INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION
Manti Te’o was one of the most celebrated football players of all time at the University of Notre Dame. During his senior year of college, right before a big rival football game, he learned his girlfriend died of cancer. Fans of Notre Dame sent him tweets and messages expressing sadness for his loss and wishing him well. However, a few days later, it was revealed that he had been “catfished” by a fake girlfriend. Their relationship was a sham. Manti Te’o was embarrassed that he had been part of the scam and exposed on national media. Nev Schulman, the host of MTV’s Catfish: The TV Show, also fell victim to a person posing as someone else in an online relationship (Connelly, 2014). Maybe you or someone you know has been catfished?

Catfishing, or posing as another person to lure someone into an online relationship, is part of the dark side of the Communication Age. The MTV show Catfish reveals these fake relationships and demonstrates the potential pitfalls of having an online relationship. According to the series creator, Shulman, “If you are on Facebook, Instagram or any social media that requires an online profile, even if you are totally honest, you are still not representing your true self. You are curating who you are” (Connelly, 2014). As users of social media networks, we choose the pictures that we post, fan pages we like, and tweets we favorite and retweet. In other words, we create a persona online and can build interpersonal relationships based on the portrayed identity.
Interpersonal communication increasingly involves a mixture of face-to-face and computer-mediated contact (Baym, Zhang, & Lin, 2004). Just like in a face-to-face relationship, we need to be careful in our online relationships as well. In this chapter, we discuss interpersonal communication. Specifically, we examine the role of communication, whether it is in-person or computer-mediated, in forming interpersonal relationships, building relationship culture, and creating relational climate.

When you think about the most meaningful and important aspects of your life, chances are that many of those aspects revolve around your relationships with others. Interpersonal relationships help us meet our physical and social needs, give us a sense of identity, and make our lives meaningful. In addition, interpersonal relationships allow us to experience life as part of something larger than a single, solitary being by transcending the boundaries of our individual selves. In relationships, we are exposed to and bettered by the unique gifts, talents, and differences in perspective that our relationship partners bring to the table, while they in turn are expanded and bettered because of their association with us. According to Schutz (1958), interpersonal relations satisfy our basic human longings for inclusion, affection, and control. Through them, we gain (and give to others) a sense of belonging and being part of something, a sense of loving and being valued, and a sense of mattering and being empowered.

Beginning, maintaining, transforming, and ending relationships are among the most important tasks that we accomplish through communication. As we discussed in Chapter 1, interpersonal communication refers to communication with or between persons who approach one another as individuals in a relationship. Only 20 years ago, many communication scholars would have stressed that interpersonal communication was primarily a face-to-face endeavor. But in the Communication Age, the emergence of newer communication technologies like texting, e-mail, instant messaging, videoconferencing, and social networking sites have dramatically altered how we connect and engage through interpersonal communication. In reality, the mediation of interpersonal communication is not altogether new. Interpersonal communication has been mediated by letters for thousands of years and by the telephone for more than a century. But it is undeniable that the opportunities for digital and virtual interaction in interpersonal relationships have been radically expanded in recent history. On a daily basis, we use computer-mediated communication to meet new people; talk to friends, family, and coworkers that we see frequently; and keep in touch with those we do not. Connecting and engaging with others on social media help us expand our social capital (Ellison, Vitak, Gray, & Lampe, 2014). In some ways, interpersonal communication has become easier, but it has also become more complex. So how, exactly, does communication help us reach our interpersonal and relational goals? This chapter tackles several complex issues. First, we will talk about how and why relationships form. Second, we will discuss a couple of important communication-based perspectives on relationships. Finally, we will explore how interpersonal communication builds relational culture and generates relational climate.
FORMING RELATIONSHIPS

Although it may seem like many of our relationships “just happen,” there are some specific reasons why people come together. A number of factors can influence the development of a relationship between two people. For example, you may meet someone who likes the same band or cause on a social networking site. Starting college, getting a new job, or moving to a new neighborhood may bring new people into your life. You probably met most of your current friends through school, work, extracurricular activities, or online activities. According to research, we are most likely to form relationships with people who are in close proximity to us (Festinger, Schachter, & Back, 1950). Proximity is the distance between two people. Proximity may be physical, as in the distance between neighborhoods in a city, buildings on a campus, cubicles in an office, or seats in a class, or it may be a virtual distance between online activities and spaces (Levine, 2000).

The people to whom you have close proximity are the exception, not the norm. We only meet a tiny fraction of the 7 billion people on the planet. That is precisely why proximity is such a powerful force. When people share space, whether it is at school, at work, or online, it becomes more likely that they will interact and form a relationship. For instance, you may hit it off with someone because you both enjoy exercising at the gym in the morning, but it was your physical proximity to that person that made the relationship possible in the first place. Likewise, you may form a connection with a fellow player of your favorite online game, but it was your virtual proximity to that person that set the stage for interaction. Sharing space increases your chances of having a relationship with a person, and repeatedly sharing space can lead to attraction.

Features of Attraction

Think about the number of people with whom you come into contact every day. Whether it is standing in line, riding the bus, taking the elevator, sitting in class, walking across campus, or playing an online game, we are almost always in close proximity with others. But proximity to someone does not always lead to liking that person. Attraction is also required to move the relationship forward. In Chapter 2 we discussed perceptions and how they influence our interactions with the people around us. Attraction is a major part of how we perceive others. As we interact with one another, we continuously determine whether or not others are attractive to us. Our standards of attractiveness are affected by situational factors, social and cultural influences, and personal preferences. The degree of attraction you feel toward another person shapes your behavior toward him or her, your communication with him or her, and whether you choose to interact at all.

Physical Attraction

There are several varieties of attraction, but for many people, physical attraction is the first that comes to mind. Physical attraction refers to the degree to which you find the bodily...
traits of another person pleasing and desirable. A person’s physical appearance is often the first thing we notice about him or her.

Our perceptions of physical attractiveness powerfully influence our judgments of others and our behavior toward them. Importantly, people are often more willing to form relationships with those they perceive as physically attractive. For instance, a recent study showed that university students were more willing to initiate opposite-sex friendships with a person who had an attractive Facebook profile photo (Wang, Moon, Kwon, Evans, & Stefanone, 2010).

