is to persuade your audience to act in a particular way, an organization progressing from problem to solution would generally work best. No matter your speaking goal, thoughtfully organizing your information in a pattern your audience can easily follow is an essential part of accomplishing it.

Chapter 11

Introductions, Conclusions, and Transitions

Ada agreed to listen to the presentation her roommate is preparing for an Ancient History class. The topic is on the history of storytelling. Ada likes all kinds of books and stories. She enjoys reading novels and watching movies, and she knows her roommate spent a lot of time researching and writing this presentation, so she is happy to listen. Her roommate begins by providing a list of ten particularly ancient stories and telling how old each of them is and where it was written. Near the end of the list, when her roommate mentions how old The Odyssey is, Ada is reminded that she has a book report due in her own history class. As her roommate mentions that we still like stories today, Ada remembers that one of her favorite books is being released as a movie this weekend. She is hoping to go see it in the theater with a couple of friends who also liked the book. She should probably message them to figure out a good time. Right then, she feels her phone buzz in her bag. She does not want to be rude to her roommate, so she ignores it. But it keeps buzzing, and she finds herself wondering if that is one of the friends she is hoping will go to the movie with her. She starts mentally writing the message she will send once she is done listening to her roommate. And then Ada notices the silence; her roommate had reached the end of her presentation. "So," her roommate asks, "do you think it is good?"

Have you ever tried to focus on something, only to realize that your attention had drifted? Take a moment to consider how many demands you have on your attention at any moment. You might be thinking about an upcoming exam, preparing for a challenging conversation at work, figuring out plans for tonight. Perhaps you are feeling hungry or tired. And you likely have a phone in reach that allows you to be constantly communicating with friends and family or getting updates on a topic that interests you. Even when you are trying to focus, it may be buzzing in your pocket or bag to let you know that there is something else that demands your attention. All of this is true for most of the people around you, as well. We live in a world with an immense number of distractions, and our attention is a limited resource.

This is important to remember when crafting a presentation, and it is why the introduction of any presentation is the most important part: A good opening captures the attention of listeners and makes them want to listen to the rest. It connects them to the topic and helps your audience understand why the topic matters to them. No matter how insightful, persuasive, or well-crafted the body of a presentation is, it cannot accomplish its purpose if the intended audience has already tuned it out and shifted their attention elsewhere. Think about the opening example. This is what happens when a speech begins with a poor introduction. Even a committed audience member who is interested in your topic might have a lot of other things competing for their attention. Would opening with a long list cut through those distractions? Unlikely. Would a generic

connection to the topic, such as "everyone likes stories," hold their interest? Probably not. And, if you start with a weak introduction that loses your audience's attention at the start, it is very difficult to get it back.

Beyond gaining your audience's attention, a well-designed introduction also provides an opportunity to **set your audience's expectations**. If you have ever listened to a presentation that you thought would teach you about a topic that you were really interested in, only to have that topic never come up, you know the importance of setting audience expectations. You probably left that presentation disappointed. Even if the content of the presentation was well-researched and well-delivered, if you had been led to expect something else, you likely felt let-down because it failed to align with your expectations. Overall, the goal of an introduction is to create a desire in your audience to hear what you have to say. You can then end your speech with a conclusion that helps your audience see how you have met those expectations and remember what is most important from your presentation.

This chapter will teach you how to write good introductions and conclusions.

Introductions

So what makes for a good introduction? A good introduction should typically accomplish each of the following tasks: 1) Capture an audience's attention, 2) Demonstrate the relevance of the presentation to the specific audience, 3) Establish the credibility of the speaker, 4) Clearly articulate the thesis of the presentation, 5) Provide a preview of the main points of the presentation. There are a variety of ways to accomplish each of these tasks, and the following section provides guidance on how to effectively accomplish each.

Attention Getter

The role of an **attention getter** is just what it sounds like—getting the audience to pay attention to what you are saying and interested in hearing more. There are many ways to accomplish this. You might ask a question. You might start with a statistic. You might tell a very brief story to get your audience invested. You might open with a famous quotation that connects to your speech in some important way. Whatever you choose to do, the first sentence of your presentation is incredibly important. Consider the following two attention getters:

- *Option 1: Sixty-three percent of college students report feeling stress about the transition to college.*
- *Option 2: People consistently rank public speaking ahead of death in terms of what they most fear.*

Both of these technically meet the expectations described above, but the second is much stronger. Why? Because you probably already knew that transitioning to college is stressful. But learning that people are more afraid of public speaking than death surprises most people. In the context of a class that is going to ask everyone in the room to engage in public speaking, this surprising fact makes a good attention getter.

Relevance Statement

A **relevance statement** answers the question: "Why should I care about this topic?" If an attention getter is aimed at getting an audience member to briefly stop thinking about other things and momentarily give you their attention, a relevance statement is aimed at convincing audience members to listen to the rest of

the presentation. A relevance statement should tell audience members why the topic of your presentation is important to them. A good relevance statement will make the connection between the topic and the audience as specific and personal as possible. Consider the following two relevance statements:

- *Option 1: Everyone experiences stress, and meditation can help reduce it.*
- *Option 2: We are all in a class that requires public speaking, which means each one of us will experience the stress of standing in front of a crowd and speaking. Meditation offers an effective way to manage that stress, on a budget any college student can afford.*

What makes Option 2 the stronger relevance statement? It offers specific connections to the experience of the audience. In contrast to Option 1, which makes a more general connection to stress being a human experience, Option 2 connects the presentation to the specific activity—public speaking— that everyone in the class is engaging in. It also notes the financial limitations facing many college students, which makes low-cost solutions like meditation particularly relevant.

Credibility Statement

A **credibility statement** answers the question: Why should I listen to this person? The internet gives us access to lots of people venting their thoughts on virtually every topic imaginable; why should audience members trust you? A credibility statement is a chance to explain to your audience why your knowledge of and connection to a topic makes you a reliable source of information. In professional settings, you will likely be called upon to speak about topics on which you are professionally knowledgeable. You may be able to point to years of professional experience to establish your expertise. This is not always the case in college. You may be giving a speech on a topic that you just started researching within a few weeks of the presentation. In situations where you lack formal expertise, training, or experience on a topic, establishing a personal connection to the topic can help establish your credibility. Compare the following two relevance statements:

- *Option 1: I have been researching meditation for two weeks.*
- *Option 2: As someone who personally experiences anxiety when giving speeches, I have been researching meditation for this assignment, and I have already started using what I've learned to help me feel more comfortable and confident when speaking.*

Option 2 is clearly stronger here. Why? The speaker has just started learning about the topic and has very little expertise. Both of these credibility statements clearly acknowledge this limitation. But Option 2 demonstrates the speaker has a real connection to the topic. They become more credible because they likely share a challenging experience with the audience (anxiety when giving speeches), and have learned enough about meditation to have a solution that is effective in addressing that problem.

Thesis Statement

A **thesis statement** answers the question: What is the central point of this presentation? A thesis statement condenses the main point/argument of your presentation into a single sentence. The rest of the presentation is aimed at supporting or accomplishing your thesis statement. For an informative presentation, a thesis

statement will provide a specific articulation of **what the audience will learn**. For a persuasive presentation, a thesis will provide a specific articulation of what should be done in response to the presentation. Compare the following two thesis statements:

- *Option 1: My presentation will teach you about meditation.*
- *Option 2: Meditation offers an effective tool to manage stress and increase happiness that you can start using today.*

What makes Option 2 better? Both are accurate, but Option 2 is much more specific. Because of this, it provides the listener a clearer understanding of what will be covered in the presentation.

Preview Statement

A **preview statement** answers the question: What are the main parts of this presentation? By telling audience members what the main parts of the presentation will be, it offers a roadmap of sorts. If the thesis tells audience members where the presentation is going, a preview statement tells them how it is going to get there. As we will cover later in this chapter, most presentations for a class will have 2–4 main points. A preview statement simply tells the audience what those points are and in what order they will be discussed. This helps audience members understand how your ideas fit together. Although it is possible to be creative with how you word a preview statement, it is usually best to be simple and clear. Consider the following preview statement:

> *My presentation today will describe what meditation is, how it affects the brain, and some simple meditation practices that anyone can use to improve their lives in a variety of ways.*

Now, let's combine the previous examples to see the introductions created by each. Our option 1 examples lead to the following introduction:

> *Sixty-three percent of college students report feeling stress about the transition to college. Everyone experiences stress, and meditation can help reduce it. I have been researching meditation for two weeks. My presentation will teach you about meditation. My presentation today will describe what meditation is, how it affects the brain, and some simple meditation practices that anyone can use to improve their lives in a variety of ways.*

This introduction has all of the essential elements. But because it is too general and lacks any specific connection to the audience or speaker, it is unlikely to draw and hold the attention of audience members. Compare that to the introduction created from our option 2 examples:

> *People consistently rank public speaking ahead of death in terms of what they most fear. We are all in a class that requires public speaking, which means each one of us will experience the stress of standing in front of a crowd and speaking. Meditation offers an effective way to manage that stress, on a budget any student can afford. As someone who personally experiences anxiety when giving speeches, I have been researching meditation for this assignment, and I have already started using what I've learned to help me feel more comfortable and confident when speaking. Meditation offers an effective tool to manage stress and increase happiness that you can start using today. My presentation today will describe what meditation is, how it affects the brain, and some simple meditation practices that anyone can use to improve their lives in a variety of ways.*

This introduction is far stronger It is constructed of the same parts as the previous introduction. However, because those parts are much better—the opening statistic is striking, there is a direct connection to the experiences of the specific audience, and it provides a clear articulation of what the audience will learn from the speech—they make for a much more engaging introduction. You will find that an introduction that does each of these five parts well is effective in almost any speaking situation.

Conclusions

Just as you should have a thoughtful and well-constructed introduction to start any presentation, you should also carefully construct the conclusion of your presentation. You have probably heard speeches in past classes or other settings in which the speaker ends abruptly by saying something like "that's all" or "thank you." You may have even experienced the awkward silence if a speaker simply stopped talking as they reach the end of their material, but the audience was unsure if the speaker was finished. An effective conclusion prepares an audience for the end of the presentation and takes advantage of the recency effect by ensuring the final moments of the speech review key information.

In many ways, effective conclusions mirror effective introductions. A conclusion should have the following parts: a review statement, a restatement of relevance, a restatement of the thesis, and a strong close. The first three can be taken, with minor modifications, from the introduction.

Review Statement

A **review statement** quickly reminds the audience of the main points covered in the speech. This serves two purposes: first, it gives the audience one more overview to see how the main ideas connect. Second, it provides a clear transition into the conclusion. When your audience hears you transition from the final point of your presentation to reviewing your main points, it cues them that the presentation is nearing its end. Based on the introduction we just created, you might modify the preview statement to create a review statement such as:

> *Today I discussed what meditation is, how it affects the brain, and some simple practices that anyone can use to reduce their own stress.*

Restate Relevance

Your conclusion should restate relevance to provide a final **reminder of the connection between this topic and your specific audience** members. Hopefully your audience will already be convinced of the importance of your topic by the time you reach your conclusion. However, given that we are constantly competing for audience attention and interest, it is worth providing a final reminder of why your topic matters to your audience. For the speech we just created, you might say:

> *As we all deal with the stresses of having to give speeches, and of being college students, meditation is one way to reduce stress that we can all afford.*

Restate Credibility (optional)

Hopefully, by the time you reach the end of your speech, your credibility on the topic will be clear. You can decide if you wish to take the time to **remind the audience of your credibility** based on how important them remembering that is to the goal of the speech. If your goal is to establish the importance of some problem so that your audience will hire you to solve it (imagine an entrepreneur pitching their service to a potential client), reminding them why they can trust you is a good idea. If your own expertise in the topic is not a key takeaway for your audience (such as you informing your class about the benefits of meditation), you do not need to include it in your conclusion.

Restate Thesis

Once you have reviewed your points and the relevance of your topic, it is time to **restate your thesis** and close the speech. A well-written thesis statement typically requires little revision from the introduction to the conclusion. In this case, the same exact sentence works nicely:

> *Meditation offers an effective tool to manage stress and increase happiness that you can start using today.*

Strong Close

A **strong close** is a last sentence or sentences that alert your audience that the presentation is over and conclude it in a powerful way. As we mentioned, you have probably seen presentations with abrupt endings that leave the audience unsure if the presentation is over. This is easy to avoid if you carefully plan your final sentences. As with attention getters, there are many ways to craft a strong close to your presentation. In fact, linking your attention getter and conclusion is often an excellent way to craft a strong close. If you opened with a quotation or statistic, you might make a reference back to it. If you opened with a story, briefly return to that story in a way that ties your presentation together.

Sometimes a return to the attention getter may not work well or feel natural in a speech. In such situations, there are other ways to conclude. If you are advocating for your audience to act in a certain way, you might close with a call to action. For example, in a TEDx presentation challenging societal beauty norms, Melissa Butler (2017) closes with "So I challenge each of you: when you go home today, look at yourself in the mirror. See all of you. Look at all of your greatness that you embody. Accept it and love it. And finally, when you leave the house tomorrow, try to extend that same love and acceptance to someone who doesn't look like you." This strong close emphasizes the central ideas of the presentation and provides the audience with one final, memorable, call to action.

If your presentation does not lend itself to a powerful call to action, you might simply close with **a provocative question** that leaves your audience with something to think about. For example, in a fascinating Ted Talk about the power of language in shaping our thoughts, Cognitive Scientist Lera Boroditsky (2017) concludes, "I want to leave you with this final thought. I've told you about how speakers of different languages think differently, but of course that's not about how people elsewhere think. It's about how you think. It's how the language that you speak shapes how you think. And that gives you the opportunity to ask yourself: Why do I think the way that I do? How could I think differently? And, also, what thoughts do I wish to create?" This strong close reconnects the topic and the audience. It reminds them that the presentation was not just scientific data on language, but rather an invitation for each listener to reflect more fully on their own words and thoughts.

Because our speech on meditation opened with particularly striking fact, it would make sense to return to it when closing the speech:

> *While the majority of people fear public speaking more than death, you don't have to. You will be able to calmly and confidently speak in any situation now that you know what to do: meditate.*

Combined, these elements lead to a strong conclusion to the speech:

> Today I discussed what meditation is, how it affects the brain, and some simple practices that anyone can use to reduce their own stress. As we all deal with the stresses of having to give speeches, and of being college students, meditation is one way to reduce stress that we can all afford. Meditation offers an effective tool to manage stress and increase happiness that you can start using today. While the majority of people fear public speaking more than death, you don't have to. You will be able to calmly and confidently speak in any situation now that you know what to do: meditate.

Conclusion

This chapter provides you the information you need to write effective introductions and conclusions. These parts of introductions and conclusions are applicable in most speaking situations, ranging from your in-class speeches to most professional presentations you may be asked to give. They also work for many types of writing. If you can get your audience's attention, convince them of why the topic is important to them and why they should listen to you, and provide a clear thesis and preview your speech, you will have gone a long way toward getting your audience to listen. By briefly revisiting those elements in the conclusion, you help your audience remember the key ideas of your speech. The start and end of your speech are the parts your audience will remember most; make them count!

Chapter 12

Outlining

Zoey is beginning to work on a class presentation. She knows the assignment requires an outline, but she does not really know what an outline should look like. Before reaching out to her professor, Zoey searches online for sample outlines. She finds many examples that look very different from one another. When she asks her roommate for advice, her roommate suggests writing and organizing all of the information she is considering including in the presentation. When she asks a friend, her friend suggests writing out exactly what she plans to say, exactly as she plans to say it. When she asks another student in the class, the student says they are planning on just writing a few words and phrases that they can look at when giving the presentation. By the time Zoey finally reaches out to her professor, she is more confused about what an outline should look like than when she started.

So, what should Zoey do? Should she follow the advice of her roommate and put every idea she has in her outline? Should she follow her friend's advice to carefully outline exactly what she plans to say? Or should she follow the other student's example and just write words and phrases to help her present? The best answer may be to do all three! There are many different types of outlines, and each can accomplish a different purpose. When creating presentations, we would recommend creating three different types of outlines: A draft outline, a full sentence outline, and a presentational outline. Creating three outlines for a single presentation may sound excessive, but each version can be used to create the next. If you have ever noticed that bad presentations often seem random or disjointed while good presentations flow smoothly from one idea to the next, that is because writing good presentations requires doing the work of collecting lots of information, choosing how to organize and support main points, and ensuring the vocal delivery of the presentation follows the written plan. Creating the three types of outlines will help you accomplish those tasks. This chapter describes each type in detail and provides sample outlines

Draft Outlines

People often want to wait to start outlining their presentations until they know what their main points are going to be and what they want to say in each. However, outlining can be a helpful tool for figuring out what you want say and when. Once you have started researching and learning about your topic, one of the best things you can do is start outlining.

