Lets Communicate An Illustrated Guide to Human Communication 1st edition Fraleigh Solutions Manual

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Chapter 2
Perceiving Others, Perceiving Ourselves

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- Understand that our communication with others is based on our perceptions, which are formed either through conscious thinking or through instant mental associations and therefore may not always be accurate.
- Analyze our perceptions of ourselves—our self-concepts—and the ways that they are influenced by the feedback we receive from others and sociocultural influences.
- Explore ways of improving our self-concepts and managing our identity, both in face-to-face communication and in online settings, while remaining ethical and accurate in what we present to others.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

- The opening scene of the chapter offers a scenario where a basketball prospect name Shoshana is interested in team tryouts at her university. When she arrives at the basketball table at the university club resource event, Shoshana is not greeted warmly by the coach of the club team. Shoshana is disheartened by the coach's demeanor and skips the tryouts.
- Shoshana did not realize that the coach had other things going on in her life that prevented her from giving Shoshana her full, undivided attention. Too often, we rush to make judgments without having the full context of a particular situation. How we perceive ourselves and how we perceive others directly affect our communication. Chapter 2 offers ways to improve perceptions, thus helping us to become better communicators.

PERCEIVING OTHERS

- The ability to perceive others correctly is important because this perception creates your view of reality.
- People who are able to read others accurately are able to employ better social skills, form closer relationships, and generally navigate life more smoothly.
- **The Meaning of Perception**
    - **Perception** is the process by which we come to understand the stimuli in our world.
    - **Stimuli** include any **sensory information**—the information we receive through our senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.
    - **Person perception** is the process of making judgments about others.
    - We make **inferences** from the sensory information we have. This means that we use that sensory information to make further educated guesses about a person.
- **The Role of Perception in Communication**
    - **Making the right communication choices**
        - Our perceptions help us decide whether or not to interact with another person.
        - These assessments also influence the choices we make when deciding how to communicate.

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- **Making a good impression**
  - Your communication behaviors influence others' perceptions of you.
- **Deepening and strengthening our interactions**
  - Perception is a two-way process.

- **The Formation of Perceptions**
  - Perceptions are formed both consciously and unconsciously.
  - **Receiving stimuli**
    - To some extent, the stimuli that we respond to depend on our needs, experiences, and attitudes.
    - We are taking in only a limited amount of information when we perceive others, so we might miss some meaningful information.
  - **Using mental associations (schemas) to make sense of stimuli**
    - After the mind perceives stimuli pertaining to a person, we use **mental associations (schemas)** to form an idea about a person's attributes, his or her possible behaviors, and the meaning of his or her communicative behaviors.
    - Experiencing certain stimuli triggers responses based on information stored in our minds.
    - Mental associations are dynamic and not fixed, meaning they can change as you encounter new information.
  - **Sources of mental associations**
    - Life experiences
    - Information people give you about a category of persons can influence the associations you make.
    - Media
    - Culture

BARRIERS TO PERCEPTION AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

- **Why Are Perceptions Often Inaccurate?**
  - **First impressions**
    - People may "freeze" on their first impressions and resist further cues that contradict it.
  - **Stereotypes** are inferences that people draw about others simply because they're part of a given social category.
  - **Fooled by appearances**
    - Some evidence suggests that people can judge personality traits such as "extraversion, emotional stability, openness, self-esteem, and religiosity" based on appearance alone "with some degree of accuracy."
  - **She reminds me of Aunt Minnie (transference).**
    - **Transference** occurs when your mind triggers additional inferences about the new person, based on their shared traits.
  - **Giving ourselves the benefit of the doubt**
    - **Self-serving bias** occurs when we attribute our successes to our own favorable personality traits rather than circumstances.
    - **Fundamental attribution error** takes place when you overestimate the effects of others' personal traits and play down the role of circumstances.