We use features like attractiveness to form expectations of what a person will be like that are based on the first traits we recognize (Kelly, 1955). We may automatically assume that because one of our coworkers is good-looking, he or she is also talented, fun to be around, and hardworking. Studies have shown that we associate physical attractiveness with a number of other positive traits and physical unattractiveness with negative personal attributes (Berscheid & Walster, 1969; Griffin & Langlois, 2006). The tendency to let our perceptions of one positive trait, like physical attractiveness, influence our perceptions of other positive traits, like intelligence or moral fiber, is called the halo effect (Berry & Muller, 2001; Thorndike, 1920). By contrast, we may assume that because someone is not physically attractive to us, she is also unpleasant to be around. This is called the horns effect. Our assumptions can have negative consequences if they are incorrect, so it is important to monitor our thoughts about others, and how those thoughts are affecting our behavior. Our perceptions of a person’s physical attractiveness can change as a result of observation and interaction.

Perhaps you have known someone who seemed to become more physically attractive to you once you got to know him or her. Maybe this person appeared average or even flawed on your first meeting, but gradually became beautiful as you spent time together. The reverse is also possible. Chances are, it was not physical appearances that changed—it was your perceptions. Just as we often assume that physically attractive people have good personalities, we also use personality characteristics to gauge physical attractiveness (Swami et al., 2010). Our perceptions of how people look rely on our assessments of their social characteristics.

One groundbreaking study (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977) investigated how college students formed judgments about lecturers. In the experiment, students were divided into two groups to watch two different videos of the same lecturer (a man with a heavy Belgian accent). In the video shown to the first group of students, the lecturer was shown answering questions in a friendly and warm manner. The second group was shown the same video but with a different lecturer answering questions in a cold and unapproachable manner. The results showed that the students who saw the warm lecturer rated the lecture as more enjoyable and easier to understand, even though both lectures contained the same content. This demonstrates how our perceptions of a person’s physical attractiveness can influence our judgments of their personality and performance.
Social Attraction

Social attractiveness is measured by an individual’s actions and personality. If confidence and assertiveness are attractive qualities to you, you may be drawn to someone you have seen displaying these attributes. As you spend time with this person, you may ask yourself, “Do I like how he behaves in this situation?” or, “Does her communication style resemble mine?” We tend to spend more time with people when we get along well with them and when we take pleasure in the way they act or speak.

In addition, people may take cues from others in the environment to gauge the social attractiveness of a particular person. For instance, you might make observations of a potential friend’s Facebook page. Research has demonstrated that people whose Facebook friends are moderate in number, physically attractive, and extroverted are rated as more socially attractive (Tong, Ven Der Heide, Langwell, & Walther, 2008; Utz, 2010; Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman, & Tong, 2008). Thus, information generated by others plays a role in perceptions of a person’s social attractiveness.
We often hear that “opposites attract,” but similarity is usually more appealing to us than dissimilarity. We gravitate toward others with whom we share attitudes, social and cultural backgrounds, personality, interests, and social skills (Brehm, 1992). According to the matching hypothesis, we also tend to form relationships with people who are comparable to us in terms of physical attractiveness (Goffman, 1952; Taylor, Fiore, Mendelsohn, & Cheshire, 2011). So why do we like people who are like us? There are several likely explanations. First, interacting with someone who is similar to us can validate who we are and how we see the world. Communicating with similar others also tends to be agreeable and reinforcing, which leads to liking (Clore, 1977).

This leads to the second reason why we gravitate toward the familiar, which is that we often believe relationships with alike others take less effort and have a better chance of working out. If a person’s lifestyle or values resemble our own, we expect to face less conflict. The third reason why we are attracted to those who are like us is that it seems more likely that they will like us back. The potential for reciprocity, or having your feelings of fondness returned, means that rejection from the other person is less likely, thereby avoiding possible pain and frustration later.

It is important to recognize that not all similarity is attractive to us. In some cases, the differences between two people allow them to complement each other beautifully. For instance, relationship partners who are dissimilar in terms of dominance are happier than those who are more similar (Markey & Markey, 2007). Can you imagine why? Two highly overbearing people might end up in perpetual conflict over who gets to have the final say. On the other hand, in a relationship between two submissive individuals, no one may step up to take the lead. Neither situation sounds very satisfying. Another reason why we may be attracted to a dissimilar other is that we recognize qualities in another person that we do not have but would like to develop or learn from (Baxter & West, 2003). For instance, we are often attracted to peers who represent our “ideal self,” even if we do not feel we live up to those qualities (Mathes & Moore, 1985). Consider your best friend. Do you ever wish you were more like that person in certain ways? The differences between you may help you gain a new skill set or benefit from another person’s strengths.

**Costs and Rewards**

Attraction can also be based on the costs and rewards of being involved in the relationship (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Relationships with a high cost but low rewards are unlikely to form and last. Relationships with a low cost and high rewards are likely to be more enjoyable and lasting. The various costs and rewards change throughout the relationship, and we continuously seek to balance out this relational equation.

Clearly, some features of relationship formation are outside of our immediate control. We cannot always choose who is in close proximity. Circumstances beyond our control may bring us into the same space or prevent our paths from ever crossing. Likewise, there is only so much we can do to enhance our physical appearance. However, several aspects of attraction can be influenced by our choices and actions. Interpersonal communication plays a key role in shaping perceptions of social and physical attractiveness, discovering and building similarities, and gauging and displaying reciprocity.
MODELS OF RELATIONSHIP FORMATION

Interpersonal relationships shape our lives. We may not always see it, but our families, friends, coworkers, classmates, peers, and acquaintances are all continuously helping us re-create who we are and how we perceive the world around us. Because relationships are so central to our lives, scholars have spent many years studying them and have devoted a great deal of time to creating models and theories of how communication forms, maintains, and dissolves them. Think of models and theories like the lenses that an eye doctor holds in front of you to help you see more clearly. Your doctor will usually give you several and then ask you which one provides you with the best view of the images in front of you. Theories are like lenses. Some help us see ourselves and our lives more clearly than do others. As you consider each theory or model, ask yourself, “Does this perspective help me understand my own experiences better?”