A **draft outline** is the name for that first outline, and—as the name implies—it functions like a first draft. As you are researching, start writing down short versions of the main ideas that you think you might want to include in the speech. These might just be a phrase or a sentence. Be sure to include the name of the author or article title while doing this (Trust us, this is much easier than going back and trying to figure out who said what later).

As you start to decide what you think your main points will be, you can begin to cut and paste the various

ideas you have written down into the main point that they best fit with. You may notice that some areas need more information, and some information that you wrote down does not fit well within any of the main points. Rather than deleting that information, move it to the very end of the document—if you decide to change your organization or refocus your speech, it may become useful again. You can also play around with the ordering of your subpoints to see what flows the most smoothly.

Remember, this is your first draft. The American novelist Ernest Hemingway is often quoted as saying "The first draft of anything is shit." This is probably a bit harsh, but you also should not expect that the first ideas you find or the first way you organize your ideas will be your best work. Some improvements or connections will only become apparent to you after you have been working on organizing your ideas for a while. A first draft is supposed to change. Your draft outline will be messy and imperfect, but luckily, you do not have to show it to anyone.

Full Sentence Outlines

Once you have all of your key information in place in your draft outline, you can begin writing your full sentence outline. A full sentence outline is a polished outline, written in complete sentences, that includes what you actually plan to say in your presentation.

The most commonly used structure for an outline starts with Roman numerals for the major sections (Introduction, Body, Conclusion) and then moves to capital letters (for main points), Arabic numerals (for subpoints), lowercase letters (for support information), and occasionally lowercase Roman numerals (for detailed supporting information). This sounds complex, but you are probably more familiar with this approach than you might think. Below is an outline and some details about what kinds of information go where. To see more of what this looks like in practice, view the sample outline at the end of this chapter. An outline in this format looks like this:

I. Major section one. The first level of an outline can be the major sections of a presentation (Introduction, Body, or Conclusion).
    A. Main point one. This is where you would put main points within a section of your speech. These might be each of the parts of an introduction, or each of the 2-4 main points within the body of your speech.
        1. Subpoint one. Each of your main points will likely have some large subpoints under it.
            a. Support. Some subpoints will have additional support such as specific studies, information from your supporting materials, or other things your listeners should know to understand the subpoint.
                i. Detailed support. Occasionally, you may wish to break down your supporting information even further. This is rare in shorter presentations, but becomes more likely if you are giving a particularly long presentation.
                ii. Detailed support. Some readers/teachers will get grumpy if you have only one entry at a particular subheading level (such as an "a" but no "b" or a "i" but no "ii"). We aren't those teachers, but we just want to warn you.
            b. Support. More controversial claims may require multiple pieces of evidence to support them.

2. Subpoint two. Your main points will typically have multiple subpoints. Each of these may potentially have support information under it as the previous subpoint did.

B. Main point two. Put the second main point of this major section here. Add subpoints and support points as needed.

(TRANSITION) Include a sentence that connects the ideas in the previous main point to the next main point.

II. Major section two. If the first major section was your introduction, the second would be the body. From here, you can just repeat the pattern in section I.

With this general structure in mind, here are some pieces of advice for creating and structuring your full-sentence outline:

1. Start each outline in a NEW document/file. You can cut and paste your draft outline into the new document when creating a full sentence outline, but keep the draft outline as a separate document in case you need to go back for things you have deleted.
2. For guidance on determining what your main points should be, refer back to the chapter on organizing your presentation. You should be able to articulate each of your main points as a sentence. These sentences should have a parallel structure and make sense together. In other words, if you just said the three sentences in a row, you should be able to easily understand how the parts of the speech fit together. If you squeezed them into a single sentence, they should sound a lot like the preview statement in your introduction.
3. Each of your points should typically move from more general (main points) to more specific (subpoints and supporting information). Each of your main points is a broader idea. The subpoints and supporting information you include are more specific details and data that help your audience understand and believe your main points. Specific data, studies, examples can be powerful ways of supporting your main points, but they are rarely essential and should almost never be your main points.
4. Try to keep your main points balanced. They do not need to be exactly equal, but it will be confusing to your audience if your first main point takes five minutes to deliver and your second takes 30 seconds. A quick way to estimate that is simply to see how much space they take on the page. If they are roughly equal lengths, they will likely take similar amounts of time to deliver.
5. If one of your subpoints is based on information you found while researching for your presentation, be sure to include a citation in the full sentence outline AND the presentational outline. You are much more likely to remember to make the correct oral citation when delivering the presentation if you have it in your written outlines.

Presentational Outlines

Once you have written everything you want to say out in your full sentence outline, you can create your **presentational outline**. A presentational outline is a shortened outline from which you deliver your presentation. Why not just use your full sentence outline? Particularly when delivering an in-person speech to a live audience, speaking off of a detailed, full sentence outline typically leads to reading to your audience.

You have probably seen speakers that simply read a script at their audience; it is rarely an effective way to deliver a presentation. You will find it exceptionally difficult to maintain a conversational delivery, create any eye contact, or monitor your audience's nonverbal feedback when speaking from a full sentence outline.

Presentational outlines are shorter. They condense the contents of the full sentence outline into key terms and phrases. You may begin by practicing your delivery from the full sentence outline, but—once you have practiced enough and really know the content of your presentation—the key terms and phrases of your presentational outline will be enough to let you remember everything you plan to say as you deliver the presentation. Your goal should be to not rely on the outline, but simply have it available to glance at when you need a quick reminder of what to say next.

In addition to condensing the contents of your full sentence outline, there are a few things you will want to be sure to include:

1. You will want to write out your citations. If you are citing multiple sources within a presentation, it can be difficult to keep track of which citations go where while you are delivering the presentation. It is easiest to just write out how you plan to say your citation. It might look odd on the page, but your outline might have multiple short phrases followed by something like "In a study published in Nature in 2022, a team of researchers at Johns Hopkins found _____."
2. You may wish to write out certain sentences if it is important to get the wording exactly right. It is usually wise to write out any direct quotations from your sources. You may also wish to write out key sentences such as your first and last sentences or thesis statement.
3. You may wish to add delivery notes. Are there certain words you wish to emphasize? Write them in all capital letters. Moments you wish to move? Times to change slides? Places you need to pause to show a slide? Make notes in bold in your delivery outline.
4. You should keep it as clean and uncluttered as possible so it is easy to find your place and see what is next at the same time you are speaking to your audience. Remember that this version of your outline is designed to be used WHILE you are speaking. Depending on the speaking situation, you may be viewing your outline on a screen, sheet of paper, slides, or notecards while you are speaking. Do not write in small letters or use small font to try to squeeze more in. You do not want to have to pause your speech and squint at your outline to re-find your place in it.
5. You do not need to worry about your presentational outline being grammatically or stylistically perfect. In most speaking situations, you will be the only person who sees it. You may choose to simply delete connecting words, phrases, or whole sentences from your full-sentence outline when creating your presentational outline. Punctuation is only important if it helps your verbal delivery (for example, a question mark may remind you to deliver a sentence as a question). What is important is that the outline works for you.

Conclusion

This chapter covered the various types of outlines you can use when creating a presentation. A draft outline is where you can dump any information about your topic as you find it. The purpose of a draft outline is to help you collect all of your information in one place, organize it, and begin making decisions about how to

structure your presentation. A full sentence outline is where you write out the speech as you plan to say it. Here, you are removing things from the draft outline that you do not wish to include, making sure you have the right citations/supporting information to support your argument, and writing out the specific wording you want to use. A presentational outline is what you will use while actually delivering the speech. It is an abbreviated version of your full sentence outline with delivery notes that—with sufficient practice—you can glance at while speaking to ensure you stay on track and deliver the presentation as planned. It may seem excessive to create three outlines for every presentation you deliver, but each of them is simply a tool to help you work through the basic steps of writing any presentation. We have included a sample full sentence and delivery outline to give you a model of how this might look when developing your own outlines.

Sample Full Sentence Outline

I. Introduction
   A. Attention Getter: People consistently rank public speaking ahead of death in terms of what they most fear.
   B. Relevance Statement: We are all in a class that requires public speaking, which means each one of us will experience the stress of standing in front of a crowd and speaking. Meditation offers an effective way to manage that stress, on a budget any student can afford.
   C. Credibility Statement: As someone who personally experiences anxiety when giving speeches, I have been researching meditation for this assignment, and I have already started using what I've learned to help me feel more comfortable and confident when speaking.
   D. Thesis Statement: Meditation offers an effective tool to manage stress and increase happiness that you can start using today.
   E. Preview Statement: My presentation today will describe what meditation is, how it affects the brain, and some simple meditation practices that anyone can use to improve their lives in a variety of ways.

II. Body
   A. What is meditation?
      1. Mindfulness meditation is the practice of training awareness in ways that can help people focus or clear their minds.
      2. Meditation is the word we use to describe many different approaches. You may have heard of some of them. They include mindfulness meditation, yoga, vipassana, mantra meditation, and transcendental meditation.
      3. Meditation practices are common in many religious traditions, but a person doesn't need to be religious to meditate.
         a. According to the Cleveland Clinic (2022), various forms of meditation have developed in Buddhism, Christianity, Taoism, and others. Yoga, which has origins in Hindu and Buddhist traditions, is a form of meditation that is commonly practiced around the world as a secular practice.
      4. **(TRANSITION)** Meditation probably emerged in all of these different cultures and forms because it has so many beneficial effects on the human brain.
   B. Meditation can affect the brain in profound ways.

1. Researchers found that college students who took a one-hour college course on meditation experienced substantial reductions in stress levels (St. Martin, et al., 2022).
2. Meditation can also reduce the effects of stress on the body, which can strengthen the immune system and help prevent illness.
3. Meditation can improve focus and happiness.
    a. Meditation can increase focus, which can increase happiness. In a famous study entitled "A wandering mind is an unhappy mind," Harvard researchers found that when people's minds wandered from what they were doing, they were less happy. That was even true when people were doing an unpleasant task but thinking about something that was pleasant. Regardless of what a person was doing, being focused on that task was better for their happiness (Killingsworth & Gilbert, 2010).
4. **(TRANSITION)** Many of these brain benefits can be accessed through simple mindfulness meditation practices that anyone can do.

C. Mindfulness meditation offers simple exercises that anyone can use to improve their lives.
    1. Sitting Meditation: One simple version of meditation just involves setting a time for 10-15 minutes, sitting in a quiet room, and trying to clear your mind by focusing on the sensation of breathing in and out. When you notice your thoughts wandering, simply return your attention to your breath. Repeat this process as many times as necessary during the 10-15 minutes.
    2. Walking Meditation: Another easy meditation is a walking meditation. As you are walking across campus, spend a minute or so each focused on the following questions: What do you see? What do you hear? What smells do you notice? How does your body feel? How does the ground feel under your feet? Can you focus on the sensation of your body moving?
    3. Many meditation teachers offer guided meditations that can be streamed or downloaded for free. Meditation apps such as Headspace, Calm, or 10 Percent Happier offer free trials and student discounts.

III. Conclusion

A. Review Statement: Today I discussed what meditation is, how it affects the brain, and some simple practices that anyone can use to reduce their own stress.

B. Restate Relevance: As we all deal with the stresses of having to give speeches, and of being college students, meditation is one way to reduce stress that we can all afford.

C. Restate Thesis: Meditation offers an effective tool to manage stress and increase happiness that you can start using today.

D. Strong Close: While the majority of people fear public speaking more than death, you don't have to. You will be able to calmly and confidently speak in any situation now that you know what to do: meditate.

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Sample Presentational Outline

Download Sample Presentational Outline [DOC]

I. Intro
   A. People consistently rank public speaking ahead of DEATH in terms of what they most fear.
   B. All in public speaking. Meditation an effective way to manage that stress, on a budget ANY student can afford.
   C. I experience anxiety. researching, using to feel more comfortable and confident.
   D. Meditation offers an effective tool to manage stress and increase happiness that you can start using today.
   E. What meditation is, how it affects the brain, and some simple meditation practices. (CHANGE SLIDE)

II. Body
   A. What meditation is
      1. Mindfulness meditation- training awareness help focus or clear mind.
      2. Word used for many approaches- mindfulness, yoga, vipassana, mantra, and transcendental.
      3. Common in many religious traditions, do not need to be religious to meditate. Cleveland Clinic- various forms of meditation have developed in Buddhism, Christianity, Taoism, and others. Yoga, origins in Hindu and Buddhist traditions, practiced around the world as a secular practice.
      4. (CHANGE SLIDE) probably emerged in different cultures and forms because so beneficial
   B. Affects brain
      1. Journal of American College Health, one-hour college course on meditation lower stress
      2. reduce the effects of stress on the body, prevent illness.
      3. improve focus/happiness. Study “A wandering mind is an unhappy mind,” Harvard researchers found that when people’s minds wandered from what they were doing, they were less happy. Focus better for happiness.

4. (CHANGE SLIDE) Many benefits accessed through simple mindfulness meditation practices

C. Mindfulness meditation simple exercises
   1. Sitting Meditation: 10-15 minutes, quiet room, focus on breath.
   2. Walking Meditation: walking across campus, see? hear? smell? feel? Movement.
   3. Free downloads. Headspace, Calm, or 10 Percent Happier trials, discounts. (CHANGE SLIDE)

III. Conclusion
   A. what meditation is, how it affects the brain, and simple practices
   B. stresses of speeches, being college students, meditation is one way to reduce stress that we can all afford.
   C. Meditation offers an effective tool to manage stress and increase happiness that you can start using today. (CHANGE SLIDE)
   D. While the majority of people fear public speaking more than death, you don't have to. You will be able to calmly and confidently speak in any situation now that you know what to do: MEDITATE.

Chapter 13

Presentational Aids

Carter touched his backpack again, reassuring himself that it was still there. He was excited to give his presentation today about the importance of hunting. He had been hunting since he was old enough to stand, when his grandfather had taken him out to hunt deer. To be fair, he had slept in the deer stand most of the time, only waking up when his grandfather had gently shaken him awake and pointed at the young buck across the meadow. "We'll leave him alone today. Hopefully, he'll grow up and be a good catch in a couple of years," he remembered his grandfather saying. Who knows, maybe one of the bucks he had shot and brought home in the intervening years was that same one.

When it was Carter's turn, he walked up to the front of the classroom, backpack in tow. "When many of you think about hunting deer, you might think about using a rifle, shotgun, bow, or crossbow. All of these ways of hunting are legal in Iowa as long as you follow certain guidelines. What many of you might not know is that hunting with a handgun is legal as well. According to Iowa law, you can hunt with a handgun as long as you use centerfire handguns .357 caliber or larger that shooting straight-walled ammunition with an expanding-type bullet. As my visual aid, I brought these with me to show you." And, with that, Carter pulls out a medium sized box. He takes his keys out and uses one to open the box, where he removes a large handgun and several ammunition cartridges.

"This is a .357 Magnum, which you might associate with a Wild West six-shooter, although most of those that you see in the movies are probably .36 caliber 1851 Navy Revolvers." Carter said, holding up the weapon, making sure to always point the barrel toward the ceiling.

"The .357 was used for a long time in police forces around the U.S. and is still used for home defense. But it can also be used for hunting deer and other animals with the proper ammo. Like this," he said, holding up one of the spent cartridges. "This is a 180 grain–that's how heavy the bullet is–hard cast ammo cartridge. You can see I've already shot these, so the ammo isn't live. But it gives you a sense of what you should use because lighter ammo may not kill the deer. In that case, you may only wound the deer and then it suffers." Carter gives the rest of the presentation to the audience, many of whom seem interested in what he has to say. He finishes and puts the items back in their box, locks the box, and then puts it back in his backpack.

After class is over, he grabs his things and walks out of the room and into the hallway. There, two campus police officers are waiting. "Sir, do you mind opening your bag for us please?" One says, pleasantly.

"Sure," Carter gets a sinking feeling in his stomach. "The police?" He thinks. What do they want?"

"Sir, do you have a weapon in your bag?"

"I mean, I have my gun for my presentation."

"A gun? Sir, put the bag on the ground and back away slowly from it."

"I mean, yeah, but it's in a lock box," Carter says, flushing with embarrassment, "See, I can show you." He began to reach into his backpack so he can bring the lockbox out and show the officer that this has all been a huge misunderstanding.

"Sir, back away from the bag now!" The officer's voice is suddenly very firm, and both he and his partner reach their hands to rest on their service guns.

"Oh man," Carter thinks as he drops the bag. "Is this going to count against my grade?"