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- **Improving the Accuracy of Perceptions**
  - **Recognize that perceptions are fallible.**
    - During the process of *correction*, we consider the input we've taken in and apply logic to make a reasoned judgment about others' behavior.
    - When making judgments about others, keep in mind that our impressions may be inaccurate.
  - **Seek additional data.**
    - First impressions can be misleading, but you can strengthen them by looking for additional information.
    - When people have negative first impressions, they tend to limit further communication.
    - Ask questions that allow you to gain a better understanding of a person's traits.
  - **Differentiate facts and inferences.**
    - **Facts** are statements for which there is enough proof to convince almost any reasonable and objective person that they are true.
    - Inferences make a mental leap, going beyond the details you have noted and making an educated (or not so educated) guess about what they mean.
  - **Check perceptions**
    - **Perception checking** is a conscious, three-step process that allows you to ask other people about their intentions in a nonthreatening way:
      - Describe the behavior that you observed.
      - Offer at least two possible interpretations for that behavior.
      - Ask the other person to explain what he or she meant by the behavior.

PERCEIVING OURSELVES

- Each of us has a **self**, our own personal construction of who we are. Only you know the whole picture of how you see yourself.
- **The Nature of Your Self Concept**
  - Your **self-concept** reflects "our attempt to explain ourselves to ourselves" and includes abilities, accomplishments, personality, preferences, and characteristics.
  - The self-concept also includes an **extended self** that focuses on your perceptions of yourself as a participant in a relationship (such as sister, son, or friend) or as a part of a group (such as African Americans or Christians).
  - **Attributes of self-concepts**
    - Unique
    - Dynamic. It can change over time.
    - Relatively stable
    - Variable salience. The *salience* of self-concept attributes varies from person to person. This means that these attributes do not have equal importance when you consider your self-concept.
  - **Self-concept and self-esteem**
    - Your self-concept includes both a *descriptive* dimension and an *evaluative* dimension.
    - **Self-esteem** is your evaluation of the person you visualize when you describe yourself.

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        - Your **global self-esteem** reflects your overall self-evaluation.
        - Your **domain-specific self-esteem** reflects your self-assessment on a specific trait, such as honesty, fitness, or test-taking.
- **Sources of Self-Concepts**
    - **Reflected appraisals:** The feedback that we receive about ourselves from others ("looking-glass self").
        - Sources of reflected appraisals include parents, peers, and siblings.
        - We may focus on the feedback received from members of **in-group(s)**—social groups we feel affiliated with and respect.
        - We're more likely to reject negative statements from an **out-group(s)** that we don't feel a part of.
    - **Sociocultural contexts**
        - From an early age, members of your culture communicate "culturally important beliefs, values, and preferences."
        - Despite increasing acceptance of more egalitarian gender roles in society, conventional expectations still hold some influence on self-concepts.
- **Improving Your Self-Concept**
    - **Positive self-talk**
        - **Self-talk** is essentially talking to yourself. Positive self-talk builds you up. It can increase your self-confidence and improve your ability to succeed.
        - **Self-fulfilling prophecy** occurs when you expect a particular outcome to occur, which causes you to behave in a way that makes the outcome more likely.
    - **Personal growth** refers to the process of strengthening your self-awareness and trying to live a life consistent with your values and capabilities.
    - **Reappraisal** occurs when you change your interpretation of something that happened in your life.
    - **Support networks**
        - Friendships provide an important source of support.
        - The types of friends who have your best interests at heart can help you feel good about yourself.

IDENTITY MANAGEMENT

- Everyone has both a private and public self.
    - Your **private self** is known only to you. Nobody else truly knows the whole picture of how you see yourself.
    - Your **public self** represents the self that you portray to other people.
    - **Identity management** or **impression management** is the process by which people "present information about themselves in order to appear as they wish others to perceive them."
- **How We Engage in Identity Management**
    - We regularly apply identity management when interacting with others, although our message and strategy change, depending on the situation.
    - People are likely to try to manage impressions of themselves when the stakes are high.
    - Most people have a limited number of personas that they use when presenting themselves to others.

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- **Self-disclosure** is the intentional revelation of important information about ourselves that others are not likely to know.
- **Emotional intelligence** is the ability to understand one's own and others' emotions.