Seeking to make a complex and dynamic process comprehensible, early interpersonal relationship research created linear models to explain how people come together and break apart. A linear model is progressive, meaning that it moves in stages toward a specific end goal. Importantly, these models are descriptive instead of prescriptive. In other words, they aim to describe what typically occurs in relationships, not what ought to occur. Let us take a look at a couple of the first linear models created to describe relationship progression.

Social Penetration Theory
In the 1970s, Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor developed the Social Penetration Theory to show how relationships progress toward intimacy as a result of self-disclosure from both partners (see Figure 7.1). Self-disclosure refers to the act of revealing information about one’s self to others. The Social Penetration Theory views self-disclosures in terms of breadth, or the number of topics discussed, and depth, or the amount of information revealed about a topic. According to Altman and Taylor (1973), each of us is like an onion in that we are composed of multiple layers. As we peel back each layer of who we are through acts of self-disclosure, we build greater intimacy with our relationship partners.

Our outer layers are composed of superficial information about the self that is not difficult to disclose. Taste in music, clothing choices, and simple likes and dislikes are all examples of the outer layers. We tend to shed our outer layers easily because there is little risk that we will be rejected for revealing superficial information. The middle layers move toward more personal details, such as social attitudes and political views. Have you ever tried to discuss your thoughts about marriage on a first date? If you have, chances are it did not go so well. According to Altman and Taylor (1973), that is because the middle layers are meant to be revealed only after you have first peeled back the outer layers of the self.
The Social Penetration Theory maintains that as two people learn more details about each other, self-disclosures become more intimate and partners share more and more information about themselves. After peeling back the middle layers, individuals progress to the inner layers, which consist of our deepest fears, our greatest hopes, and our spiritual values. These are the parts of our identity that we share only with those who are closest to us. Beyond the inner layers, at the center of the “onion,” lies the core personality, or the most basic self. Our core represents the essence of who we are, and we share it with very few people.

The Social Penetration Theory has several strengths because it simplifies a process that can be complicated, confusing, and full of uncertainty. It focuses our attention on the crucial role of communication in building relationships. It explains why we often begin relationships by disclosing surface details (our favorite bands, our majors, what we do for work and fun, and where we hang out) and only gradually progress to deeper information that may leave us vulnerable (our spiritual beliefs, past relationships, and the number of children we hope to have). It also explains why it is so awkward when someone we barely know strips back too many of his or her layers too quickly. Too much self-disclosure, whether from a blind date, a person sitting next to you on an airplane, or a Facebook message, can cause discomfort and diminish the likelihood of relationship progression. One reason why is that we tend to match levels and types of self-disclosure, or engage in the norm of reciprocity. So not only do we feel we have received “too much information,” but we may also feel expected to give intimate details about ourselves that we do not want to share.
Model of Interaction Stages

Mark Knapp and Anita Vangelisti (2000) constructed a more complex model of how communication progresses relationships. The Model of Interaction Stages includes five stages of coming together—initiating, experimenting, intensifying, integrating, and bonding—and five stages of coming apart—differentiating, circumscribing, stagnating, avoiding, and terminating. Before we move on, understand that the coming together stages should not be construed as “good” and the coming apart stages as “bad.” This model takes into account that we use communication both to build and to dissolve our interpersonal relationships. The stages are organized to move smoothly from one to the next and to demonstrate the overall process of forming and deconstructing a relationship. Each stage is defined by the presence of a specific type of communication. Much like Altman and Taylor’s Social Penetration Theory, the Model of Interaction Stages is based on the notion that if you want insight on where a relationship stands, you should listen to what the partners are saying to one another.

Initiating

The first stage, initiating, is where partners make their first communication contact. A couple may initiate a relationship by exchanging a simple greeting. Initiating communication includes light conversation, or small talk, that helps partners determine whether there is a possibility for relationship progression.

Experimenting

In the experimenting stage, partners probe to see if there is common ground between them. As partners reveal more private information, they observe whether their disclosures are reciprocated, and they consider the impact of the disclosures on how they view one another. Many relationships end at the experimenting stage because partners feel they do not have enough in common or may not be a good fit.

Intensifying

Couples may, however, progress to the intensifying stage, in which they develop greater intimacy and exchange a greater number and depth of self-disclosures. Communication is typically more affectionate and may revolve around expressing commitment or testing out labels like boyfriend or girlfriend. Think about a current or former romantic relationship. You might remember the intensifying stage by the endless hours you spent learning everything you could about the person by talking, texting, instant messaging, or video chatting through the night. Again, relationships may end here—often by “failing a test”—or progress to the next stage.

Integrating

In the integrating stage, partners engage in communication that weaves their lives together and solidifies their status as a couple. A formal announcement to friends,
family, and other social groups may be made. For example, partners may go from “single” to “in a relationship” on a social networking site. Language often includes more inclusive pronouns, like *we* and *us*, and assumes a shared future (“What are we doing this weekend?”). You may even find that friends begin referring to the two of you as a unit, rather than as two separate people. Partners may not succeed in integrating their separate lives and identities. As before, relationships can end here or progress to the next stage.

**Bonding**

Bonding communication involves a public and formal (traditionally legal) declaration that “two have become one.” A couple communicates their deep commitment to one another to the rest of the world. Bonding rituals include weddings and commitment ceremonies. A relationship may remain at the bonding stage indefinitely, or until the death of a partner. In the long term, communication revolves around maintaining the relationship by being constructive, sharing power, and staying connected. However, many relationships dissolve even after the bonding stage. Whereas the previous five stages addressed how we communicate to form relationships, the next five stages discuss how we communicate to dissolve relationships.

**Differentiating**

The differentiating stage is characterized by communication that asserts the separateness of relationship partners. Rather than emphasizing a joint identity, partners talk in ways that stress their individuality and distance from one another. For instance, partners may say things like, “I don’t want to go to the art exhibit this weekend; I don’t enjoy them like you do,” or “Moving to the city has always been your dream; I have different dreams.” Couples stop “working together” and may even explore a trial separation. Couples may eventually reaffirm their commitment to one another and return to bonding, or they may continue the path of relationship deterioration by moving into the next stage.