Presentational aids include any object, item, or video/audio recording that is used to effectively clarify, support, or enhance a specific point in the presentation. For Carter, although he brought an item in the hope that it would help his audience understand his argument, it caused more problems than it solved. Regardless of your intentions, some presentational aids may detract from your presentation because they are shocking, disgusting, threatening, or (in Carter's case) illegal to bring. It's important to remember that a presentational aid is used to do exactly what its name says: It "aids" you in making a point to your audience. In Carter's case, there were other choices he could have made (e.g., bringing in a model gun, using an image of a gun, or showing a video clip of shooting) which would have had all the benefits and none of the downsides of bringing a weapon on campus. Choosing and effectively using your presentational aids is a skill that must be developed: choosing poor items or using them poorly can detract from your presentation but having ones that are too provoking can also harm your presentation. Being able to provoke the right amount of interest and engaging is the hallmark of a master public speaker.

Presentational aids should highlight important parts of your presentation. As such, you should learn when to reveal and conceal your aids, so they are maximally effective to your audience. Properly done, a presentational aid is not a substitute for good speaking practice. That is, you should not read off notes or outlines (e.g., PowerPoint/Prezi) nor should you play, fiddle, or otherwise be engrossed in your presentational aid to the exclusion of maintaining good eye contact with your audience. Make sure that your presentational aids are culturally inclusive to your audience. Showing pictures or other visual aids may be helpful for an audience of who doesn't share your language as their first language (e.g., giving a presentation to an international business). Conversely, using aids that alienate others' culture can alienate your audience (e.g., showing pictures that contain women without covering for a Muslim audience). In this chapter, we'll discuss why, when, and how to use presentation aids to ensure your presentations always use aids that enhance your purpose.

Types of Presentation Aids

Before picking out the type of presentation aid you want to use, it is important to understand the situation, room, and purpose of the presentation. For example, it would do little good to have a well-choreographed multimedia presentation if you have to give it in a room with no projector or poor Internet. Similarly, using aids may be influenced by factors such as audience size. If your audience is large, then holding a small item or using a dry-erase board may be inappropriate. Unless your audience is very small, we discourage passing items around the room as this becomes distracting for audience members and can result in you not getting your items back at the end of the presentation. Finally, recognize that some presentation aids may be more appropriate based on how they are used in a context. Having a scrolling set of photos may be fine if people are walking through an area and can freely engage with you but may be tedious or boring if an audience feels like they are held captive for an extremely long list of images. Remember, if a presentation aid fails it is because you chose to use an aid that was ill-suited to context. you should always check the room beforehand to ensure that it has the capability to handle whatever type of aids you wish to use.

Most importantly, make sure your presentational aid has a purpose. Many speaking situations can be enhanced by using an aid, but only if you have clearly thought through how to incorporate it into your presentation. It should neither detract nor overshadow your presentation; rather it should build and extend upon the firm foundation of your presentation. A key indicator of whether your presentational aid is appropriate or not is this: c*an you give the presentation without the presentational aid and the audience will*

get approximately the same quality of message? If yes, then you have incorporated an appropriate level of presentational aids. If not, then it is possible you are over-relying on your aids and may be unable to give your presentation in the event of a presentational aid failure (an all-too-common occurrence in our experience!).

Below is a list of often-used presentational aids and their advantages and disadvantages to their use.

Actual Item

Sometimes the most effective presentational aid is an example of the actual item in question. For example, in presentations about contraceptives, it might be important to bring items such as condoms, diaphragms, or birth control pills. These items can be simple to add to a presentation and are recognized as having an immediate applicability to the presentation topic. However, using actual items may not be appropriate if the presentation topic is on something dangerous or taboo or if the audience is too large to properly see the item. If audience size is a problem, it might be appropriate to film the presentation while giving it and having it projected on a large screen while you are giving the presentation.

Replicas

For items that are expensive, fragile, or dangerous, we recommend using a replica for your presentation. For example, actor Charlton Heston, in his presentation to the National Rifle Association when he was its president, held a replica of a flint-lock rifle when he gave his famous “From my cold, dead hands” presentation. Replicas can be effective if they look indistinguishable from the real item and provide a way of showing items that may otherwise be inaccessible due to your budget or context. However, because they look real it is important to remember that they may be mistaken for something that is dangerous and you should check with the venue before bringing it.

Models

To show items that are either too large to bring to a venue (e.g., a plane) or too small to be seen without special equipment (e.g., a virus) a model can be a great way to help your audience visualize your topic. Depending on the size and detail of the model, they can be prohibitively expensive or delicate. However, a model can also provide audiences with access to ideas or concepts that they wouldn’t be able to comprehend completely otherwise.

Charts, Tables, Graphs

Charts, tables, and graphs can help your audience quickly process a great deal of information by simplifying it into an easy-to-understand format. Common types include Bar Graphs, Line Graphs, Dual Axis Charts, Area Charts, and Pie Charts. Sometimes data needs to be put in columns and rows and displayed as a Table. The most common way this is generated is through Microsoft Excel.

Photography/Images

They say that pictures are worth a thousand words, and that can be true when using one as a presentational aid for your presentation. Whether showing a photograph of an example or an image that is meant to

provoke a response from your audience, these presentational aids can help your audience connect with your presentation. Make sure the photos/images you use are large enough that everyone in the audience can see them and that they are appropriate for the presentation's context.

Digital Slides

Perhaps the most common type of presentational aid is the digital slide. Most speakers will use either PowerPoint or Prezi to create a dynamic set of slides. The most common mistake speakers make is to read off their slides. Don't do this! It is insulting to your audience (who can read) and indicates that you have not practiced and memorized your presentation. Choose colors that are appropriate and readable to color-blind audience members and use engaging design principles. Although you should not overdo animations in your slides, having some movement to your slides (especially having reading revealed as you make your points) can be an effective way to ensure that your audience remains engaged. Finally, you should try to follow the 5/5/5 rule: no more than **five** words per line of text, **five** lines of text per slide, or **five** text-heavy slides in a row. Too much text may make the audience disengage or make them want to read your text to the exclusion of hearing your presentation–neither is good!

Multimedia

For some presentations, it might be appropriate to have a choreographed collection of presentational aids. The multimedia approach to presentational aids can be time and resource consuming, but incredibly effective. Your audience will not only benefit from the various types of media you use but will also be impressed by your effort. If you are using a multimedia presentation, it is vital that you practice it before giving your presentation. Bad timing, glitches, and technological failures can plague even a well created multimedia presentation.

As we addressed in Chapter 8, you will need to appropriately observe citational and copyright rules/laws when using visual materials in addition to any text-based materials you use in your presentation. This may include limiting the amount of a video or film you show without contacting the copyright holder for permission. For example, The Door McAllen, a church in south Texas, had to pay damages for staging an unauthorized rendition of Hamilton–not only did they not have permission to perform the musical, but they also made changes to the script/music without permission. Whether a photo, image, video, song, performance, or some other form of work, it is likely that you will need to get permissions if you are using it outside of an educational setting (i.e., making a pitch to investors). Making sure you don't run afoul of copyright laws and properly attribute content creators is not only the correct ethical choice, but it will also make sure you don't end up in trouble!

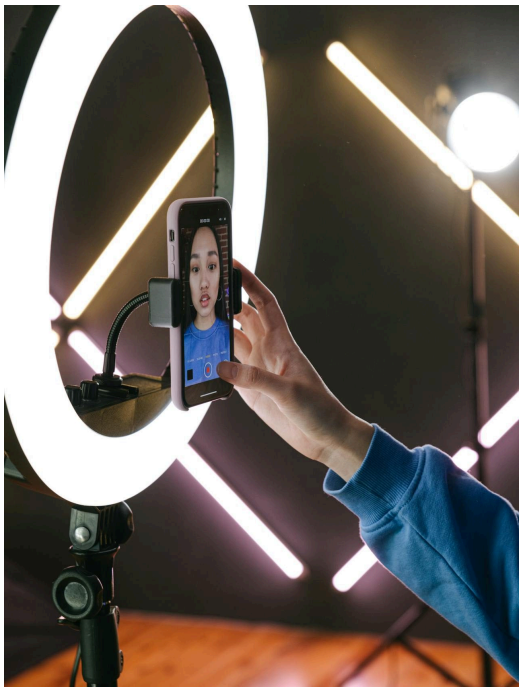


Image source: Ivan Samkov via Pexels.

Regardless of which presentation aid(s) you use, you must convey confidence and competence in using them. Over-relying on them to make your presentation work or having repeated failures in getting your aids to work will undermine your credibility and make your presentation ineffective. Make sure to give yourself enough time to create, test, practice, and perfect your presentational aids.

You should **storyboard** your ideas; that is, you should outline your presentation, sequencing it to 10–15 seconds; 15–30 seconds; and/or 30–60 seconds. Develop your presentational aids to fit within these time sequences, so you know you can fit your presentation to your speaking time limit and that your aids are highlighting the key parts of your presentation. Storyboarding is especially easy if you are using a digital slide program since you should typically use not more than 2 slides per minute of your presentation. Planning out your presentation in blocks like this can be helpful when making sure you are using your time effectively. It can also be helpful in identifying points in the presentation that are not flowing smoothly or connecting well and focusing on that specific point.

Conclusion

Using presentational aids in your presentation can elevate it from a boring lecture to a dynamic and engaging multimedia performance. Central to this goal will be planning your steps, being intentional about your presentational aid use, and practicing your presentation before giving it to your audience. Always have a backup plan in case your presentational aid fails to work properly or if the context changes and doesn't allow for its use (e.g., a weather change). If you follow these tips, your presentational aids will enhance your presentation's effectives and make you stand out in the classroom, community center, or boardroom.

Chapter 14

Persuasive Speaking and Language

Anthony recently received a promotion in his job at the campus tutoring center. He was hired as a sophomore, and after two years of working as a tutor, he was asked to become the supervisor of a group of students.

At first, his co-workers were excited: Anthony had worked his way up in the organization, and it was nice to be supervised by another student who knew what it was like to balance the demands of working as a tutor while still being a college student. Anthony's experience in the job gave him insights into changes that he believed could make the job more enjoyable for everyone. On his first day, he changed the schedule for the rest of the month. His peers were confused and frustrated that he would make this change without talking to them. That afternoon, he overheard two of them complaining about him misusing his new power. It bothered him all afternoon. When one finally told him that he should not have made the changes, he angrily snapped "Well, I'm the supervisor. It's my decision."

The following day, Anthony walked in to work to find most of the staff waiting for him. Ellie, a longtime tutor, spoke for the group. "Anthony, we've done the schedule this way for years. We're really frustrated that you would change our hours without talking to us first. Yes, you're the supervisor, but this isn't ok." Anthony was upset. Everyone had always hated the schedule. On his first day, he fixed it, and now everyone was mad at him?

Anthony thought about it and took a breath. "I was trying to help. We have one group of tutors that helps students find information, and another that helps them write their speeches. I thought if I scheduled everyone together for a month, we could teach each other what we do. Then, when the semester gets busy, it would be a lot easier to find someone to cover your shift. We always complain about how hard it is to get time off, and I was trying to fix that." He noticed Ellie nodding and continued, "I wasn't trying to use my power to control your schedule, I was trying to give you more power over when you work for the rest of the year. But I should have talked to you first and explained why I think this is a good idea. Sorry; I won't make that mistake again."

Persuasion is an important part of our daily lives. We attempt to persuade others every day. In our personal lives, we use persuasion to make decisions such as a group of friends discussing where to eat, to major decisions such as a family deciding which house to buy, persuasion is an essential part of existing alongside other people. In professional settings, persuasion is how groups work together to decide which project to pursue next or convince a potential client to work with them instead of a competitor.

Even the beginning of your career is a test of your persuasive skills: your first task is likely to be crafting a résumé that persuades a perspective employer to want to learn more about you. If you succeed, you move on to a job interview, during which your task is to persuade the interviewer that your skills and attitude make you

the best candidate for the job. If you succeed in that task, you will receive a job offer—and an opportunity to persuade your potential employer that your starting salary should be higher than their first offer. As Anthony learned in the opening example, even really good ideas may require you to persuade your audience in order to get them on board.

Beyond being incredibly useful in a wide variety of personal and professional settings, persuasion is an essential part of a healthy democracy. When the first democracy was created in Athens, Greece, it was based on the idea that political decisions should be made by vote of the people rather than by decree of a king or queen. The ancient Greek word for a single ruler is still in use today: tyrant. Although citizenship was restricted to a minority of those living in Athens (free men born in the city), the expansion of political power beyond a small group of elites was revolutionary. Citizens met in a place called the Assembly, where anyone who wished could address the group, and laws were passed and decisions made based on a simple majority vote. In this environment, people quickly realized that becoming better persuasive speakers would allow them more influence on the decisions of the group. Those who could afford it hired teachers to help them become more effective persuaders.

Students often express concerns about persuasion. We have even had students say things in their persuasive presentations like "my goal is just to give you the facts, not to persuade you." This perspective makes sense if you understand persuasion as manipulating another person. And this perspective is why people have often been conditioned to dislike when someone tries to persuade them—no one wants to be manipulated. However, this way of thinking about persuasion underestimates listeners' ability to think and make decisions for themselves.

Consider how many times you have seen an advertisement and *not* bought that product. Consider how many speeches you have heard and *not* been convinced to do what the speaker said. This is true for all of your audience members as well. As long as your presentation is ethical— providing information that you believe to be true, drawn from high-quality sources, and not misleading your audience or leaving out important information— you can trust your audience to determine if it persuades them. Your goal in a persuasive presentation is to provide information and make arguments in a way that **changes how your listeners think and act on a topic**. A well-crafted presentation is more likely to be effective at this goal because it prompts your audience to understand the topic in a different way, and to see things the way you do, but the decision to act is ultimately up to them.

Luckily, persuasion is a skill that can be developed. While the next few chapters of this book will provide you with a variety of strategies to become more effective at persuasion, the rest of this chapter focuses on the relationship between language and persuasion by helping you better understand how language affects our perceptions. This knowledge can help you be more intentional and skillful in your own language choices, which is an incredibly valuable skill that can benefit you at work and in your community. It can also to help you recognize the countless ways you are exposed to strategic language that is designed to influence you without you even noticing. As you become more aware of how specific language choices can shape how we think and interact with one another, you will also become better at recognizing others' attempts to persuade you. This will help you better recognize when someone has made a strong, convincing argument, and when someone is attempting to engage in unethical manipulation.

Persuasion and the Power of Language

Language is a central part of how we think and how we perceive the world. It's power to affect our thoughts, feelings, and actions influences almost every aspect of our lives. The words we use impact our individual preferences and actions in ways we may not even recognize. Because of this, marketers trying to sell us products or politicians trying to gain our support often carefully choose language designed to get us to think and act as they want us to.

For over 30 years, U.S. political parties have regularly hired experts in language to help them talk about issues in ways that garner public support for their positions. These experts are not just speechwriters—who have been part of law and politics for thousands of years—they are experts who use focus groups and social media analyses to test different word choices and then decide which words will be used by entire political parties and media outlets. They know that different language choices can make a huge difference in whether a politician, law, or product gains public support.

For example, in a public opinion poll conducted after it was passed, 24 percent of respondents reported having "very negative" feelings about the Affordable Care Act. Interestingly, the same poll found 35 percent of respondents had "very negative" feelings about Obamacare. Meanwhile, the number of respondents with "very positive" feelings about the Obamacare was also substantially than those with "very positive" feelings about Affordable Care Act. Why are these differences interesting? Because the *Affordable Care Act* and *Obamacare* are two names for the same law. In other words, public opinion of the exact same law changed substantially depending upon which name people were asked about. Though describing the same legislation, the verbal association with President Obama's name changed many peoples' perceptions, causing some to oppose the law, others to support it, and fewer people to adopt neutral responses. This example is far from unique. **The words we use to communicate about the world affect how we and others see it.** But how does this work?

Denotative and Connotative Meanings

We often think of words as having a specific meaning. If we want to know the meaning of a word, we can simply look it up in the dictionary. The reality is that language is more complex, and words have meaning based on how they are used and understood within groups. The same word may have many different meanings and associations beyond what appears in a dictionary. A word may mean different things to different audiences, may be viewed as positive in one context and negative or insulting in another, and may even change meaning over time. Up until the 1920s, English speakers in the United States would describe talking and spending time with friends as having *intercourse*…. we would strongly recommend choosing a different word to describe those activities now.

One way to think about how words carry meaning is through denotative and connotative meaning. **Denotative Meaning** is the most widely used, literal, or dictionary definition of a word. The denotative meanings of a word are easily accessible through a dictionary. **Connotative Meaning** is all of the associations and secondary meanings attached to a word. The connotative meanings of a word are much harder to identify, because they may differ from group to group or even person to person. Despite these difficulties, it is important that you consider the most likely connotative meanings of the words you use when crafting a message.

