

## Contexts of Communication

Humans communicate with each other across time, space, and contexts. Those contexts are often thought of as the particular combinations of people comprising a communication situation. For example, theories of [interpersonal communication](#) address the communication between dyads (two people). [Group communication](#) deals with groups, [organizational communication](#) addresses organizations, [mass communication](#) encompasses messages broadcast, usually electronically, to mass audiences, [intercultural communication](#) looks at communication among people of different cultures, and [gender communication](#) focuses on communication issues of women and between the sexes. Newer contexts include health communication and computer-mediated communication.

Contexts of communication are best thought of as a way to focus on certain communication processes and effects. Communication context boundaries are fluid. Thus, we can see interpersonal and group communication in organizations. Gender communication occurs whenever people of different sexes communicate. We can have mass communications to individuals, group, and organizations.

Using communication contexts as a means to help us study communication helps us out of problems some people associate with the intrapersonal context (some say the "so-called" intrapersonal context). Some people facetiously say intrapersonal communication exists when someone talks to themselves. It's more accurate to define intrapersonal communication as thinking. While thinking normally falls within the purview of psychology we can recognize that we often think, plan, contemplate, and strategize about communication past, present, and future. It is legitimate to study the cognitive aspects of communication processes. So, even if some people call those cognitive aspects of communication thinking, it can be helpful to allow the context of intrapersonal communication to exist, thereby legitimating an avenue of communication research.

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This page serves as a gateway to summaries of the communication theories you should understand after taking Professor Chadwick's COMM 321 course, or before taking his COMM 430/530 course at Oregon State University. More theories are discussed in each of those courses, but the summarized theories present an overview of the contexts and introduce concepts and issues relevant to many other communication theories. Each page linked to below contains a summary of a theory and citations to related works.

### Theories related to how humans create meaning:

- [Coordinated Management of Meaning](#)
- [I. A. Richards on Meaning](#)
- [Signs](#)
- [Symbolic Interactionism](#)

### Theories related to interpersonal communication:

- [Attribution Theory](#)
- [Constructivism](#)
- [Elaboration Likelihood Model](#)
- [Social Judgment Theory](#)
- [Social Penetration Theory](#)

- [Uncertainty Reduction](#)

### **Group Communication:**

- [Groupthink](#)

### **Organizational Communication:**

- [Karl Weick on Organizing](#)

### **Gender Communication:**

- [Muted Group Theory](#)

### **Intercultural Communication:**

- [Issues of Face](#)

### **Mass Communication:**

- [Cultivation Theory](#)
- [Spiral of Silence](#)

### **For detailed information read:**

Casmir, F. L. (Ed.). (1994). *Building communication theories: A socio/cultural approach*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Dahnke, G. L., & Clatterbuck, G. W. (1990). *Human communication: Theory and research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Griffin, E. (1994). *A first look at communication theory (2nd ed.)*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Heath, R. L., & Bryant, J. (1992). *Human communication theory and research: Concepts, contexts, & challenges*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Littlejohn, S. W. (1996). *Theories of human communication (5th ed.)*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Trenholm, S. (1991). *Human communication theory (2nd ed.)*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

[Back to comm theory page.](#)