**Circumscribing**

In the circumscribing stage, communication moves from identifying differences to restricting the communication between partners. Partners may talk less and reveal less intimate information for fear of conflict. They may begin to lose interest in the relationship altogether.

**Stagnating**

The next stage is stagnating, which compares the relationship to a still, lifeless pond. The quantity and quality of communication continues to decline. In addition, it is common for partners to experience and/or express a sense of hopelessness.
COMMUNICATIONHOW-TO
MANAGE INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

Conflict in relationships is inevitable and can be both a positive and a negative force. Conflict allows us to solve problems and potentially make the relationship work better for all involved. Below are some basic tips on managing interpersonal conflict.

1. **Talk face to face about the conflict.** Text messages and online chat will not allow us to take advantage of nonverbal characteristics.

2. **Use inclusive language when possible.** It notes that the couple is in this conflict together and can solve the issue. “We will work this out.”

3. **Put yourself in their shoes.** Most of the time, each person is correct about at least part of the problem. Express empathy.

4. **Use “I” statements to express your own feelings and thoughts.** Avoid blaming the other person for how you feel. Say, “I feel sad about the fight.” Don’t say, “You made me feel sad about the fight.”

5. **Listen.** Instead of thinking of the next argument, truly listen to the other person before you even think about what to say next.

Avoiding

The next stage of relationship decline is avoiding. Here, partners extend their declining communication by physically steering clear of one another. They may rearrange their schedules to see one another as little as possible and desire permanent physical distance through separation or divorce.

Termination

Termination is the final stage of the process of coming apart. Termination is a reversal of the bonding stage. A couple once joined publicly and formally ends their relationship, often through the legal process of divorce. Termination signals the official end of the relationship.

Limits of Linear Models of Relationships

Like the Social Penetration Theory, the Model of Interaction Stages has strengths. Namely, this model highlights how our interpersonal communication can move our relationships in certain directions and identifies general pathways relationships can take to develop or dissolve. However, linear models also have their
Think about long-standing interpersonal relationships in your life. Do these all follow a linear model?

Another problem with linear models is that most of the initial research was based only on the experiences of White, heterosexual, middle-class college students. A different picture of how relationships form might emerge from including the perspectives of people from all ethnicities, sexual orientations, socioeconomic backgrounds, and ages. In addition, the early research focused heavily on relationships that occurred primarily face to face and not on computer-mediated interaction. For instance, social networking sites may encourage hyperpersonal communication, or situations in which the affection, emotion, and intimacy that develop through computer-mediated communication equal or surpass what happens face to face. Because the reduced nonverbal cues in computer-mediated settings allow people to feel less inhibited, and people can take their time crafting asynchronous messages, they are likely to experience early idealization of their partners and offer more and deeper self-disclosures sooner in their interactions (Tidwell & Walther, 2002; Walther, 1996).

A final criticism of linear models is that they are external. In other words, an outside observer determines what level of intimacy is present or which stage of relationship development a couple is in. Yet, in your own relationships, do you feel that what matters most is how you and your partner experience the relationship? The following section describes two individual interpretations of relationship development.

**Personal Perspectives on Relationship Development**

Individual interpretations of relationship development put the focus on how a person makes sense of his or her own relationship with another person. According to James Honeycutt (1993), our cognitions, and not externally observable events like bonding or self-disclosure, are responsible for our perceptions of whether or not a relationship is progressing. Activities like bonding or self-disclosure may be important to relationship development, but only if partners assign them meaning. Imagine that a boyfriend or girlfriend took you home to meet the parents for the first time. Depending on how you and your partner interpret the meaning of being introduced to family, the event could be a major
milestone that signified “things are getting serious” or an unremarkable activity. Ultimately, it is how we interpret an act, and not the act itself, that influences our sense of whether the relationship has moved to a new level.

**Imagined Trajectories**

Furthermore, each of us has an understanding of the various paths relationships can take and where those paths lead. Honeycutt (1993) refers to these understandings as *imagined trajectories*. Have you ever felt that one of your relationships was “not headed in a good direction,” or perhaps, “going really smoothly”? In either case, you were relying on an imagined trajectory that defined your expectations for what should happen and guided your reaction to things that deviated from your script.

The stories couples tell of how they met and fell in love are as unique as the couples telling them. They may paint a picture of “love at first sight,” complete with a whirlwind romance that led to commitment in record time. Or they may relate the saga of a long and rocky courtship full of breakups and makeups. Researchers have identified four major trajectories, or patterns of romantic relationship development (e.g., Surra, 1985) (see Figure 7.2).

In an accelerated trajectory, the relationship moves smoothly and quickly to marriage or commitment. Partners consistently achieve greater and greater levels of intimacy and dedication to one another. In an accelerated-arrested trajectory, the relationship gets serious early on, but then loses momentum and does not end in commitment. The intermediate trajectory involves more gradual relationship development. Couples experience a series of ups and downs and then reach commitment. Finally, in a prolonged trajectory, the relationship is very slow to develop and somewhat rocky along the way, but eventually achieves commitment. It may
be helpful to consider which of the four trajectories best describes your current and past romantic relationships. Previous experiences, personal observations, media portrayals, and relationship role models can influence a person’s expectations of how relationships can and should progress.

**Turning Points**

Another way we make sense of our relationships with others is through **turning points**, which are perceptions of events that transform relationships (Baxter & Bullis, 1986; Bolton, 1961). It is not the events themselves that change relationships, but our interpretation of the events. According to research, there are four major categories of turning points (Baxter & Bullis, 1986):

- **Interpersonal/normative** turning points occur when you evaluate yourself, your partner, or the relationship by standards of what is ideal and/or normal. For instance, you may think, “I’m too young to get married,” “She’s the perfect woman,” or “There’s too large an age difference between us.” Each of these evaluations could change your relationship as a result of comparing your situation to an ideal or normative standard.
- The second type of turning point is **dyadic**, which refers to direct interaction between you and your relationship partner. Dyadic turning points focus on the things you say and do to one another. Examples could include having your first big fight, exchanging “I love yous,” or saying, “This will never work out.”
- **Social network** turning points occur when friends, family members, coworkers, or acquaintances influence the course of your relationship. Perhaps your parents disapprove, or your friends welcome your partner with open arms.
- Finally, **circumstantial** turning points occur when events that are perceived as beyond your control (and your partner’s) influence the relationship. Illnesses, natural disasters, and relocations are unforeseeable events that may significantly alter the course of a relationship.