Imagine you are speaking to a class of aspiring fiction writers. Although both labels might be denotatively

accurate, you can probably assume they would rather be called *storytellers* than *liars*. When talking to an older audience, it seems a safe bet they would prefer to be called *youthful* than *childish*. Most of us would like to be known as *confident,* but we would not want to be called *arrogant*. The denotative meanings of these word pairings are all very similar. The connotative meanings are far different. It is the connotative associations that give the words their emotional resonance. These associations can have a substantial impact on how an audience thinks about a topic. If you want to connect with or persuade an audience, or get them to think about a topic favorably or unfavorably, you should think carefully about the likely connotations of the words you choose.

Terministic Screens

The power of language to shape how we interpret the world goes beyond words having multiple meanings. Particular language choices may guide our attention in very different ways. Rhetoric scholar Kenneth Burke (1966) described this phenomenon as terminstic screens. **Terministic screens** is a name for how the language we use shapes our perceptions by guiding our attention toward certain aspects of the world while simultaneous guiding it away from other aspects. In one of his most famous writings on the topic, Burke argued "even if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology, it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality" (p. 45). What does it mean to say that language reflects, selects, and deflects reality?

- **Reflects:** By saying language can reflect reality, Burke means that humans use words to make sense of and communicate about the world. The word tree is not the same as the actual object, but the word can help us identify something that exists in the world and communicate with others about it.
- **Selects:** Language can never objectively and completely represent an object or topic. Because of this, whatever words we choose will select certain aspects of the topic to draw our listeners' attention toward.
- **Deflects:** By selecting certain aspects of the topic to draw our listeners' attention toward, we also deflect their attention away from the many other aspects we did not choose to select.

One widely-read use of Burke's idea of terministic screens occurs in Celeste Condit's (1990) book *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric*. In this book, Condit analyzes how both pro-life and pro-choice movements have strategically developed vocabularies for talking about abortion that help frame abortion debates in particular ways. Even the names themselves function as terministic screens. In identifying oneself as "pro-life" or "pro-choice" you have chosen a label that *reflects* that you have a position on the issue of abortion. However, each label selects and deflects different aspects of the controversy and sets up opposing frames to interpret the issue.

> If you consider the words in other contexts, both are widely perceived as important and worthy of protection. Both tend to have generally positive connotations. If you ask a room full of people if they think "life" is a good thing, you would expect most of them to say yes. The same is true of "choice." When *not* talking about the issue of abortion, most people would consider themselves generally in favor of both life and choice.

These vocabularies extend well beyond the names each group gives their position on abortion and include

very different terms for talking about the issue. For example, consider the person who is pregnant. Within the vocabulary of the pro-life movement, this person is most often referred to as a "mother." By contrast, within the vocabulary of the pro-choice movement, this person is most often referred to as a "woman." Both terms reflect the same person, but what they select and deflect is very different. The term *mother* selects a relationship that implies another person. To many people, the connotation is of a relationship of love, care, and a desire to protect their children. The term *woman* selects something different: an autonomous individual with the right to make choices for herself.

And what do we say the mother/woman is pregnant with? Again, it depends which vocabulary is being used. Within a pro-life vocabulary, the term used is almost always "child" or "baby." Within pro-choice vocabulary, you are more likely to see the term "fetus." Why? Again, consider which aspects of the situation each term draws your attention toward. For many people, the terms "child" or "baby" connote something small, often cute, and in need of care and protection. The term "fetus" by contrast, is a technical, medical term. It not only lacks the positive connotations of baby, but it draws your attention to this not yet having developed into the cute and cuddly thing we associate with the term baby. Neither of these vocabularies is inherently more or less right than the other. But they function to frame a discussion of abortion in very different ways by selecting and deflecting opposing elements of the issue.

Another example of this comes from the language used in discussions of wealth. What do you call a person who has a lot of money? *Rich*? *Wealthy*? Over the past decades, this question has become an important part in messaging around public discussions of taxes in the United States. In the aftermath of the 2011 Occupy Wall Street protests, a great deal of attention was paid to economic inequality and the increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of a small percentage of Americans. Activists began calling on lawmakers to raise taxes on the wealthiest Americans, and repeatedly pointing out that the richest 1% of Americans owned as much wealth as the bottom 90% combined. They began referring to the wealthiest Americans as "the one percent." As calls to raise taxes on the wealthy grew, those who opposed raising those taxes began to more consistently call people with wealth "job creators." Much like in previous examples, what this term selects and deflects is very different. Both the one percent and job creator are terms that point to a person with lots of wealth. But the phrase the one percent had a clear connotative association with the statistic about them having as much money as 90 percent combined. Every time it was repeated, it drew attention toward the substantial inequality in wealth. It also selected that this was a relatively small group, and thus 99 percent of people would not have their taxes raised. The term job creator, in contrast, draws attention toward the economic contributions of this group. In a time when many people had recently lost their jobs, calling someone a job creator drew attention toward how they might use their wealth in ways that made new jobs (McGeough, & King, 2021).

Once you understand that the same subject can be described with words that have positive or negative connotations, and those words might also draw listeners' attention towards some aspects of the topic and away from other aspects— often in ways listeners do not even notice— you can begin to see what a powerful tool language selection can be. Over time, specific language choices may become so commonly used on a subject that people use them without even considering alternatives. This is what communication scholars call a **public vocabulary,** which is the "terms that compose people's taken-for-granted understanding of the world" (Lucaites, & Condit, 1990). Even when a term becomes part of the public vocabulary, it still works as a terministic screen. The fact that some words become the seemingly natural, taken-for-granted terms we use to communicate about specific issues makes them particularly powerful in shaping how we understand the world.

Conclusion

Persuasion plays an important role in almost every setting where people have to cooperate with one another. Part of sharing a space—whether a home, a workplace, or a community— is navigating different (and sometimes competing) needs and desires. *Where should we go for dinner? Which project should we focus on next? Should our town build a new school?* When navigating these questions, and the many others we face as members of our various groups, we frequently turn to persuasion. This is a good thing; history provides countless examples in which the alternative to persuasion is often force.

Persuasion is a skill that can be developed. The next few chapters will teach you about various types of persuasive appeals you might employ. However, you should start by paying attention to words. **When trying to persuade others, select your language thoughtfully and intentionally**. Carefully consider the both the denotative and connotative meanings of your words. When possible, select language that draw your audience's attention in ways that help them see the topic in the same way you do. A speaker who is able to get their audience to think about a topic through the language the speaker has selected has taken a major step toward persuading that audience. A speaker who is not thoughtful about their words may unintentionally use language that undermines their argument.

Persuasion is all around you. As a listener, you should pay close attention to the language being used to attempt to persuade you. What things is it drawing your attention toward? What things is it drawing your attention away from? Remember that how we understand the world is influenced through the adoption of vocabularies that seem natural to us. Given the countless number of times each day that you are exposed to people and brands attempting to influence or persuade you, paying attention to language is a valuable tool to help you be a more conscious and critical consumer of messages. Building the habit of paying close attention to language can not only help you avoid being manipulated, it can also help you be a better listener. Doing so can give you insight into how other people understands a topic. This might help you understand what is important to others, identify how you might be more persuasive to them, or potentially find common ground with the other people.

Chapter 15

Ethos

Madison is working on a presentation about ADHD. She was recently diagnosed with it, and learned that women with ADHD are frequently misdiagnosed. She knows that she wants to inform her class about some of the symptoms and some strategies to try if they think they might have ADHD themselves. However, as she starts trying to write the speech, she starts to be concerned: why would any audience listen to her about this topic? She is 19. She has only known about her own ADHD for a couple of months. Although her therapist has provided her some strategies that she is finding helpful in studying for her classes, and she has been trying to read more about strategies to navigate being a college student with ADHD, she is still learning about the topic herself. She is certainly no expert.

She decides to talk to her professor to get some advice about how to handle this problem. After Madison articulates all of the reasons she is not credible, her professor says "Oh, it sounds like you have a lot of ways to establish your ethos."

"What do you mean?" Madison asks.

"Well, it's obvious that you care deeply about this topic, and it is important to you that the class learns these strategies. Why is that?" asks her professor.

"Because college has gotten so much easier since I learned these things. I was struggling in all my classes, and now that I know how to work, I'm doing so much better. I bet there are people in the class that are in a similar situation."

"Ok" says her professor, "so you and your listeners might have something important in common, and you care about them enough that you really want to share the strategies that are working for you in navigating it. You've been getting advice from your therapist and researching the topic, and the things you have found have already made a big difference for you. Think about it this way: Imagine if, one year ago, someone had told you that they shared your struggles, learned why, and have been getting strategies from a mental health professional, as well as reading tips from experts online, and what they have learned has changed their life. Wouldn't you want to hear what they had to say?"

"Oh," said Madison, "I hadn't thought about it that way. I would have definitely wanted to hear what they had to say."

The concepts of ethos, logos, and pathos are amongst the most foundational elements in learning how to speak or write persuasively. This is for good reason; each of them is an important strategy for effectively persuading an audience. Over 2000 years ago, in *The Rhetoric*, the philosopher Aristotle (n.d.) noted that the most effective persuaders combine ethos, logos, and pathos in ways that make them even more powerful. Almost any effective message combines them in ways that are mutually reinforcing. There is a good chance

you learned about them before starting this class. But they are often more complex than people realize, and developing a deeper understanding of them can help you be more persuasive and better evaluate others' attempts to persuade you. Each of the next few chapters focuses on one of these types of persuasive appeals, beginning with ethos.

Ethos

Ethos refers to the credibility of the speaker. Are we inclined to believe the things they say? Why? Aristotle argues that establishing credibility requires convincing an audience to believe in the intelligence, character, and goodwill of the speaker. In other words, **Ethos** is the credibility of the speaker based on the audience's perception of their intelligence, character, and goodwill.

Intelligence

According to Aristotle, the first thing a speaker should establish is that they know what they are talking about. Establishing intelligence/wisdom to Aristotle is about more than just the speaker being a generally smart person. In this context, **intelligence** means having knowledge of a particular topic and the practical judgement to know how to act on that topic. Establishing intelligence requires convincing the audience that the speaker understands the specific topic under discussion and knows what we should do as a result of that knowledge. If a listener does not believe that the speaker is knowledgeable about the topic of their presentation, it is unlikely they will pay much attention to the speaker or their presentation. Much of the rest of this chapters covers the various ways you might convince an audience that you are knowledgeable enough to make reliable judgements about your topic.

Character

You may have noticed that the word ethos looks very similar to the word ethics. This is because, when Aristotle was writing, ethos was the Greek word for moral character. In Aristotle's time, as in our own, we are more likely to listen to and be persuaded by people that we believe are of high moral character. As such, it is important for a speaker to establish that they are trustworthy, and—by extension—that the things they are saying are true.

It is important to remember that ethos is both built within a speech and constructed across time. In other words, you should always make sure to establish your ethos within a speech. This is why you should always have a credibility statement in your introduction, cite sources, etc. But ethos is also based on our past knowledge of a speaker. If a speaker has a history of being honest and accurate in what they say, audiences become more likely to trust what they say. But the inverse is true as well. You have heard a parent say the old maxim "trust takes years to build but only seconds to break." There is truth to this. If an audience learns that a speaker is willing to lie to them, or even to say things that they are not sure are true, audiences will be much less likely to trust what that speaker says in the future. Avoiding this is fairly simple: Do not lie to your audience. Do not mislead your audience. Do not plagiarize. Do not say things unless you know they are true. Honesty is a good policy, both morally and rhetorically.

Goodwill

Knowing that a speaker is intelligent and of high character goes a long way toward getting an audience to trust a speaker. However, Aristotle recognized that audiences are looking for something else as well. Aristotle called this last aspect of credibility goodwill. Establishing **Goodwill** means the audience believes the speaker respects them and wants what is best for them. Goodwill, for Aristotle, is similar to friendship. Consider how you think about your very closest friends. Hopefully you respect, appreciate, and even admire them in some way. You are happy for them when good things happen in their lives. If you are discussing a topic that you know far more about than your friend does, you may choose to avoid jargon or not go in too much depth, but you would still talk to them like they are an intelligent person who can learn what you know. This is a simple way that you demonstrate a respect for their intellect. No one likes to be spoken to condescendingly. If an audience believes that you respect or admire them, and that you would be happy to see good things happen to them (even if those things did not benefit you directly), they are more likely to listen to what you have to say.

Overall, Aristotle believes people are persuaded when they believe the speaker knows what they are talking about, has good character, and has the best-interest of the audience at heart. If a listener believes all three are true, it becomes easy to trust the speaker. An effective speaker will establish these things WITHIN the speech itself. It would be unwise, according to Aristotle, for a speaker to assume that they have already established any of the three in past speeches or based on their reputation and can ignore it in their next speech. Every speech is an opportunity to remind your audience why they should listen to you.

Establishing Your Credibility

There are many ways to establish credibility. Credibility can be established by demonstrating how one is different from or similar to members of the audience. This requires you analyzing what your audience knows (for more on audience analysis, see Chapter 3).

Expertise is established by demonstrating a high level of formal knowledge, training, or experience in a topic. Expertise often works by establishing that the speaker has more knowledge about the particular topic than the rest of the audience. It may be established through formal education. For example, if a scientist with a Ph.D. in biochemistry explains how a medication works in the human body, most audiences are likely to accept that the scientist knows far more about the topic than they do and believe what they say about the topic. On the other hand, if a person sitting next to you in class told you how a medication works, you might be more skeptical. They could be right, but you are less likely to believe them because they do not have the same level of expertise on the topic. If you learned that your classmate is a biochemistry major, you would probably be more likely to trust them on this topic. This points to education as a major way to build credibility. If a speaker has a substantial amount of formal education on a topic, audiences are more likely to believe their claims.

Education is not the only way to establish expertise. If someone has spent a substantial amount of time engaging in a particular activity, audiences may recognize that experience as providing the person with expertise. If you bring your car in for a repair, it is unlikely your mechanic has a Ph.D. However, if they are professionals who presumably have extensive experience working on cars, you likely recognize them as having expertise in doing auto repairs. If they say you need new brake pads, you probably trust them and pay for them to put on new brake pads.

At this point, some readers may find themselves thinking something like, "no, I would check to see if I need new brake pads." There are likely two possible reasons for this reaction. The first is that you know enough about cars to do your own diagnosis. If this is the case, the issue here is that you do not perceive the mechanic to know that much more than you about if a car needs brake pads. In other words, you do not perceive enough difference between your knowledge and the mechanic's knowledge to defer to their expertise. A second reason may be that you believe the mechanic is telling you to pay for an unnecessary repair in order to make more money. If that is the case, you may believe that they have far more expertise than you, but you do not trust their honesty. In other words, you are **not convinced** of their character and goodwill.

One final thing to remember about expertise is that it is tied to a particular topic or set of topics. When a person has an advanced degree or years of experience in a topic, we can usually assume they know a lot about that particular topic. This may be a sign that they are a generally intelligent person, but it does not necessarily make them an expert in other topic areas. If someone with an M.D. is offering investment advice, their degree does not guarantee they are knowledgeable. Both the biochemist and the mechanic may be experts in their respective areas, but that does not qualify them to give you advice on how to learn a new language or whether you should break up with your significant other.

Identification

Where expertise establishes credibility by separating you from your audience, **identification** is established by showing how you and your audience are the same in some important way. This is usually established by pointing to similar group membership, origins, experiences, or worldview. The rhetoric scholar Kenneth Burke (1969) argued identification has become a central part of contemporary persuasion. Creating identification may allow you to gain credibility in a way that looks very different from attempts to establish expertise. For example, a professor might establish their expertise by saying, "while many of you are learning about the various aspects of credibility for the first time, I have been studying this topic for 20 years, so you can trust that I am very knowledgeable on the topic." On the other hand, you might establish credibility through identification by saying to in a class speech "Like you, I only learned about how to establish credibility as a part of this class. However, I have a job in sales, and since I've started paying closer attention to how I establish my own credibility, it has made me way better at my job. I'm going to share a few strategies that have really worked for me; hopefully they will work for you, too." Both of these are effective ways of establishing credibility. Which you should pick depends on your relationship to the topic and your audience: Why is your audience listening to YOU on this topic? Do you have formal expertise on the topic? Is it likely that your knowledge and experience is similar to your audience's?

On some occasions, audiences may actually appreciate **both** types of credibility. Consider the commercials or infomercials you may have seen for health or fitness products. They frequently feature speakers with some sort of expert credibility such as doctors or personal trainers. They also tend to feature people with no technical expertise who simply used and benefitted from the product. A staple in fitness commercials is before and after photographs. These display people who the target audience is supposed to perceive as "everyday" people that used the product and benefitted from it. Though rarely stated explicitly, the appeal is simple: these are people like you, if the product worked for them, it will probably work for you.