- **Objectives of Identity Management**
  - There are a number of goals that we may try to achieve through identity management, and they typically are accomplished through different communication strategies:
    - **Ingratiation** is used when a person hopes to be liked.
    - **Self-promotion** is employed to make an individual appear capable.
    - **Exemplification** is applied to show that the person has a high moral character.
    - **Supplication** is exercised when an individual wishes to demonstrate helpless or dependence on others.
    - **Intimidation** is used when a person tries to convince others that he or she is dangerous by using threats or other statements that cause discomfort.
- **Ethics and Identity Management**
  - Unless those who interact with us are willing to listen to the whole story of our lives, we cannot reveal our entire self-concept.
  - Picking and choosing which elements of ourselves we will reveal is inevitable.
  - Truth telling is an important societal norm.
- **Online Identity Management**
  - Social media provide us with new and unprecedented opportunities for identity management.
  - Self-presentation in the online world offers a unique opportunity for us to consider how we like to present ourselves and which parts of us to share.
  - It also comes with some ethical challenges in the online dating world and in the employment sector.

LIST OF KEY TERMS

perception
stimuli
sensory information
person perception
inferences
mental associations (schemas)
stereotype
transference
self-serving bias
fundamental attribution error
facts
perception checking
self
self-concept
extended self
self-esteem
global self-esteem
domain-specific self-esteem
reflected appraisals

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in-group
out-group
self-talk
self-fulfilling prophecy
personal growth
reappraisal
private self
public self
identity (or impression) management
self-disclosure
emotional intelligence
ingratiation
self-promotion
exemplification
supplication
intimidation

CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some stereotypes of college students? Can we assume that all of the students in this class fall into those categories? Why or why not? When have you stereotyped other people, and when have you been stereotyped by others? What perception checking could you or the other person have done to check for inaccuracies?

- By engaging in stereotyping, we are taking away the individuality of every person. Everyone has a story, which should be reiterated when discussing this chapter. We tend to see what we want to see. Because there are many stimuli in the environment, we choose the stimuli to which we want to respond. It is impossible to comprehend everything in the environment.

2. What things help shape our perceptions as we go through life? Can our perceptions change over time?

- Family, friends, culture, media, and personal experiences all influence our perceptions. Yes, perceptions can change over time. People will adopt a change in beliefs and attitudes as they are exposed to new and different stimuli.

3. What are some ways you can improve your self-concept? What are some specific ways you can strengthen your self-awareness?

- Key ideas you are looking for here are engaging in positive self-talk, strengthening self-awareness, engaging in reappraisal (changing interpretation of something that has happened in your life), and having a good support network.
- How you talk to yourself directly influences how you communicate with others. Also, taking a more positive approach to understanding why a certain event occurred in your life can improve self-concept.

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4. Have you ever had a conversation with someone and started replaying the conversation in your head as soon as it was over? What was the context of the conversation, and with whom were you speaking? Why do we sometimes replay conversations in our heads after they have occurred?

- Ultimately, this situation boils down to perception. We care what people think of us (depending on the person's status or our relationship with a certain individual, we tend to be affected more by those who mean more to us), and we try to manage our identities accordingly.
- There are essentially six people in every conversation—how I see myself, how you see yourself, how I see you, how you see me, how I think you see me, and how you think I see you. All of these factors influence how we communicate with others.

5. How do you alter your communication behaviors when you have a favorable opinion of someone? Conversely, how do you alter your communication behaviors when you have an unfavorable opinion of someone? What are some strategies you can use to become a better communicator with both types of people?

- No matter how hard we try, we are going to go through life and discover that not everyone likes us. Perhaps this happens because one person has a false perception of another person. Whatever the case, students need to understand how to break down some barriers by engaging in some perception checking.
- If students are unfamiliar with the process of checking perceptions, reiterate the process, and offer a few personal examples to which students can relate.

6. How can your network of friends influence others' perceptions of you? Provide an example of when you judged someone based on their friends. Explain the importance of surrounding yourself with a supportive network of friends.

- Whether or not we like it, we are judged based on our "inner circles." For example, if students are part of a club or an organization that is admired for its community service projects, they are tied to that perception. If students are part of an organization that is seen in an unfavorable light because of several student judicial infractions, they are also tied to that perception.
- By getting involved with positive influences, students will find more opportunities to help themselves grow personally and professionally.

APPLY YOUR SKILLS

APPLY YOUR SKILLS FROM CHAPTER 2

1. Look at the "Apply Your Skills" activity on page 65 in the text. After students complete the activity, have them answer the following questions, either in small groups, in a class discussion, or in writing:

- Conversely, do you believe someone's perception of you has changed over time? If so, in what ways?