Each turning point is linked with a perceived change in the intimacy or commitment of the relationship. Some turning points are associated with an increase in closeness and satisfaction, while others are associated with a decline. The unique series of turning points in a relationship helps define its distinct trajectory.

**COMMUNICATION OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Communication creates, sustains, and transforms our relationships with others. In many ways, the nature of our talk with another person becomes the nature of our relationship. Recall from Chapter 1 that **communication is the collaborative process of using messages to create and participate in social reality**. Interpersonal communication defines who we are to one another, what we can achieve together, and the
culture and climate of our relationship. Likewise, interpersonal communication is the means by which we participate in the realities we create with others to accomplish relational objectives like providing support and resolving conflict. In this section we will discuss the role of interpersonal communication in relational culture, relational climate, and cultural influences on relationships.

Relational Culture

Through communication, each relationship develops features that distinguish it from all other relationships. In other words, communication creates relational culture, which is defined as “a unique private world constructed and sustained by partners in a relationship” (Wood, 1982, p. 75). The culture of a relationship includes the identities of the partners involved, but it also goes beyond them and takes on a larger identity of its own. This explains why the relationship you have with one friend is completely different from the relationship you have with another.

Relational cultures are dynamic in the sense that they are constantly changing and developing. They do not appear fully formed the moment two people decide to begin a relationship; they take time to build, and they gradually evolve as the individuals and their communication evolve. Even when two people have reached a consensus about what their relationship is all about (like true love, marriage, or best friends), both partners will continue to change and grow, which further influences the relational culture.

Relational cultures are created and shaped by relational partners, but they also turn back and influence the partners. If a couple’s relational culture includes absolute honesty, both partners will adhere to that, even in situations when it may be difficult to do so. Recall from Chapter 1 that the creation of any social reality involves both agency and constraint. The same is true of the relational cultures, or private worlds, that we construct with our partners. The realities we create lay out the possibilities and impose the limits on how we behave and who we become. Relational cultures may be positive and healthy, or they may be destructive for one or both partners, and they arise from the combination of a number of communication processes and practices. The following sections discuss the role of relational dialectics and symbolic practices in building and sustaining relational cultures.

Relational Dialectics

Leslie Baxter’s (1988) relational dialectics theory (RDT) is a groundbreaking analysis of interpersonal relationships that attributes the communication patterns between partners to the existence of dialectical tensions. RDT begins with the simple premise that relationships involve experiencing tensions based on contradictory needs. In other words, RDT recognizes that relationships are messy and that there is no escaping being pushed and pulled in seemingly opposite directions. The “pushes” and “pulls” are what make a relationship a relationship.
CHAPTER 07

The way we experience the tensions and respond to them helps create the unique culture of each relationship. There are three main relational dialectics. Each arises from a set of conflicting core values relationship partners hold.

- The first dialectic is autonomy and connectedness. Autonomy (self-determination, or independence) is a basic human need, but connection with others is also necessary. Maintaining your own freedom and independence while simultaneously nurturing a close attachment to a partner can be a challenge. RDT explains that relational partners must try to create a relationship that satisfies both of these needs at once, and the process of doing so propels the relationship forward.

- The second dialectical tension is novelty and predictability. People simultaneously desire new, exciting things and familiar, comfortable things. A relationship that lacks surprises and spontaneity can feel boring and stale. On the other hand, a relationship that lacks predictability can feel unstable and unreliable.

- The third dialectical tension of openness and closedness highlights relationship partners’ simultaneous needs to share personal information and to have privacy. Boundaries are necessary in any relationship, but sharing private information fosters greater intimacy.

**Dialectical Tensions in Relationships**

So how do relational partners negotiate these tensions? A common misconception is that partners have to choose one end of a dialectical tension over the other, but RDT stresses that both ends of each dialectical tension coexist in relationships. Not only are both ends always present, they are also interdependent—so you cannot have one without the other. These tensions occur in all types of relationships and often happen in conjunction with one another. If you think carefully about your relationships, we are sure that you have used multiple communication strategies to navigate all of these tensions at one time or another, and will continue to do so.

Think about the tensions present in the following example:

Alex is a college freshman living away from home for the first time. She is enjoying her classes and has made several new friends in her residence hall. During her first week on campus, Alex called home to speak with her parents nearly every evening. She couldn’t wait to tell them about her classes and her new job writing for the university newspaper, and she also wanted to know how her parents were doing without her. Now, a few months into her first semester, Alex calls home twice a week at the most. The last time she called, her mom mentioned that Alex seemed to be calling less and wanted to know if anything was wrong. Alex felt a little guilty for not calling more often, but she also felt annoyed that her mother wanted to know everything that had happened that week. Alex wanted her mom to know she missed her, but she also wanted to spend the majority of her time settling into her new life. She wonders how often she should call home from now on.

Interpersonal relationships involve tensions created by contradictory needs.
The relationship between mother and daughter shown here is an example of all three of the main dialectical tensions. Moving away to go to school has allowed Alex to be more independent, but at the same time she wants to maintain her connections with her family. Alex is enjoying the novelty of her university experience and is excited about all of the changes occurring in her life, but she also desires the familiarity and predictability of her relationship with her mom. She wants to tell her parents all about her college life, but she does not want to describe every detail of her week to her mother. Does this relationship sound familiar to you? Have you experienced these tensions within your relationships? If you think carefully about your relationships, we are sure that you have used multiple communication strategies to navigate all of these tensions at one time or another, and will continue to do so.