Social prestige

Another type of credibility that works somewhat differently is what we might call social prestige. Social prestige is the credibility of someone we admire or want to imitate. This is the kind of ethos appeal at work when you see a celebrity endorsing a product that has little relation to what they are famous for. For example, YouTube creator Mr. Beast promotes a line of snack bars. There is no reason to believe he has expertise around snack bars, and the bars have no particular relation to the videos he creates aside from the fact that he promotes them. But his audience likes or admires him, and some decide to buy the bars. Musical artist Beyoncé signed a multimillion-dollar endorsement deal with Pepsi, while Taylor Swift did the same to promote Coca-Cola. This is not lay credibility, as we can safely assume these singers' lives and experiences are substantially different from our own. But it is not also not expert credibility; presumably neither of them has any special expertise in soda-tasting. Rather, fans might like or admire the singers and wish our life was more like theirs. Sadly, most readers of this book probably cannot win a Grammy. But you can buy a Pepsi, which at least gives you something in common with Beyoncé.

Two Other Ways to Establish Credibility

Citing sources

One important way that you establish ethos is by **citing your sources**. Students are often taught that the reason they should cite sources is to avoid plagiarism. This is true, but it is not the only reason to do so. Citing sources increases your credibility as a speaker. Imagine one of your classmates is delivering a speech on a new kind of brain surgery. Even if you perceive them to be intelligent, it is probably safe to assume they have not gone to medical school or ever performed this (or any other) kind of brain surgery. So how confident are you that they are incredibly knowledgeable about their topic? Probably not very. What could they do within the speech to establish their knowledge on this topic?

When a speaker supports their arguments with multiple sources from reputable outlets, you are more likely to believe they are knowledgeable about the topic. This helps establish their intelligence. When the claims they make align with those sources, you are more likely to believe they are telling the truth. This helps establish their character. Citations are also an invitation to double-check for yourself. When the speaker cites their sources so that you can find them if you wish, they are providing you with information and implying that you are intelligent enough to understand the information yourself. This helps establish a sense of goodwill.

Delivery

Another way that you can establish credibility within your speech is through your **delivery** (see Chapter 5). Have you ever seen someone give a speech in which they lacked confidence or seemed unprepared? How confident were you that they knew what they were talking about? Audiences are more likely to trust speakers when they seem confident and well-prepared. You would probably be wise to NOT judge ethos in this way; there are plenty of people who are experts in a topic but bad public speakers. Unfortunately, there are also people who can confidently deliver a lie. Nevertheless, audiences often use delivery to help evaluate the credibility of a speaker. As such, delivering your speech well is one way to increase your credibility.

Judging Ethos

As discussed throughout this chapter, ethos can be established in a variety of ways. We regularly make judgements of others' credibility when deciding if we should listen to what they say. In a world awash in persuasive appeals, learning to effectively make judgements about the credibility of others can help us make better choices. Chapters 8 and 9 of this book provide in-depth guidance on how to evaluate the credibility of written sources of information. When trying to determine the credibility of a speaker, many of the same tools can be used. You can start by asking basic questions: Is this person a legitimate expert in this topic? Do they have an advanced degree or extensive experience in area? If not, this does not mean they are wrong—plenty of people without advanced degrees or extensive experience in an area may still have correct and valuable information. But, in such situations, it becomes even more important that they are using reliable information to support their claims. This is also true of experts speaking outside of their specific areas of expertise. Someone with a Ph.D. in Political Science may have training that helps them read and understand the statistics and other technical information in psychology journals. But you should then expect that person to be consistently citing that information to support their claims.

If you believe a person has the knowledge to speak credibly on a topic, you should still ask yourself what you know about their character and goodwill. Do you have past experience with them? Do they have a track record of being honest? Do they have biases that might skew their arguments in problematic ways? For example, do they have a financial interest in getting you to believe them or act in a certain way? If so, have they at least been transparent and disclosed this bias? Here again, even if there are questions about a speaker's credibility, it is possible they are providing you with accurate information. Many people make profitable businesses selling products that are legitimately beneficial. But when those questions arise, they may be indications you should do your own research rather than simply trusting the speaker.

You should also be particularly careful when evaluating persuasive attempts built around identification. It may be useful to know if people similar to you liked a particular product. A friend's recommendation may persuade you to see a movie because you know the two of you enjoy similar things. For political appeals, however, you may wish to consider things more closely. Persuasion through identification is not necessarily a bad thing. However, Burke (1969) believed that identification has become the most important element of how we engage in political decision making. In fact, he believed it was impossible to not make sense of the world through identification. However, he also recognized that this could have dangerous consequences. Burke analyzed Nazi propaganda and observed how identification could be used to get people in a group to view outsiders as evil, and even subhuman, in ways that led to violence. It can also contribute to a sort of intellectual laziness. Rather than doing the hard work of carefully considering our positions on different political issues, it is far easier to outsource this intellectual work to the groups we are members of. Political decisions can easily become focused less on what is right or ethical, and become focused on what is good for my group or bad for the people in a different group. Can you think of examples of these dangers in the current moment?

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the role of ethos in persuasion. Ethos is the credibility of a speaker created by convincing an audience of their intelligence, character, and good will toward that audience. Each of these can be established through a variety of different strategies. Audiences may find a speaker credible because they

have a very different level of knowledge from the audience, or because they similar experiences or worldviews. Audiences also are more likely to trust speakers who they believe are of high character and who want what is best for them. Credibility can also be established through drawing on other experts through the citing of sources and delivering your presentation well. As a speaker, it is incredibly important that you establish your credibility with your audience. As a listener, it is important that you make accurate judgments of the credibility of those trying to inform or persuade you.

Chapter 16

Logos

Harper wants to convince his parents to help him buy a new car. He tells his parents that his current car is A) old, B) unsafe, and C) pretty ugly. His argument doesn't work. His parents reply that A) it is already paid-off, B) they did a lot of research and specifically chose this car for its good safety ratings, and C) they don't care that it is ugly. Rather than give up, Harper considers what he learned about his parents from this discussion: First, they don't want him stuck taking on loan payments. Second, they care a lot about how safe his car is. Third, they care a lot less than he does about how the car looks. With this new information, he starts doing his research and coming up with a better argument.

The following week, Harper approaches his parents again. This time, he proposes a specific car that he wants: a newer, much prettier version of his old car. He knows exactly how much the car will cost, and he can pay for half of it with the money he saved from his summer job. "In fact," he says to them "if you will pay for the other half, it would mean I won't have to worry about having a car-payment for a long, long time." Then, he explains how the new model of the car is similar to the old one, but with many new safety features. He points out how it gets the highest possible safety ratings. "I know how important it is to you that I drive something safe," he says, "Buying this now would immediately make me safer, and it would mean I spent the next 10 years in one of the safest cars on the road." He doesn't mention how much nicer the new one looks.

His parents look at each other. His dad cracks a small smile. "We can go test drive one tomorrow. Then we will decide."

Now it is Harper's turn to smile. He is going to like his new car.

Logos describes persuasive appeals based in logical reasoning. Logos relies on reason to persuade, and is created by the information you choose to present and how you choose to organize it. Aristotle (n.d.) believed there was an art to this, and that speakers could be effective by choosing the right arguments and organizing them in a way that moves their particular audience. If done well, your audience should find that the information you provide naturally leads to the conclusions you wish them to reach. But how should you do this? This chapter provides some guidance on the key parts of logical arguments, how they fit together, and the importance of matching your argument to your audience.

The Toulmin Model

The Toulmin Model is a model of argumentation created by the philosopher Stephen Toulmin (2003). In this model, the essential parts of an argument are a claim, data, and a warrant. A **Claim** is a statement the speaker wants the listener to believe. Claims can vary from non-controversial and easily-verified: "it is raining outside," to highly-contested and difficult to assess: "going to college is a bad investment." Some claims are easily accepted. If your roommate walks into your apartment and says "it is starting to rain outside," you probably

accept what they are saying as true without taking the time to go outside and check for yourself. Other claims are not accepted so easily and require the speaker to support their claim with data and warrants.

Data (sometimes called grounds) are the evidence provided in support of a claim. There are many different types of data ranging from scientific studies and statistics to personal anecdotes or observations. Different types of claims require different types of data to support them. For example, the major claims in a scientific study generally require carefully collected evidence interpreted using other scientific studies. Without these, other scientists will not believe the claims. However, if a friend tells you that you should take a certain class next semester, the fact that your friend took it and liked it might be good enough evidence to convince you.

Again, the more controversial the claim, the more important it is to provide strong data to support it. If someone's claim is that "going to college is a bad financial investment," pointing to a few very wealthy people who did not go to college is not very convincing data. This is particularly true because there is a lot of research suggesting college graduates make substantially more money over their lifetimes. In other words, the majority of the data does not support their claim. However, if the person changed their claim to "it is POSSIBLE to get rich without going to college," those few examples they provided would be much better data to support that particular claim.

A **Warrant** is how your data logically supports your claim. Warrants are often overlooked by both speakers and audiences, because we often leave them unsaid. They are frequently assumed and taken for granted. If a friend recommended a class to you, they might say something like:

> *You should take Public Speaking next semester. (claim)*
>
> *I'm taking it this semester and it is a fun class. (data)*

Imagine if, instead of this, your friend said:

> *You should take Public Speaking next semester. (claim)*
>
> *I'm taking it this semester and it is a fun class. (data)*
>
> *Next semester it is being taught at the same university, so the information, assignments, and classroom experience will probably be similar to what they are this semester. You and I are friends and have a lot in common, so it is likely we would enjoy the same experiences. (warrant)*

That would be both awkward and inefficient. However, if your friend just said the shorter version of the recommendation, what would happen? It is quite possible you might both assume all of the information in the longer version without either of you actually saying it. Or you might ask your friend if the same professor is teaching it next semester. This is actually you questioning their warrant. If the class is being taught by a different professor, it might be very different and the data of their experience from this semester might not tell you much about the class next semester.

Using the Toulmin Model

When creating a presentation, it is important to ask yourself "what are the main things I want my audience to believe after hearing my presentation?" These are your **claims**. Once you identify them, ask yourself "what data will I need to support my claims?" Remember that different audiences may have different expectations

for what counts as reliable evidence, so you should consider what types of data you need for this specific situation. Finally, ask yourself "does the data I found logically support my claims?" If not, you either need to continue looking for data or change your claim.

Occasionally, you may start with a claim you wish to make, set out to find data in support of your claim, and realize that it is very difficult to find any reliable data that support your claim. That is okay. You then need to determine if…

1. There is **no reliable data** on this topic (which is rare),
2. You are **not looking in the right places** (this is possible, and you may wish to ask your instructor or a librarian), or
3. There is good data on the topic, but it **does not support the claim** you wish to make.

This last option is frustrating, but valuable. You've learned that something that you thought was true may not be—or at least not in the way you thought. In this situation, you may have to change your claim to fit your data. You may then choose to change your mind entirely (if the data you found convinces you to do so), or you may decide to modify or limit your claim so that it aligns with the data you found. This is actually a good thing. It means you learned something new and refined your thinking.

We once had a student who wanted to give the previously mentioned speech arguing that going to college was a bad financial investment. He knew that this was a controversial claim, and that convincing an audience of students who had chosen to make that investment would require strong data. As he was researching his topic, he recognized that it was easy to find examples of people who had gotten rich despite not going to college. This kind of data was what led him to his opinion in the first place. However, every thorough study he could find on the topic pointed in the opposite direction; they consistently found that people with college degrees generally earn far more money across their lifetimes than those without. He did not want to lie to or mislead the class by leaving out all of the studies on the topic, but he also was not ready to abandon the topic entirely. Instead, he changed his claim to "it is possible to get rich without going to college." This claim is far less controversial. This more-nuanced claim was much easier to support with the data he found.

Deductive and Inductive Arguments

Logical arguments can be structured in two main ways: deductively or inductively. A **deductive argument** starts from a general rule or principle and reasons to a specific conclusion. A famous example often used to illustrate deductive arguments is as follows:

> *All men are mortal*
>
> *Socrates is a man*
>
> *Therefore, Socrates is mortal*

As you can see, the argument works by establishing a general rule (sometimes called a major premise),

showing how it applies to the specific case or situation (called a minor premise), and using this to make a specific judgement (also called a conclusion). In a deductive argument, if the premises are true, the conclusion is certain to be as well.

To convince your audience using a deductive argument, you need to persuade them:

1. That your major premise is **true**.
2. That it **applies** in this specific situation.

Imagine you are pulled over and given a speeding ticket for driving 65 miles per hour in a place where the speed limit is 55 miles per hour. The logic for giving you a ticket is straight-forward: Anyone driving over 55 mph in this area will receive a speeding ticket *(major premise)*. You were driving 65 mph *(minor premise)*. Therefore, you will receive a speeding ticket *(conclusion)*. What if you wished to appeal this ticket? How might you do so? Perhaps the speed limit on the highway was recently changed to 65, and the officer was mistaken to write you a ticket. In this case, you would argue against the major premise—the speed limit is actually NOT 55 mph. It is more likely that everyone agrees that the speed limit is 55 mph, and so you would need to challenge the minor premise. Perhaps you could argue that you were actually driving 55 mph, and the officer must have radared a different car. Or you might argue that the radar gun malfunctioned. In either case, you are not challenging the speed limit, but rather arguing that you were not violating it. If you convinced a judge that either premise was wrong, your speeding ticket would likely be rescinded.

You may look at the example deductive argument about Socrates and thought that arguing that way seems overly formal and awkward. Does anyone actually talk like that? Actually, people regularly use deductive arguments. However, like warrants in the previous section, we do not always say all of the premises out loud.

An **enthymeme** is a kind of deductive argument in which one or more of the premises is left unstated. You might say "This is the United States— our veterans should have access to mental healthcare." This might not look like a deductive argument. Here you are leaving out the minor premise. In the context of a discussion of the cost of providing that healthcare, the omitted premise might be "The United States is a wealthy country and can easily afford to provide veterans with mental healthcare." If you are confident that your listener will agree with that omitted premise and automatically fill it in, you may not need to say it.

It is also possible to provide some premises and leave out the conclusion. Imagine if you asked someone if they wanted a hamburger, and they replied "Actually, I'm a vegetarian." You would take that four-word sentence to mean that they did not want a hamburger, right? But consider all of the premises you recognized that they did NOT say. They actually made— and you immediately understood— two deductive arguments:

> *Vegetarians do not eat meat (Major premise)*
>
> *I am a vegetarian (Minor premise—and the only thing they actually said)*
>
> *Therefore, I do not eat meat. (Conclusion)*

That first conclusion then became the general rule for a second deductive argument that you also filled-in for them.

> *I do not eat meat (Major premise)*

A hamburger is meat. (Minor premise)

Therefore, I will not eat a hamburger (Conclusion)

All of this from four words. Using enthymemes can have multiple benefits. First, they allow you to make the argument more quickly and conversationally by not explicitly stating every premise. Consider how much time (and social awkwardness) the person saved by just saying "actually, I'm a vegetarian" rather than stating all of these premises and conclusions. Second, enthymemes can make listeners feel as though they reached the conclusion using their own reasoning. But they only work if the listeners fill in the missing parts in the intended way. This is another reason that knowing your audience is an important part of persuasion. If your audience shares the same values and assumptions as you, then you may be able to leave more of your argument unsaid. However, if you are talking to an audience that you expect will think differently than you, you may need to more carefully state all the parts of your argument.

An **inductive argument** starts with specific examples and reasons toward a general conclusion.

My first iPhone was reliable.

My current iPhone is reliable.

My sister's iPhone is reliable.

Therefore, iPhones are reliable.

We engage in inductive reasoning every day. You make assumptions about how people will act based on how they have acted in the past. If you have gotten good food every time you visit a restaurant, you assume they will make good food in the future. If the average temperatures are rising in the United States, France, China, Egypt, and Brazil, you assume temperatures are rising across the entire planet. Humans are remarkably good at observing the world around us, recognizing patterns, and developing theories of how the world works.

Unlike deductive arguments, **the conclusion of inductive arguments is never certain**. The next time you go to your favorite restaurant, your food might be bad. However, if you have enough information, you can be fairly confident in our conclusions and predictions.

If your presentation provides the right information, you can convince your audience to be confident in those conclusions as well. To do so, you need to persuade your audience that your premises are:

1. **Sufficient:** that you have enough data to support your conclusion
2. **Reliable:** that your premises are based on accurate information from trustworthy sources
3. **Representative:** that your data is similar to other data on the topic.

Typically, you will draw upon both deductive and inductive arguments when writing a speech that attempts to persuade an audience. If you know your audience shares a number of important beliefs (for example, if you are members of the same religious organization), it might make sense to start with those shared beliefs as the major premises for your deductive arguments. If you do not know much about your audience's starting

assumptions, or you believe they are likely to be very different from your own, it might make more sense to start with a variety of smaller, less-controversial, observations, and then build inductively toward your intended conclusion.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an introduction to the role of logos in persuasion. The essential elements of logical arguments are claims, data, and warrants. Deductive arguments start from general rules and apply them to specific situations. Inductive arguments start with specific observations and build toward more general rules. Remember that effective use of logos requires analyzing your audience. Different audiences might have different expectations for what evidence persuades them. Knowledge of your audience may allow you to build a deductive argument based in major premises your audience already believes. Or it may allow you to use enthymemes that guide them to reaching the conclusions you want them to reach. The key to effective logos is knowing your audience and developing the right arguments to persuade that audience.

Chapter 17

Pathos

Wilson is preparing for a persuasive presentation. Wilson, who is passionate about reducing child-poverty, has volunteered for an organization that helps children escape poverty, and has done extensive research on the topic. Wilson has excellent data on how many children are affected by poverty, the many systemic causes of child-poverty around the globe, and how donating to or volunteering with the organization they volunteered with would be a very effective way to help to reduce child-poverty. By the time they finish getting all their data organized and writing the presentation, they feel really good about how strong their argument is. They ask their roommate to listen to the presentation.

As Wilson is delivering it, their roommate pays attention but seems disengaged. Afterward, their roommate simply says "It's good… It makes sense to me."

This is not the reaction Wilson was hoping for.

"You looked kind of bored… When I came home after volunteering and told you about it, you said you wanted to volunteer with me next summer. So, if this is boring for YOU, I've got to figure out how to improve it."

"That was different," their roommate says. "What made me want to volunteer was all the stories you told about the people you got to help. Like those two sisters who had to spend all day walking back and forth carrying water for their family, but your group built a well and now they get to go to school. I still think about that one sometimes."

"Do you think I should tell that story in my presentation?" Wilson asks.

"Yes! It is such a good story, and it will help your audience really see what a good cause this is!"

Pathos

Pathos describes persuasive appeals based in emotion. Aristotle (n.d.) recognized that, even when presented with the same evidence, people will make different judgments and reach different decisions depending upon the mood they are in at the moment. Knowing this, an effective speaker will pay attention to the emotional states of their audience and may even try to alter those states when necessary. Aristotle's goal is not simply to manipulate audiences through their emotions. In fact, he argues that effective use of pathos can even prevent audiences from making wrong judgments due to bad emotions. The goal of pathos should be to put listeners in an emotional state that allows them to make the right decision and have the conviction to act on it. So, what does this look like in practice? How can you use pathos to be a more effective presenter? This chapter offers guidance on when and how to use pathos.

Pathos appeals are everywhere. We encounter them when companies try to sell us products. We are confronted with them during every election season. And we sometimes experience them in our interpersonal relationships at work and home. The reason is simple: they work.

Which emotions can be part of effective pathos appeals? Aristotle lists several, including anger, friendship, fear, shame, kindness, pity, indignation, envy, and emulation. But the list is even longer. This chapter discusses a few emotions commonly used for pathos appeals and offers some insights into how they can be used. However, any strong emotion can motivate listeners or make it easier to persuade them.

Anger

Anger is the feeling of resentment, and desire for justice, a person feels in response to actions, insults, or situations they believe are unjust. That last part is particularly important. We may not like an action or situation, but if we believe that others were fair and just in their actions, we are unlikely to be angry. However, if we believe harm was done to someone who did not deserve it, or people acted in a way that was unjust, we may feel anger. Anger is a powerful motivator. If you can convince your audience that people have been unjustly harmed, it becomes much easier to convince them to support action to address the situation and prevent it from continuing.

Joy

Joy can encompass a variety of positive emotions including happiness, satisfaction, or pride. In some circumstances, you may want to evoke future joy as a way to motivate your audience to work toward something. For example, in order to convince them to adopt good study habits, you might prompt a group of first year college students to think about how proud they and their families will feel when they graduate. Alternatively, you might evoke joy about the past or present. If you were speaking to a group of wealthy alumni from your university, you might ask them to remember the pride they felt when they graduated and ask them to donate scholarship money so that other people will have the opportunity to have that same feeling.

Compassion

Compassion is feeling sadness for the suffering of others and wanting to alleviate that suffering. A common strategy in persuasive speaking is to appeal to an audience's compassion by describing the suffering of others and offering a solution that addresses it. In this way, a speaker can make abstract problems or issues much more concrete and real to an audience. Imagine opening a speech by saying that "619,000 people die of malaria each year." This statistic may or may not resonate with your audience. On the other hand, imagine you open by showing a picture of a smiling young child carrying an even smaller child on his shoulders. Then you say "This is Ali. He is the oldest of three children, loves taking care of his infant brother, and wants to be a doctor when he grows up. He recently turned five years old and talked every day about how excited he was to start school. Unfortunately, he was unable to. He contacted Malaria, and—because he did not have access to the necessary medicine—was bedridden and unable to attend school for months. Thankfully, Ali got the medicine he needed and has fully recovered. But 619,000 people a year are not so lucky. And more than 75% of them are children under the age of five." This second version includes the same statistic, but it is far more likely to get your audience engaged because it makes the problem concrete to your audience and evokes compassion.

Fear

Fear is the feeling that a person, their friends/family, or their community is in danger. Appeals to fear are common in political discourse. We may be told to fear other people, the government, or countless other dangers of the future. Of course, some fears are more warranted than others. Public health campaigns often rely on fear appeals. For many years, anti-smoking advocates have run advertising campaigns that vividly depict the health risks of smoking. These include graphic images of severely damaged lungs, striking testimony from cancer survivors, or chalk outlines of how many people die from smoking each day. These advertising campaigns have contributed to a substantial reduction in smoking in the United States.

Shame and Guilt

Shame is the feeling of being disgraced to people we admire, and who we wish to have admire us. Social work professor Brené Brown (2012) makes a distinction between shame and guilt. She argues that shame is a belief about one's quality as a person— that one is fundamentally unworthy of belonging with the people they want to belong with. Guilt, in contrast, is a feeling about how one acted in a particular moment— that one failed to live up to their values. Both can be powerful motivators, because they are both deeply uncomfortable emotional states. However, Brown argues that appeals to shame are likely to reduce social connections and should be avoided. Appeals to guilt, however, can be productive by focusing on specific behaviors and calling ourselves and others to live up to our ideals. She specifically discusses these kinds of emotional appeals in parenting, and notes that shame correlates with addiction, depression, and aggression, while guilt can prompt productive reflection on specific behaviors. Because both shame and guilt are such uncomfortable feelings, you should be very careful about using such appeals. It is probably best to only use guilt appeals, and only to audiences with whom you have built a strong connection. Being told that you have failed to live up to your values by a stranger is unlikely to be persuasive. However, if you believe that you and your audience share a connection and a deeply held conviction, noting how they have failed to live up to it—and calling them to do so—can make for a powerful persuasive appeal.

Using Pathos

Pathos can be a powerful tool when trying to move others to action. However, it is probably the easiest of the three types of appeals to misuse in ways that render it ineffective or unethical. To use pathos well, you should follow three rules: 1) Be concrete, 2) Be selective, and 3) Be ethical.

Be Concrete

Being concrete means making your use of pathos feel as real and specific as possible. Consider the example from the introduction. Although Wilson wanted to motivate their listeners to help all children living in poverty, describing the various challenges such children might face is less likely to evoke a strong emotional response than a concrete and detailed representation of the challenges faced by specific children. One simple way to make your pathos appeals concrete is through storytelling. Tell the story of a *specific* child. What do they have to do every day because of their poverty? What hard choices do they have to make? What does your audience take for granted that this child lives without?

Another way is to make these appeals visual. Images can make your emotional appeals more real and present in the minds of your audience (Langer, 1996). In addition to telling a story, show a photograph. The image could depict children navigating some of the challenges described in the story. But even seeing a picture of her smiling with her siblings makes the rest of the story more real.



This photo by Dorothea Lange captures a family of migrant agricultural workers in the 1930s attempting to support seven children while living in poverty. The photo is famous in part **because** it focuses on a single, real family and their life.

Be Selective

Pick the moments you use pathos carefully. It is easy to overuse pathos appeals, and using them too frequently can undermine their impact. People can only feel strong emotions for so long, and about so many things, before they lose their intensity. If you make too many emotional appeals, your audience will begin to feel like you are trying to emotionally manipulate them. This will make them less likely to trust you and can greatly undermine your ethos.

Where might you use them in a speech? First, a story with strong emotional resonance can sometimes be a very effective way to open and conclude your speech. It can not only create immediate interest in your topic, in a way facts or statistics may not, but it can also help put your listeners in the right emotional state right from the start of the speech. Second, you might couple pathos with logos by adding pathos appeals in places

where you think your logical arguments might be too dry or abstract. This is why anti-smoking campaigns are such good examples of pathos: rather than simply providing data on the strong statistical link between smoking and various health problems, they supplement those logical arguments with vivid depictions of what those health problems look and feel like. Finally, pathos can be particularly useful when the consequences you are advocating for or against are far away in time or distance. On issues like smoking or climate change, the dangers may seem uncertain or distant enough that motivating people to act is difficult. In such situations, pathos can be a powerful persuasive tool.

Be Ethical

Finally, it is important to use pathos ethically. Three important rules to follow are 1) Don't use pathos to manipulate audiences into acting in ways they normally would never wish to act, 2) represent others honestly and consensually, and 3) use pathos to support, not replace, logical arguments.

One of the oldest concerns about rhetoric and persuasion is that they would be used to inflame the emotions of an audience and cause them to act in ways they normally would not want to act. This is a real danger, and you should actively avoid using pathos in this way. Aristotle noted, for example, how people actually *LIKE*being angry and feeling like they are justified in punishing those who deserve it. This misuse of pathos based in anger and fear has led to countless examples of mob and vigilante violence: from historical incidents such as the Salem Witch Trials and the Red Scare, to more recent examples such as violence against innocent Muslim-Americans after the 9/11 attacks and Asian-Americans in response to Covid-19. Using pathos ethically means not inflaming emotions in a way that allows them to indulge their worst impulses. Rather, you should use pathos to give your audience extra motivation act as the best version of themselves.

Second, if you are telling others' stories, do so honestly and (when possible) consensually. If their story does not quite work for your speech, you can always find a different one or even present a hypothetical story. But, if you are telling a real person's story, you owe it to them and your audience to tell the truth. If the person is someone you actually know, it is usually best to ask for their permission to tell their story or use their image.

Finally, Aristotle argued pathos should be used to support logical arguments, and to prepare an audience to respond to them, not to overrule our logical faculties. Of course, it is possible to make logical arguments for unethical actions. But if you know your audience would not accept your logical arguments, so you find yourself using emotional appeals to get a person to do something, you should stop and consider if you are attempting to manipulate them. Basing your argument in strong logic not only reduces the likelihood that you are just manipulating your audience, it also makes you more persuasive. If you provide both a strong logical argument for why they should act, and you support it by creating an emotional response in your audience, you are far more likely to persuade your audience.

Conclusion

Pathos can be an incredibly powerful tool to persuade your audience. Emotions like anger, joy, compassion, fear, or guilt can be powerful motivators. Pathos appeals can help put listeners in an emotional state that allows them to make the right decision and have the conviction to act on it. You can be most effective in your use of pathos by being concrete, selective, and ethical. However, it is unlikely you can persuade your audience

in a meaningful and long-lasting way using pathos alone. Evoking strong emotions in your audience may prime them to act, but you also need to convince them of the right action to take.

This highlights an important aspect of ethos, logos, and pathos appeals: they can, and should, be used together. Using pathos alone may create a desire to act, but leave your audience unsure how or why to act. If you only use logos, you may be frustrated to find that—despite having strong evidence and logic—your audience grows bored or simply does not care enough to act. Without establishing ethos, your audience may not even listen to what you have to say. Even if you do an excellent job establishing your credibility, you may still have a hard time persuading your audience simply based on their trust in you. But if your audience perceives you as a knowledgeable and trustworthy speaker, presenting a strong logical argument that resonates with them emotionally, they are likely to find you very persuasive.

Chapter 18

Leadership, Teamwork, and Collaboration

In 1949, thirteen young men were killed in a forest fire in the mountains of Montana. What at first appeared to be a common and extinguishable forest fire quickly became a death trap. The person leading the group, Wagner Dodge, called out what could have been lifesaving commands, but no one on the team did as they were told. The Harvard Business Review *wrote about the tragedy, saying:*

> *Sensing that the crew was in serious danger, Dodge yelled at them to drop their tools. Two minutes later, to everyone's astonishment, he lit a fire in front of the men and motioned to them to lie down in the area it had burned. No one did. Instead, they ran for the ridge and what they hoped would be safety.*
>
> *Two firefighters, Robert Sallee and Walter Rumsey, made it through a crevice in the ridge unburned. Dodge survived by lying down in the ashes of his escape fire. The other 13 perished. The fire caught up with them at 5:56—the time at which the hands on Harrison's watch melted in place. (Weick, 2014).*

Why didn't Dodge's crew obey his commands? And why is The Harvard Business Review *writing about this nearly 50 years later? Norman Maclean, who is famously known for his novel* A River Runs Through It*, studied this forest fire for decades, interviewing survivors, U.S. Fire Service veterans and even visiting the site of the fire. Maclean's research on the event has been reviewed and studied by business and organizational communication scholars to better understand crisis management in teams.*

From sending astronauts to the moon to scoring a goal on the soccer field (and everything in between), one thing is crystal clear: every significant human accomplishment is the result of teamwork and collaboration. Even people who we might think of as visionary leaders in government, business, or religion are only as influential as the people who work with, around, and for them. At a more day-to-day level, working in teams in your classes is preparation for when you will need to work with others in your professional life and community. Although you may dislike teamwork because of your past experiences, we argue that your bad experiences are a product of poor leadership and lack of collaboration rather than an inherent problem in teamwork itself. That is, teamwork is only effective if you have the skills and knowledge to make them so–otherwise, they are more likely to result in boredom, frustration, and failure.

As communication scholars, we know that people have an inherent need for sociability. People need to interact with each other, feel like they belong, and develop a sense of progress toward mutually satisfying goals. When engaging in teamwork, there are actions that can threaten or destabilize team collaboration. Team members who are competitive, controlling, and lazy, or those who do not use effective listening skills, can doom a group's work before it even begins. This is to say that even when we want to work in a group, or at least recognize that a group is needed to accomplish a task, team member personalities, values, or styles can threaten effectiveness.

To be an effective team member, or leader, you will need to develop the skills, habits, and knowledge needed to collaborate and reach team goals. People–especially people who grew up in highly individualistic societies such as the United States–are not naturally good at being team members. In our experience, students often approach teamwork as simply dividing a project into the number of pieces as there are group members, who will then complete their individual part of the project only to put it all together at the end. This is not effective teamwork and often results in poor outcomes. In this chapter, we detail some of the ways of building high-performing teams and cultivating effective leadership skills.

Collaborative Teamwork

> *On August 4, 2014, a section of the Mount Polly copper mine training pond collapsed, releasing 25 million cubic meters of mine tailings and wastewater into pristine Quesnel Lake. Parts of the crystal clear lake filled with thick, gray mining sludge. For Indigenous peoples in our communities and downstream who rely on healthy waters for food and cultural practices, the tailings breach was devastating. We held an emergency meeting for our communities the next day. Our elders, one by one, got up to talk about their love of the land, the waters and all the unique medicines and plants that the area around Quesnel Lake offers. The lake itself provides migration, rearing and spawning habitat for several salmon and non-salmon species. The elders all cried as they talked. To them a death had happened in the family because they know it is all connected. (Sellars, 2021).*

There are many different approaches to leadership and teamwork. Indigenous models of leadership do not assume "a compartmentalized world with discrete, individual entities with competing self-interests in which leaders are expected to advance and defend the self-interests of the constituents they lead" (Blume, 2021). Instead, models of Indigenous leadership see the group or team as an interdependent whole. Cooperation and collective interests are valued above self-interests and authority is gained through wisdom, respect, and humility. In the following section, we discuss collaborative teamwork. As you read this section, consider how your own cultural background and experiences have influenced how you engage in teamwork and what you consider important values in team members and leaders.

The most important lesson about teamwork is that a team's effectiveness will be directly correlated to how much time the members put into creating "a team." This is to say, your effectiveness will depend on how much effort you and others put toward creating a team culture that encourages excellence, punctuality, collaboration, and vulnerability. If your team is simply a collection of individuals, then you're going to produce outcomes that do not consider a variety of obstacles, miss opportunities, and result in burnout and failure.