**TAKING A STAND AGAINST CAMPUS GOSSIP**

COLLEGE CAMPUS LIFE has always involved a good deal of gossip and rumor spreading. However, the launch of Yik Yak app in 2013 took college gossip to a whole new level using phones. This social media app urges users to post anonymous posts or “Yaks.” Created by Furman University graduates Tyler Droll and Brooks Buffington, the app has similar functions to instant messaging and GPS in that users can only post and respond to Yaks within a 1.5-mile radius (Kingkade, 2015). While certainly there are positive Yaks, many are used to post scandalous gossip about classmates, professors, and school administrators. For many students, unfettered access to the outrageous details of other people’s personal lives can become an obsession, even an addiction. Fans of the app enjoy the entertainment value and the sense of connection and power forged by talking about people.

However, it soon became apparent that Yik Yak was part of a darker element to college student interaction. Anonymity, along with the failure to prescreen content, created a breeding ground for posts that were hurtful, humiliating, blatantly untrue, and profane. Gossip about who was drunk, who was promiscuous, and what was right and wrong about people’s appearances dominates the online discourse. Geoff Holm, a biology professor at Colgate University, described Yik Yak as “the Internet equivalent of the truck stop bathroom wall” (Kingkade, 2015). The app has been used for harassment, bomb threats, and racist talk (White, 2014). On college campuses across the country, many students and faculty were urging their networks to block access to Yik Yak. At Emory College, the student government has denounced Yik Yak as a site for hate speech (Cary, 2015). Students at Clemson University have asked the administration to ban the app on campus. The negative reaction to Yik Yak is occurring on campuses across the United States.

Websites and apps such as Yik Yak are not new. In 2009, a similar website, JuicyCampus, ceased operations due to a lack of revenue. Declining popularity on college campuses contributed to its inability to turn a profit. The same generation of college students that had created Yik Yak and other such anonymous posting platforms will ultimately be responsible for bringing them down. The rise and fall of such websites and apps are a powerful illustration of our collective capacity to organize, speak out, and make a difference in the quality of interpersonal communication.
Strategies for Handling Dialectical Tensions

In a study involving undergraduate students in premarital romantic relationships, Leslie Baxter (1990) discovered four basic methods for handling dialectical tensions:

- **selection**—satisfying one of the two dialectical needs, but denying the other (like choosing to pursue connectedness at the expense of autonomy);
- **separation**—satisfying both dialectical needs, but in separate areas of life (like choosing to pursue connectedness on the weekends, but autonomy during the week);
- **neutralization**—compromising so that both dialectical needs are met to some degree, but not fully (like choosing the middle ground between openness and closedness by agreeing to discuss everything, but not being completely open when you do); and
- **reframing**—transforming the two needs of a dialectical tension so they are no longer experienced as opposites (like making novelty and predictability compatible by establishing a firm rule that every Saturday night you will do something you have never done before).

In general, selection was the least satisfying strategy. Reframing, on the other hand, was associated with relationship satisfaction, but was rarely used. That is probably because reframing takes some real communicative creativity. Reframing involves taking one end of a tension and turning it into something that actually helps you attain the other end. Because reframing is full of potential as a way to nurture relationship closeness (Baxter, 1993), you may wish to give it a try the next time you are feeling relationship pushes and pulls.

Symbolic Practises

Symbols and symbolic practices are important components of all cultures. For instance, in U.S. culture, symbols such as the flag, the national anthem, the Constitution, and war memorials serve as important sources of national identity. It is likely that you also associate your close and enduring relationships with a variety of symbols. Symbolic practices play a crucial role in relational culture. First, symbolic practices reflect the culture of a relationship by echoing its dialectics, values, and interaction patterns. In addition, symbolic practices create the culture of a relationship by reinforcing partners’ understandings of the private reality they share.

Types of Symbols

There are at least five types of symbols that friends and romantic partners use to reflect and build relational culture (Baxter, 1987):

- physical objects (special keepsakes, gifts, or photographs);
- cultural artifacts (“our song” or meaningful movies);
- places (restaurants, parks, coffee shops, or meeting places with relational history);
• events/times (holidays, certain times of year, or vacations that serve as reminders of the meaning of the relationship); and
• behavioral actions (nicknames, interaction routines, code words, or nonverbal actions that hold special meaning).

Can you identify the symbolic practices that give one of your friendships, family relationships, or romances its unique culture? What do those symbolic practices accomplish for you, your partner, and the relationship? According to research, relationship partners rely on symbolic practices to perform a variety of functions that create and sustain relational culture (Baxter, 1987). Symbolic practices can be used to help partners remember important events in their histories, demonstrate closeness, create a sense of fun, highlight the differences between their relationship and others, manage conflict, and help the relationship endure hardships and the passage of time.

Relational Climate

Each relational culture has its own relational climate. Just as different geographical areas produce varying weather patterns that result in a climate, relationships also generate an overall pattern of interaction that becomes the relational climate. Consider your group of friends. You probably have relationships that are usually warm and sunny, but with the occasional stormy day. You may also have relationships where clouds are part of the climate all the time. Some relational climates are volatile and can shift in an instant, while others are more constant. Relational climate defines the overall emotional feeling, or temperature, of the relationship.

Confirming Versus Disconfirming Communication

As you can imagine, relational climates may be positive or negative. Communication determines the overall positive or negative tone of each relationship. Confirming communication refers to messages and interactions that make people feel valued and respected, while disconfirming communication refers to messages and interactions that make people feel devalued and disrespected (Ellis, 2000, 2002; Laing, 1961). Confirming communication recognizes, acknowledges, and endorses the relationship and the other person in the relationship. Disconfirming communication, on the other hand, denies or minimizes the existence and importance of the relationship or the other person (Cisna & Sieburg, 1981; Dailey, 2006).

Spirals of Communication

Relational climates begin to develop during initial interactions and quickly take on a life of their own as patterns of behavior become established. Partners may find themselves in self-perpetuating spirals, or patterns of reciprocal communication where each person’s message reinforces the other’s message. This may be problematic when the patterns of interaction involve conflict. For instance, escalatory
Conflicts occur when one attack leads to another. De-escalatory conflict spirals occur when, instead of fighting, partners gradually lessen their dependence on one another, decrease their contact, and withdraw from the relationship.