If you are able to choose group members, then you should think about the type of people you want to surround yourself with on a project. Are they fun to be around, but not a good contributor? Are they shy, but smart? Maybe they are argumentative, but respectful? Peoples' personalities and communication styles can lead to a variety of outcomes. On one hand, people often pick members who they like or feel are similar to and produce a group that acts and thinks in ways that are familiar or comfortable. This process can lead them into **groupthink**, and lead them away from important conversations because they focus on being nice or friendly with each other more than producing the best results. On the other hand, group members can have an **authoritarian culture**, where team members view each other as rivals who are either higher or lower on status and who try to control or exclude others. Neither approach to group work is effective.

To ensure your groups are able to collaboratively reach goals, we offer five key processes to keep in mind: contribute, develop, decide, implement, and evaluate.

Contribute

What rules do you have for interaction and discussion? In large groups, it might be helpful to have formal rules, such as *Robert's Rules of Order*, which prescribes very specific criteria for how to run a meeting. In smaller groups, these rules may be less formal, but are just as important. For example, when developing ideas or **brainstorming**, it is important that ideas are noted and affirmed in a judgment free setting before then winnowing them down to the idea the group will adopt. If groups are too quick to judge, then they may discard good ideas out of hand due to groupthink or authoritarian culture. Make sure your group is clear about rules of interaction: Will each member have a formal time to contribute or will you implement an informal turn-taking process? If the latter, how will you make sure that all members feel comfortable contributing? Developing clear guidelines for how to contribute can ensure people are not talked over, talked down to, or ignored either intentionally or unintentionally.

Develop

In addition to rules for contribution, your group will need to create ways for you to develop ideas. This process might include instances such as reducing the ideas developed from brainstorming to the option that your team will pursue or taking an idea and probing it for its strengths and weaknesses. In both cases, it is easy for members to feel emotionally invested in their ideas and resistant to it either being discarded or critiqued. Your group will need to agree on ways to pursue these processes or it risks team members getting frustrated or alienated when their ideas are not adopted. For example, after you have completed your brainstorming, your group may rank the ideas and discuss everyone's top three. From there, you can all decide which idea seems the most feasible given your time and resources.

Decide

Some of the most frustrating experiences in teamwork are when the group makes a decision, but a group member continues to advocate for a different idea; when a group member tries to force a particular decision by being interpersonally aggressive; or when a group member attempts to sabotage a decision through stalling tactics (e.g., asking too many questions, taking overly long to explain their position, or using procedural rules to stall processes). To combat these problems, your group will need to develop processes for decision making. Will the decision be made by the team leader? Will it be voted on by team members? Or will it be made by a superior, such as a manager? Developing and affirming the process of decision making will reduce the likelihood of conflict and improve your teams' chances for reaching its goals.

Implement

Once a plan is developed and decided, it is time to implement it. Here, you will need to ascertain who is willing to do a specific task and who has the abilities best suited to completing the task (these are not always the same person). A good team member recognizes that they cannot do all the work on their own, and that tasks

must be shared (even if unevenly). Make sure all team members understand their role, agree to its completion, and are willing to be held accountable if they do not complete their tasks.

Evaluate

After implementing the plan, your team will need to evaluate whether it was successful or not, and how to improve in the future. This final component is probably the step that is most overlooked in teamwork situations in classrooms, but it is one of the most vital. That is, most teamwork in classes is deemed successful if: A) the project is turned in on time; and B) it receives a certain grade. However, these are poor metrics to evaluate your success. If you reach these goals, but none of your team members contributed and you did all the work, then that was not a successful team! Doing an inventory on your team communication will ensure that you can adjust and improve in subsequent teams.

Team communication–often set within a larger organization such as a job–is an inescapable part of life. However, by being a knowledgeable and skillful team member, you can ensure that your group is able to achieve goals that they wouldn't be able to otherwise. Teamwork, at its best, is more than just the sum of its individual parts. Rather, it is a communicative process, by which people are able to develop new technologies, better solutions, and identify root causes of problems. Recognizing the importance of team communication, and developing your skills for it, will enhance your potential for success.

Leadership and Teamwork

> *Serene was the owner of a print company where she led a team of five people. The small company was struggling to stay afloat and needed to switch to using more affordable and contemporary design software. Serene believed the company also needed to invest in social media marketing.*
>
> *One of her team members, Cheryl, was resistant to these changes. Cheryl was frustrated that she would have to learn a new program and believed that social media marketing would cheapen the company. Serene explained that extensive market research showed this change was not only what the company needed, it was necessary if they were going to stay open. Cheryl had been a committed member of the company and Serene did not want to lose her. So, Serene found alternative work for Cheryl to take on as the rest of the company learned the new software and developed social media ad campaigns.*
>
> *Three months later, their company was seeing substantial growth. Cheryl went to Serene's office and expressed how impressed she was that the plan had actually worked. Serene looked at Cheryl and asked, "Great! Are you ready to learn the new software now?" Cheryl enthusiastically agreed.*

Teams often develop, informally or formally, a leader or multiple leaders. Leadership is a set of qualities that promote team cohesion, problem-solving, collaboration, and motivation while transcending their own personal stake or self-interest. Leaders do not necessarily have a position or designation (e.g., manager) and, in fact, people in those roles are sometimes the worst at fulfilling leader role qualities. Rather, leaders are those people in a group who are able to be communicatively flexible, recognize their limitations, and inspire others toward innovation and success. Leaders are member focused and results driven. The sign of a successful leadership is when they are able to obtain results without sacrificing member relationships.

Team activities are often disorganized and based on the experiences, knowledge, or interests of each individual team member. Leaders are able to organize these disparate activities/knowledges and recognize the various task, social, and procedural goals that animate teamwork. For example, knowing which members of a group work well together (and which do not), the strengths/weaknesses of each member, and reorganizing team members' potential for development and promotion are all integral parts of good leadership. One of the most important components of good leadership is to help define the team's focus and process.

As such, we offer four key areas that leaders should develop to have an effective team: goal setting, climate check, resolve conflict, and address performance.

Goal Setting

Good leaders encourage the team to set short- and long-term goals, develop plans for obtaining those goals, assess whether goals are being achieved, and provide support when members fall short of goals. Note that, unlike managers, leaders do not impose goals or assessment on their team members. Rather, leaders empower team members to make plans and provide resources to help others reach their goals. Leaders can do this by agenda-setting at the beginning of meetings; that is, they can develop a schedule of what tasks, conversations, or brainstorms a group may need to execute and ensure that team members adhere to those processes. Good leaders strive to ensure that goals, and the processes for identifying and achieving them, are transparent to group members.

Climate Check

Throughout the process of pursuing goals, good leaders take formal and informal measurements of team members' feelings and socio-emotional health. Sometimes this takes the form of giving explicit praise or rewards for accomplishments, being a shoulder to cry on, or allowing a member to vent about an issue. Regardless of the situation, a good leader withholds judgment and seeks to listen to team members deeply and sensitively. Sometimes issues call for interventions and solutions, other times they necessitate new communication channels and outlets, and in some cases require interventions from authorities (e.g., contacting human resources if a team member feels they have been discriminated against or harassed). Climate checks are crucial because the old adage "silence means consent" can be deeply harmful. Sometimes people are silent about their problems or needs because of a toxic culture or they feel depressed or threatened. Good leaders make intentional efforts to climate check so there are no surprises–good or bad–only opportunities for growth.

Resolve Conflict

Sometimes, team members have disputes, and it is up to the leader to ensure that it does not threaten team collaboration. Importantly, conflict is not (in and of itself) a problem. Team members can disagree, sometimes vigorously, and still be able to function well and meet goals. However, when conflict begins to affect team performance, a leader may be called on to intervene. Leaders should strive to follow the following process: 1) Deescalate disputes; 2) Identify common ground; 3) Affirm team's culture and commitments; and 4) Develop solutions. Importantly, developing solutions does not necessarily mean that compromises between the parties are always possible or even desirable–sometimes one person may be clearly in the right and the

other in the wrong. However, by bringing the team members back to the idea that the team's culture and commitments are paramount, a leader is able to facilitate a shared vision where everyone is welcome.

Address Performance

Perhaps one of the most difficult tasks for a leader is to address team members' poor performance or lack of performance. Sometimes leaders (especially those who informally emerge rather than those who have a position or title) may feel that it isn't their role or responsibility to address performance issues. Others may feel intimidated by the idea that they have to be the "bad guy" or "kill joy" to team members. However, when well performing team members see that poor performance is not addressed, it demotivates them to strive to meet goals. In other words, by not addressing a poor performing team member, you risk creating other poor performing team members. To address performance, a good leader will first ask the team member if they feel they have barriers to success. Maybe the team member's skill sets are being mismatched, maybe they have life problems (e.g., illness), or maybe they have interpersonal disputes with other members. Any of these issues and more can affect performance and a good leader will strive to learn from their team members before rushing to judgment. Depending on the nature of the issue, a leader may adopt a wide array of solutions such as reassignment, counseling, or reward structure.

People who overly monitor, micro-manage, or surround themselves with "yes men" will quickly find themselves unable to achieve team goals. A quote that is often attributed to U.S. business leader John Welch is, "If you're a leader and you're the smartest guy…in the room, you've got real problems." In other words, leaders should not believe they are above scrutiny, cannot make mistakes, or are better than those who work with them. Instead, good leaders surround themselves with people who will challenge and question them while trusting them to do their jobs.

Conclusion

Being an effective team member, or leader, requires a wide range of communicative skills, habits, and knowledge. Although you may sometimes feel like teamwork is one of the most difficult or frustrating experiences, we argue that this is often because people do not develop good team and leadership skills. In this chapter, we have offered some insights into developing your potential as a team member and leader and hope you continue cultivating these ethics and developing your skills. Doing so will be invaluable as you navigate college, career, and community life.

Chapter 19

Digital Public Speaking Skills and Delivery

"Hey guys! Welcome back, this is a day in the life of an entitled person. Let's watch!"

"Ladies and gentlemen, today I want to show you the future of travel with our new, all-electric vehicle."

"Hi everyone! I'm going to show you how to make authentic, Mexican tortillas today."

"Top o' the morning to you laddies! My name is Jacksepticeye and today we're playing Subnautica!"

A recent report from YouTube (2023) showed that from 2010 to 2020, the greeting "Hey guys" was the #1 way that content creators started their videos. However, the use of the phrase wasn't uniform across the different content areas. For example, Fitness channels used "What's up," Travel channels used "Good morning," Tech channels used "Ladies and gentlemen," and sports channels used "What is going on?" Of course, YouTube channels come in a variety of languages, so phrases such as "Oi gents" ("Hey guys," Brazil), "Bonjour à tous" ("Hello to all," France), "Hallo ihr" ("Hello you," Germany), and "Hola hola" ("Hi, hi," Mexico) are common as well. The convergence of certain types of greetings to specific genres of content creation suggests that even something as simple as a greeting ca be a powerful way to identify and create an audience for your content.

Digital public speaking has been on the rise for decades, but the coronavirus pandemic accelerated the amount of time people spend engaged in digital public speaking. In 2020, Zoom surpassed 300 million daily Zoom meeting participants, which was a substantial increase from the 10 million participants reported in 2019 (*54 Zoom statistic*, 2021). Now barely a day goes by without a person attending a virtual meeting, webinar, or online course or without watching a person speak on YouTube or TikTok.

Although digital public speaking does require unique communication skills, there are commonalities between traditional public speaking and **digital public speaking**. Edwards (2021) argues that digital communication is public speaking when it requires the same core competencies. She explained:

> Online discussion forums, live streaming monologues or dialogues, and asynchronous messages on platforms like TED and YouTube are public speaking when communicators develop intentional messages on topics of social or public consequence, even when interaction between speaker and audience may be mediated by time and technology. (p. 337)

From the boardroom to the banquet hall, you will always need to develop your public speaking skills for face-to-face environments. However, the advent of social media platforms, and the ease by which everyday people can upload videos to the Internet, have made digital public skills all the more valuable.

In this chapter, we will prepare you to master the art of digital public speaking. First, you will need to determine if your speaking engagement will occur synchronously, asynchronously, or as a combination of the two. Then you will consider who your audience is and how you will need to adapt your presentation to meet your audiences' needs. Second, we will discuss verbal and nonverbal skills as well as general guidelines to aid you as you strive to be an effective communicator in digital contexts. Third, we'll summarize some principles for how to best create, edit, and promote your video content. We'll conclude by talking about the promises and pitfalls of digital public speaking.

Consider the Context: Synchronous and Asynchronous Public Speaking

> *Nayte registered for an online webinar to learn about real estate photography. A few minutes before the webinar was scheduled to begin, Nayte promptly opened his laptop and took out a pen and paper in his home office. He clicked on the link to the webinar and watched as hundreds of participants from around the world did the same. The chat box was a flurry of entries as each participant said hello and listed where they were steaming in from. When the webinar began, Nayte was surprised to learn that it had been pre-recorded. However, the instructor seemed very responsive in the chat box, answering as many questions as possible in real time. By the end of the webinar, Nayte was excited to jump into his side gig: real estate photography.*

Throughout this textbook, we have emphasized the importance of considering your audience. What does my audience already know about this subject? What do they need to know? Do aspects of their identity or their experiences influence the way I ought to present the material? Digital public speaking also requires speakers to analyze and care for their audience.

Some digital public speaking situations have clear and specific audiences. If you are attending a Zoom meeting as part of your job, it is likely that you know the purpose of the meeting as well as who will be attending. In the example of Nayte going to a webinar on photography, the audience was composed of individuals from all over the world. And yet, they were all gathering with a clear purpose: to learn real estate photography. While the demographics of the webinar audience may be diverse, they were all gathering with a common purpose, which can guide the webinar instructor in preparing for the event. Knowing that the audience will be from all over the world is also helpful. The instructor can assume that not everyone speaks the same first language or has the same cultural background and adjust tempo, presentational aids, and examples to better meet the needs of this diverse audience.

Synchronous Events

Digital public speaking contexts are diverse. Webinars, TEDtalks, YouTube videos, Zoom meetings–each content calls for specific preparations. When we think of public speaking, we usually think of a synchronous communication event. **Synchronous speaking events** are scheduled and occur in real time. The courses you take in-person are synchronous communication events. You attend class at the same time as your classmates and complete assignments at the same time as them as well. If you watch a YouTube Live with other followers, you are also attending a synchronous communication event, because you are all experiencing the same thing at the same time. Synchronous public speaking requires many of the same skills as traditional public speaking because it is **ephemeral**, meaning that it lasts a very short time. If a synchronous public speaking event

is not being recorded, it requires that you speak slowly, explain things clearly, and use repetition to guide your listeners throughout your speech, because they will not have an opportunity to pause or rewatch your presentation.

Asynchronous events

Asynchronous communication events are not scheduled and happen on your own time. Many fully online courses function asynchronously. The materials for the course are posted and you are allowed to move through the materials and assignments at your own pace. Asynchronous public speaking is often pre-recorded, which allows the speaker to edit any errors or re-record. However, in these speaking contexts, the speaker is unable to adapt to feedback from audience members. Viewers of asynchronous public speaking have the ability to pause, rewatch, skip over, and even adjust the speed of the video. They do not, however, have the ability to interact with the speaker or offer any real-time feedback.

There are now many platforms that allow both synchronous and asynchronous communication to occur simultaneously. Some speeches are pre-recorded but then shown to an audience at a scheduled time. The audience experienced an asynchronous public speaking event synchronously. The recording of the speech can then be shared on various websites, allowing people to watch it asynchronously. The example of the webinar offered at the start of this section is another example of an experience that combines asynchronous and synchronous communication. The event itself is synchronous, as all attendees arrive at a scheduled time. They are also communicating with each other synchronously in the chat box. However, the webinar lesson itself was pre-recorded.

Gathering whether your digital public speaking event will occur asynchronously, synchronously, or a combination of the two is important. How you approach preparing for the public speaking event as well as what skills you will need to be successful are based on the context. Imagine you are speaking synchronously on Zoom while your audience is responding in the chat box in real time. You will want to address your audience's comments and use their feedback to adapt your presentation as you go. This requires you to have a plan for how to address the comments without losing your focus as a speaker.

Some digital public speaking contexts may make determining your audience more difficult. When creating videos for social media, it may be difficult to predict who will see your video. In these situations, it is helpful for you, as the speaker, to have a target audience in mind and then develop your digital content appropriately. Even when pre-recorded and asynchronous, your presentations would help create a dialogue between you and your audience.