**Defensive Communication**

Defensiveness is a major source of pollution to relational climates (Becker, Ellevold, & Stamp, 2008; Gibb, 1961). Defensive communication attempts to guard, or protect, a person from an attack.
For many couples, communication technology is both a blessing and a curse. In a 2012 study, Baylor University professor James Robert coined the term phub (phone + snub) to refer to when a person chooses to text, play with an app, or take a call instead of paying attention to another person. "I was surprised by the amount of people saying that this happens in their relationship every day," says Sarah Coyne, an associate professor in the department of family life at Brigham Young University. "You are sitting there and kind of bored and check Facebook . . . it is almost our default to turn to our phones" (Holohan, 2014). A number of recent studies suggest overreliance on technology may be hurting our relationships.

According to researchers McDaniel and Coyne (2014), technoference refers to "the everyday intrusions or interruptions in couple interactions or time spent together that occur due to technology" (p. 1). Their survey of 1,443 married and cohabitating women revealed that most perceived technology devices (e.g., computers, cell phones, TV) as frequent disruptions to their interactions. Devices like computers, cell phones, and TV were interrupting couple leisure time, conversations, and mealtimes. These interruptions were associated with lower relationship satisfaction and lower personal well-being. "By allowing technology to interfere with or interrupt conversations, activities, and time with romantic partners—even when unintentional or for brief moments—individuals may be sending implicit messages about what they value most, leading to conflict and negative outcomes in personal life and relationships" (McDaniel & Coyne, 2014, p. 1).

Technology use in relationships isn’t always bad. Legget and Rossouw (2014) found that watching TV together or using cell phones together while engaging and interacting with each other (e.g., playing a mobile game together) could be positive. But, according to Legget, "engaging in technology separate to a partner while in the presence of them encourages a disconnection rather than connection" (Bilton, 2014).

**WHAT TO DO NEXT**

To turn down the technoference in your intimate relationship, try to:

- Choose verbal communication for face-to-face interactions
- Catch yourself in the act ("I’m sorry, I’ve been so busy texting that I haven’t talked to you.")
- Carve out cell phone–free times and outings
- Consider device bans in particular spaces (e.g., kitchen table, bedroom)
- Politely apologize (if you must use a device) to avoid hurt feelings

Defensiveness is often the result of face threats, or messages that challenge the image of ourselves we want to project. We may react defensively by attacking the critic, distorting the critical information, or avoiding the critical information:
Attacking the critic includes the use of verbal aggression ("How dare you call me lazy! At least I have a job!") and sarcasm ("I’m so glad I have a friend who takes the time to ruin my day").

Distorting critical information includes rationalizing, or inventing untrue explanations of your behavior that sound acceptable ("I would have helped you carry in the groceries, but I didn’t hear you pull into the garage"); compensating, or using one of your strengths to cover one of your weaknesses ("I may not help out much around the house, but I buy you everything you want"); or regressing by playing helpless ("I really want to be there for you right now, but I just can’t").

Avoiding critical information includes physically steering clear of the critic, repressing critical information by mentally blocking it out, being apathetic by pretending not to care about the critical information, or displacing by venting hostile feelings on objects or people who are less threatening than the critic (like punching a wall, kicking the dog, or yelling at a child).

Our defensive reaction may prompt defensiveness on the part of our partner, creating a defensive spiral. Therefore, it is important to use interpersonal communication to promote relational climates that are supportive, rather than defensive. In the Communication Age, the virtual spaces we inhabit also have relational climates. Many online communities seek to encourage positive relational climates by discouraging practices like flaming (making personal insults and attacks), trolling (intentionally creating drama), and spamming (posting irrelevant information or the same comment repeatedly).

Cultural Influences on Relationships

Although relationships form their own unique cultures, they are also influenced by the larger cultures around them. No relationship exists in a vacuum. Both partners will contribute their own religions, nationalities, ethnicities, generational qualities, beliefs, and values to the union, and these features will shape the course of the relationship. Wherever there are cultural differences, there is also potential for conflict, and each partner must be aware of how his or her own cultural attributes add to this possibility.

External Influences

In addition to cultural influences within the relationship, cultural influences outside of the relationship are also present. In some areas of the United States, it is commonplace for two men to walk down a crowded city street holding hands and publicly showing affection, but in other areas those actions are rarely seen. Relational partners should be conscious of external pressures on the relationship. How does your neighborhood, your
Communication How-To

Improve Relationships with Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATIONAL CLIMATE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defensive Climate</td>
<td>Supportive Climate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Instead of this...</em></td>
<td><em>Try this...</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judging another’s actions</td>
<td>Describing another’s actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certainty</td>
<td>Provisionalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing sureness that your opinion is the only correct one</td>
<td>Being open to the possibility of alternative interpretations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control orientation</td>
<td>Problem orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempting to control the situation</td>
<td>Working together to solve the problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutrality</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearing detached, withdrawn, indifferent</td>
<td>Identifying with another’s emotions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superiority</td>
<td>Equality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treating your own opinion as better</td>
<td>Treating another’s opinion as important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Spontaneity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulating, pursuing hidden agendas, and being inauthentic</td>
<td>Being straightforward, honest, and direct</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

job, or your place of worship view your relationship? Are cultural expectations affecting how the two of you communicate? As you learned in Chapter 6, communication and culture are interlinked, meaning that you cannot separate one from the other. Because we bring our own cultures, and the influences of the cultures around us, into every relationship, awareness of how those influences affect our relationships is crucial.

Interpersonal Communication and Convergence

In 2014, the Pew Research Center examined the Internet and social media habits of couples who were either partnered or married. The results demonstrated that couples who have been together less than 10 years differ in their
### INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Here are some statements about how people interact with other people. For each statement, circle the response that best reflects your communication with others. Be honest in your responses and reflect on your communication behavior carefully.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>ALMOST NEVER</th>
<th>SELDOM</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>ALMOST ALWAYS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I allow friends to see who I really am.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I can put myself in others’ shoes.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am comfortable in social situations.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. When I have been wronged, I confront the person who wronged me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I let others know that I understand what they say.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My conversations are characterized by smooth shifts from one topic to the next.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My friends can tell when I’m happy or sad.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My communication is usually descriptive, not evaluative.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My friends truly believe that I care about them.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I accomplish my communication goals.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL**

Add your responses for all 10 items. Scores may range from a low of 10 (low interpersonal communication competence) to a high of 50 (high interpersonal communication competence).

As you can see from the statements, interpersonal communication competence involves mastering the skills associated with self-disclosure, empathy, social relaxation, assertiveness, interest in others, interaction management, expressiveness, supportiveness, approachability, and control of your environment.

Reflect on each item that you scored as a 1 (almost never), 2 (seldom), or 3 (sometimes). Can you see how improving that behavior might enrich your interpersonal communication? Are there ways in which you can apply the content of this chapter to help you incorporate that behavior more often?

technology use patterns compared to couples who have been together longer. Newer couples were more likely to have used an online dating service, while longer-term committed couples were more likely to share social media profiles or e-mail addresses. Younger adults reported that technology makes them feel closer to their partners but at the same time indicated that technology has created tension in their relationships.

Despite some differences in use, most couples will navigate a complex and intricate blend of face-to-face and mediated communication to maintain their relationships. In fact, recent research suggests that the closer the relationship between two people, the more “means of communication” (e.g., face to face, voice calls, text, social network sites) they tend to use for interacting with one another. This phenomenon is called media multiplexity (Haythornthwaite, 2005).

It is important to consider the potential positive and negative impacts of the Internet on interpersonal communication. Respondents in another Pew study focused on three major advantages the Internet brings to interpersonal communication (2010):

1. Online tools offer “low-friction” opportunities to build, strengthen, and rediscover relationships that make a difference in people’s lives.
2. The Internet dissolves traditional barriers to communication, including time, physical distance, and cost.
3. Online activity brings people together by creating a climate of openness and sharing.

Yet many of the survey takers also pointed out that the Internet is both a blessing and a curse to relationships. Consider the following opinions:

- The Internet gives new ways to meet—and exploit—human needs.
- Two opposing forces are at play: cocooning and connecting. Cocooners only talk to their in-groups and get little exposure to the outside world. Connectors listen widely and are heard widely.
- The Internet presents a paradox for relationships. It strengthens our relationships with distant friends and relations, but may eat away time from our relationships with the people right next to us.

What do you believe are the major advantages and disadvantages of the Internet for your interpersonal relationships? Can you identify people who seem to use the Internet for connecting versus cocooning? Are there ways in which you use the Internet both to isolate or withdraw from interpersonal interaction and to engage in interpersonal interaction? Which of the points about the role of the Internet in social life do you most worry about, and why?
Identify the features that influence the formation of interpersonal relationships.

The factors that influence the development of an interpersonal relationship include proximity (the real or virtual distance between people), physical attraction, social attraction, and costs and rewards. We are most attracted to others who are similar to us and who reciprocate our liking.

Explain the models of relationship formation.

Developmental perspectives on relationships explain how people form and progress interpersonal relationships by moving through a series of stages. According to the Social Penetration Theory, relationships develop as we gradually offer deeper and deeper self-disclosures. The Model of Interaction Stages details five stages of coming together and five stages of coming apart.

Discuss individual interpretations of relationship development.

Our cognitions, or thoughts, about relationships are central to the perception of relationship progress. We use imagined trajectories, or understandings of the various paths relationships can take and the outcomes of those paths, to evaluate relationships. In addition, we make sense of relationships with others through turning points, or perceptions of events that transform relationships.

Describe the ways in which interpersonal communication shapes relational culture.

Relational culture is shaped by dialectical tensions, or opposing but interdependent needs and values. The way in which partners manage dialectical tensions forms the culture of their relationship. Relational culture is also formed and expressed through symbolic practices.
Examine the ways in which communication technologies and new media influence interpersonal interaction.

In the Communication Age, interpersonal communication increasingly involves a blend of face-to-face and computer-mediated communication. Communication technologies may influence the likelihood of relationship formation, the ways in which communication creates relationships, and the relational culture and climate generated by interpersonal communication.

**KEY TERMS**

Review key terms with eFlashcards. edge.sagepub.com/edwards2e

- Autonomy and connectedness 166
- Confirming communication 169
- Defensive communication 170
- Disconfirming communication 169
- Halo effect 154
- Horns effect 154
- Hyperpersonal communication 162
- Imagined trajectories 163
- Interpersonal communication 152
- Matching hypothesis 166
- Media multiplexity 175
- Model of Interaction Stages 159
- Networking 155
- Novelty and predictability 166
- Openness and closedness 166
- Physical attraction 153
- Proximity 153
- Relational culture 165
- Relational dialectics theory (RDT) 165
- Self-disclosure 157
- Social attractiveness 155
- Social Penetration Theory 157
- Turning points 164

**REFLECT**

1. Consider one of your closest interpersonal relationships. What part did each factor of forming relationships (proximity, attractiveness, similarity, matching, reciprocity) play in bringing you and your partner together? Which factor do you consider most important to the formation of that relationship?

2. Self-disclosure plays a powerful role in the development of interpersonal relationships. Can you recall receiving a self-disclosure that you felt was inappropriate or uncomfortable? Exactly what was it about the communication channel, topic, timing, or source of the self-disclosure that made the interaction awkward?

3. With relational dialectics theory in mind, consider one of your friendships. Try to identify one dialectical tension that is present (autonomy and connectedness, novelty and predictability, openness and closedness). What situation gave rise to that tension? Which strategy did you employ to manage it?
CHAPTER 07

REVIEW

To check your answers go to edge.sagepub.com/edwards2e

1. What is interpersonal communication?
2. Define media multiplexity.
3. The tendency to allow perceptions of one positive trait to increase perceptions of other positive traits is called the ________ effect.
4. According to the ________ hypothesis, people tend to form relationships with others who are similarly attractive.
5. What theory shows how self-disclosures influence the intimacy of a relationship?
6. List, in order, the 10 stages in the Model of Interaction Stages.
7. __________ communication refers to situations in which the affection, emotion, and intimacy developed in computer-mediated contexts equals or surpasses that developed in face-to-face contexts.
8. __________ theory proposes that tensions based on partners’ contradictory needs and values create the communication patterns in their relationship.
9. Messages that make another person feel valued and respected are ____________, whereas messages that make another feel devalued and disrespected are ____________.