Digital Public Speaking and Delivery

> *She smiles as she appears on the screen and immediately lifts her hands and begins telling a story about being called a storyteller as opposed to a researcher. She expresses her discomfort with this. Would she seem less credible or intelligent if she was described as a storyteller? Her delivery is conversational and poignant, serious, and playful. She goes on to talk about her research on human connection and the role courage, vulnerability, shame, and empathy play in helping humans connect to each other.*

In 2010, shame researcher Brené Brown gave a TEDtalk on the power of vulnerability. Unbeknownst to her, the

video would go viral and her work would become famous. The video currently has 59,984,380 views on TED's website alone (Brown, 2010). After this talk, she would go on to write top selling books on topics spanning from courage to leadership. She has multiple podcasts, is a highly sought after speaker, and even has a Netflix special. Of course, the content of Brown's speech is valuable and interesting, but her ability to deliver the content in a way that connects to her digital audience contributes to its success. In this section, we will discuss specific verbal and nonverbal delivery challenges you may face in digital speaking settings.

Many of the qualities that define good public speaking also apply to digital speaking environments. As a speaker, you still need to enunciate, use correct pronunciation, pause appropriately, speak conversationally with vocal variety, utilize facial expressions, dress appropriately, and avoid fillers.

There are unique aspects of digital public speaking that you should consider when preparing:

Sustain Energy

Sitting may affect your energy levels and your tone. One way to keep your energy up is by paying attention to your posture as you sit. Also, because you are not able to signal transitions with movement, you will need to find alternative ways to indicate as you shift from one idea to another. Another consideration when presenting from a sitting position, is the placement of the camera. Usually, it is best to set the camera so that your arms and hands are still visible. This allows you to use gestures, which are vital to your nonverbal delivery. If sitting results in poor delivery, consider possible ways to stand during your public speaking event.

Reduce Distractions

Choose your background carefully, avoiding anything that may divert the attention of your audience. Some content creators speak with a simple, white, others use rainbow lights, and other use a green screen where they can animate the background Whatever you do, make sure it is clear of clutter and items that might distract your viewers. You also want to make sure that you choose clothing that does not blend into your background. For example, if you are using a dark background and wear dark clothes, it may look like your disembodied head is floating on the screen! Many of the same considerations apply to auditory distractions. Choose a space to record, stream, or meet that is free of sounds or noises that could disturb your speaking. If necessary, use a microphone to obtain the best sound quality

Maintain Eye Contact

Good eye contact with your webcam is key to effective digital public speaking. It creates a feeling of closeness which is even more important when you are physically distant from your audience. Because of how your eyes track when you read, reading directly from your screen is usually very apparent to your viewers. We recommend using sticky notes around your computer or downloading a teleprompter app so that you can maintain eye contact with your webcam at least 80% of the time. If speaking using software such as Zoom, consider hiding self-view. This helps minimize Zoom fatigue and distractions!

Verbal and nonverbal delivery skills are important whether you are speaking in-person or in a digital environment. Digital communication situations do require more specific approaches and techniques. In the

next section, we will discuss some general guidelines for digital public speaking to aid you in becoming a successful and engaging digital communicator.

Digital Public Speaking Skills

From the boardroom to the banquet hall, you will always need to develop your public speaking skills for face-to-face environments. However, the advent of social media platforms, and the ease by which everyday people can upload videos to the Internet, have made digital public skills all the more valuable. Whether you plan on creating videos for a company's public relations outreach, for your YouTube/Twitch/Instagram following, or just want to make fun videos for yourself, digital public speaking skills will make sure that your work is effective, efficient, and engaging.

Before You Start

From the outside, content creation looks like a fun and easy way to make a career. You just need to film yourself reacting to something, selling some product, or playing a video game, right? Although it is certainly possible to do any of these things without much planning or forethought, if you want to do them well enough to profit from them, you will need to start developing your content creation skills. Whether you are on a Zoom conference call with investors from around the world or developing "Let's Play" videos for your YouTube channel, **there are principles you should know before you even start:**

Choose Audience/Topic

When developing online video content, the first and most important question you can ask is, "Who is my audience?" A recent report showed that nearly 90% of content on YouTube never receives more than 1,000 views and that .77% of videos account for nearly 83% of all views (Newman, 2020). In other words, there is a LOT of content on the platform and, with all that choice, it is increasingly difficult to reach one's audience. Creating content because it is interesting, fun, or humorous to you doesn't necessarily mean that it will be engaging to your audience. You need to figure out what your content's topic will be by researching where your interests and audiences' interests intersect. Some places to start are: Reacting to Trends, Let's Plays, Shorts, Unboxing or Product Demos, Tutorials, and Educational videos.

Competitor Research

One of the most effective ways to figure out your audience, topic, tone, and approach is to do competitor research. That is, find other content creators who you will be competing with for audience engagement. Watch their content for their video techniques, read the comments, and/or join Reddit groups on the topic or specific competitor. All of these can be a way for you to figure out what your audience wants and how you will deliver it. Remember, just because there is another person doing the content you want doesn't mean you can't do it. In fact, collaborations with other video makers in the same content area can promote cross-engagement. By investigating what works well for other competitors at the beginning, you reduce the likelihood that you will waste time creating content that doesn't meet your audience's needs.

Title/Keyword/SEO Search

Content titles and keywords are the way you connect you to your content to your audience. Since your audience will look for your content (or, will be guided to your content by the platform's algorithm), you need to pick terms that will connect to the broadest audience for your topic while not diluting your ability to target a specific audience by using too many terms (i.e., overstuffing). When you engage in title or keyword research, you are trying to find the search terms that people use with the goal of using that data for search engine optimization (SEO). You can use free tools, such as KeywordTool.io to see which terms are oversaturated with big competitors and which may be better fits for a beginner content creator. If you pick the keywords that best characterize your content *and* the content users might want, you will dramatically increase the chances of generating more traffic to your content. Nearly 55% of web traffic occurs in the first three links of Google search (Southern, 2020), so it's especially important to get your title/keywords correct for maximum SEO.

Decide on Tone

You need to decide on a tone that matches your content, personality, and direction. Will your content be humorous, light-hearted, bubbly, commanding, reserved, relaxed, or agitated? Although certainly you can be all these things throughout the course of a long career in content creation, a successful content creator often relies on one overarching tone for their channel or outlet. Again, look to your audience's needs and work backward. Are they looking for a credible information sources about what products to buy? To relax and laugh while they watch you play video games? Deciding early what kind of tone matches your audience/content will also help you develop your keywords for SEO.

Write Script/Storyboard

Although certainly some regular content creators improvise their videos, most develop materials before they film. For some, this might be storyboarding, where they write out major plot points, jokes, or events in the content and develop a loose script around each one. Or, they script out a close approximation or an exact script of what they are going to say. Developing and practicing a script/storyboard (especially early in your career) will help you feel less nervous, reduce dead-air (i.e., times when the content is silent because you can't think of what to say next), and ensure that you don't say something off-handedly that is ill-conceived or harmful. Most importantly, it provides you an artifact to return to and develop better content from. Maybe a joke didn't land well, or a story went too long—these are things that can be learned from and altered for future content creation.

Get Equipment

Perhaps one of the most daunting challenges to content creation is the cost of equipment. Purchasing high-end equipment on a college student budget maybe impossible for many people. Luckily, a great deal of equipment can be obtained of relatively little. The most important pieces of equipment you will need are. First, a camera that shoots in at least 1080p (high-quality) video and, ideally, can film at 4k (ultra-high quality). Second, a dedicated microphone—built-in laptop or camera/phone microphones are usually not sufficient for good audio. Third, you may need a tripod/stand/stabilizer, to ensure that your camera or smartphone doesn't

fall over or shoot crooked video. Finally, you will need to purchase lighting if you are recording indoors or in an area with a lot of ambient light (e.g., outside).

Download/Purchase Software

Once you have shot your video or photographs, it is time to edit them. Luckily, digital editing of your content has never been easier. Many universities' Department of Communication and Media (including ours!) have subscriptions to high-end video editing software, such as *Adobe Premiere Elements 2023*, *DaVinci Resolve 18*, or *Final Cut Pro*. However, you may wish to learn more about how to use many of the free video editing software programs which are available.

Shooting Video Footage

Now that you have prepared your space and procured the necessary equipment, it's time to start shooting your video footage. But wait! It's not as simple as turning on your smartphone's camera and uploading whatever you end up getting. Good video content is a complex process, and **the tips below will ensure you maximize your effectiveness:**

Practice/Rehearse

Unless you are doing a live video shoot, there is no justification for verbal pauses, mistakes, or misstatements in recorded footage. You should be practiced and rehearsed long before you turn on your equipment. You should also rehearse with your equipment on before doing the final take to ensure you feel comfortable in your performance. If you mess up during a video recording, you should either re-shoot the entire shot or scene (depending on its placement) or address the error through editing. Never publish video content that with mistakes that you can fix!

Test Lighting/Audio

When you practice/rehearse, make sure you do at least one full run with the equipment on to test your lighting and audio. After recording watch/listen to your recording—is everything exactly the way you want it? If not, change it! There is nothing worse than having a clean, perfect take on a video shot only to find out it was ruined because you didn't account for lighting (e.g., the sun's placement throughout the day) or audio (e.g., traffic or passing helicopter) issues.

Second Source for Sound

Having additional sources of sound can ensure that you are always using the clearest audio for your content. This is especially true if you are recording a talk between you and someone else on a video call. If you have a condenser mic and they are using a webcam mic, your audio will sound crisp and theirs will be poor. Additionally, having a digital audio recorder running while you are using a mic on your computer will ensure that you have two audio files in case one gets corrupted or accidentally deleted. Better safe than sorry!

Scout Location

Often, you want your video shooting location to be controllable (e.g., your home). However, in instances where that is impossible (e.g., in a local park), you will need to scout the location to find the best times to shoot. Traffic from others, the sun's placement, wind, and a variety of other factors can make shooting video frustrating. By scouting the location ahead of time, you ensure that you will be able to have the most optimum time for your content creation.

Develop Virtual Listening Skills

If you are on a Zoom call, doing an interview, or creating content where you collaborate with someone else, you need to make sure you are using good listening skills. Staying present and engaged during online meetings or webinars can be challenging. However, learning to listen in these situations is important not only for acquiring information but for maintaining relationships. The easiest and first key to effective listening is to remove any distractions. Do not multitask. Next, offering verbal feedback, such as saying "mmm" and "yeah," as someone speaks does not work in digital speaking situations. It is best to turn your microphone off and increase your nonverbal feedback. Head nods and facial expressions are an important way to communicate that you are listening. As a digital public speaker, you can encourage good listening skills by being lively and engaging, asking questions, giving participants tasks, and monitoring your audience's interest levels. Every five to ten minutes, engage your audience in some way (e.g., tell a story or make them laugh) to re-engage their attention.

Rule of Thirds

When shooting your video or video editing, you should always strive to follow the rule of thirds; that is, the idea that if you take a shot and divide it into a 3×3 grid, your audience's eyes are naturally drawn to the lines of the grid. Having important movement, figures, or items outside of those gridlines can minimize their impact. This idea is particularly true if you are looking into a webcam for a video conference—make sure your eyes are at the line of the top third and look into the camera (not the screen) to maximize your effectiveness. Of course, you can sometimes break the rule for important exceptions. Learning when to follow it, and when to break it, is a defining characteristic of a good videographer.

Editing Video/Sound Footage

You've shot your video, but there were a lot of flubs, mistakes, misstatements, or verbal pauses. No worries! **The best part of digital public speaking when it is asynchronous is that you can use a variety of editing tools to perfect your video before your audience ever has the chance to see it:**

Zoom In/Out

Although it seems like a basic technique, zooming in or out can convey a great deal of meaning. Zooming in can encourage your audience to focus on a specific part (e.g., facial expression) that you want. Also, zooming in can feature can help you achieve crop the video by enlarging the scale of the clip. Conversely, zooming out can give your audience a since of scale or reveal a character or background that was hidden while zoomed in.

Adding Graphics/Animations

Many video editing software packages have graphics or animations you can insert in your video. The best times to use them are in transitions from one scene to another and/or when you have done a jump cut (see below) that looks jarring. Adding a graphic or animation, instead of keeping the speaker in frame, can hide these imperfections while maintaining a consistent audio.

Overlaying Sounds/Music

One of the most fun components of video editing is adding sounds and music. You may be interested in open source or free sounds or music samples to do transitions, intros, or endings of your video. You can usually only use copyrighted music if you get permission from the copyright holder (usually the publisher). Using copyrighted music without permission can get your content de-monetizes, taken down, or banned. When you are overlaying sounds or music, make sure you are fitting the audio to the tone or mood of the video content. For example, stopping music in a dramatic part of the video or having high-tempo, uplifting music during a reunion can be the difference between a "good" and "great" video. You may consider downloading a *Digital Audio Workstation* to have more control over splicing sounds or music.

Transitions/Cuts

Having transitions/cuts in your video shots can signal a great deal of information to your audience, such as conveying the passing of time or a narrative change. After adding your clips or video scenes to your editing software's editing timeline, you can begin adding transitions/cuts to your content in ways that can make it interesting, engaging, or informative. Although transitions can provide dynamism to your video, over suing them can make you content look rushed, jumbled, or unplanned. Learning not just how, but when, to use transitions/cuts will go a long way to make sure your content is interesting and effective.

Templates/Presets/B-Roll

Many early-career content creators think that they need to fill every second with original footage that they have shot. This isn't true! You can and should add templates and B-roll to your content. Templates are premade short video clips that you can add as transitions or to emphasize a point, or to save money/time by not shooting that footage yourself. B-roll refers to video footage that you shoot that may be supplemental or alternate to the main shot. For example, shooting a video of a deer in a meadow may be used while a narrator is talking about the importance of environmental conservation. When editing your footage, you can use presets, which are visual or audio effects that have already been used or created that you can import into your video content for the same effect. For example, if you like the lighting on a particular shot, you may be able to obtain the preset rather than try to duplicate it yourself. There's no need to reinvent the effects that you like when you can find and import existing presets.

Tips for Video Engagement

After shooting and editing your video, you need to make sure that people actually watch it! Most media content platforms use a variety of ways to promote your content as well as way to review if you content is connecting

to your audience. **For you to extend your reach, it is important that you learn how to read your engagement reports and use that information to grow your audience:**

Thumbnail

The thumbnail is the small picture that is the clickable link for your content. Make sure your thumbnail accurately portrays your content while also being interesting and engaging. For example, in reaction videos, often the content creator will have a thumbnail that suggests movement or dynamism (e.g., pointing to something) or portray excitement, disgust, or embarrassment. You may also wish to have your brand logo on it. Some platforms such as YouTube will automatically suggest a thumbnail for your video which you can use. Alternatively, you can create your own through graphic design software, such as *Canva*.

Promote Yourself Widely

No one will watch your content if they don't know you exist! Do not be afraid to ask your friends and family to engage with your content. The more people who interact with your content, the more likely media platforms' algorithms will push your content to new audiences. Collaborate with other content creators if possible. Ask your audience to send you questions then answer them in the next content drop. Make content that has sequels to keep persistent engagement. Always ask for audience engagement (e.g., "Like, comment, and subscribe!") and respond as much as possible. Many platforms offer ways for you to pay for extended reach, which may make sense, especially if you start generating some income from your content creation. Most of all have fun and create a community around the things you are passionate about!

Review Analytics

Many content creation sites provide a robust set of tools to understand your audience's engagement with your content (e.g., videos) and overall presence (e.g., your channel). Obviously, metrics such as views, engagement (e.g., likes/comments/subscribers), and view time are important. These metrics let you know which videos engage your audience the most or extend into new audiences. You should review how people are finding your content (e.g., what search terms do they use, what search engines do they use, or similar content creators do they watch?), audience retention (i.e., how many new or long-time fans do you have), or (if applicable) what products they buy based on your embedded links/advertisements. All these metrics can help you understand how to best grow your audience and maximize your monetization.

Conclusion

In 2014, feminist media critic Anita Sarkeesian and video game developers Zoë Quinn and Briana Wu were **doxxed,** meaning that their private information was maliciously and publicly shared on the internet. They also received rape and death threats. This harassment campaign became known as Gamergate and reminds us of the dark side of digital public speaking. By publicly speaking online, you open yourself up to potential trolling and harassment. Consider ways to moderate who has access to your digital public speaking event, keep things professional, and do not feed the trolls. You cannot fully control how people respond to your public speaking event and you are not responsible for others harassing or trolling you. Should these situations occur, block, ban, and report when possible.

Digital public speaking skills will only become more important as the world becomes increasingly connected through the internet and social media platforms. Whether you are going to be a content creator or consumer, it is vital that you can recognize the best practices of this form of public engagement. Doing so will enable you to create content for yourself or on behalf of an organization in ways that are effective and engaging or it will help you identify and avoid channels that do not support its audience's needs. Either way, you will influence how content creation is planned, rehearsed, created, and consumed for years to come.

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