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- What are three ways that people alter their online identity to change others' perceptions of them? Do you think most people are truthful in an online environment, or do most inflate the truth? Provide reasons to support your thoughts.
- Speaking in terms of identity management, in what contexts might you engage in ingratiation, self-promotion, exemplification, supplication, and intimidation?

MORE "APPLY YOUR SKILLS" IDEAS

1. Go to the illustration "Perception" on page 33 in the text. Note that perceptions of each individual in the illustration are based on appearance. For each individual shown, identify the specific physical characteristics that would lead to the assumptions of their personalities as given. Now look at the "Reality" illustration on page 34 in the text to determine that perceptions aren't always correct.

2. Go to the illustration "Pizza …" on page 37 in the text, and identify why the individual does not notice the monster in the picture. Along the same lines, identify what channels and types of television you view. Explain why you select them. Is it possible to view every single channel at one time, and would you want to do that? Why or why not?

3. Go to the illustration "The Sound of Laughter" on page 38 in the text, and notice that our brains do not retrieve information from a filing cabinet when introduced to stimuli in our environment. Instead, stimuli trigger different associations that we already have experienced in our lives. What are 10 things that come to mind that are associated with the word *laughter*? Will this list be the same forever, or will it change over time?

4. Go to the illustration "The Power of Ubuntu" on page 54 in the text. After apartheid ended in South Africa, the principle of ubuntu—the bond that connects all living things—was incorporated into the new national anthem. Ubuntu was culturally engrained in the speakers of the Bantu languages in Africa. What is significant about the five different languages shown in the national anthem as it relates to ubuntu?

5. Go to the illustration "Who Has Higher Emotional Intelligence?" on page 59 in the text. Read the captions between the two individuals, and determine which one has the higher emotional intelligence. What are your reasons?

6. Go to the illustration "Identity Management: Ethics" on page 61 in the text. How many lies can you identify in John Smith's online dating profile? Why might an individual not tell the whole truth in an online environment? What are the ramifications of not being truthful in an online environment?

PERSONAL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Reflected appraisal: Have students think of a time when someone gave them positive feedback. What was that scenario, who provided the feedback, and how did the feedback affect the student's self-perception? Conversely, have them think of a time when they received negative feedback. What was that scenario, who provided the feedback, and how did the feedback affect the student's self-perception? How did each instance affect the student's self-esteem?

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2. Stereotyping: Have students think of a time when they have stereotyped other people. What was the context of the situation? Have them describe how their perceptions may have been formed, and have them discuss why stereotyping is not an effective method for learning who someone is.

3. Identity management: Have students reflect on their relationships with their friends, significant others, family members, coworkers, and teachers. How do they manage their identity in each of these relationships? Do they alter their communication behaviors? If so, how?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. Self-concept: Have students take out of piece of paper and a writing utensil and list eight to 10 characteristics that describe who they believe they are as a person (include demographics, personality, etc.). Ask them to form groups of four and share those attributes with the others in their group. Then they should identify the four attributes of their self-concept, pick one of the four concepts, and teach it to the rest of the members of the group. If a group has only three in it, have one person select two attributes to explain. Using the list of attributes, decide which ones are unique, which ones are dynamic, which ones are relatively stable, and which ones are salient.

2. Because first impressions aren't always correct, it is important to engage in some perception checking. Have students think of a time when they could have misunderstood the behavior of someone else (such as a peer in a group project, a significant other, or a coworker). Have them write out the three-step process that could have been taken to better understand the situation. Have them describe the behavior that was observed and then offer at least two possible interpretations of that behavior.

3. Have students form pairs and ask take out their smartphones. Have them pull up one of their social media accounts. If they feel comfortable (some may not or may not have a social media account), have them swap phones with their partner and scroll through their photos and comments. In a constructive manner, students should tell one another what their perceptions are based on what they see online. What messages are they are sending to their followers? Is that perception appropriate for future employers to see?

4. Self-concept: Bring in markers, glue, scissors, a variety of magazines, and construction paper. (Bring enough supplies to meet the needs of the class.) Distribute the supplies, and give students 20 minutes to create a name tag that represents them. They can make their nametags as big or as little as they like. Use the remainder of class time to have them share how the nametag represents who they are.

5. Perception checking: Use an image of a person whose background you are familiar with, and ask students to make inferences about the person based on what they see. A good image to use is one of Dr. David Ores, a physician whose arms are covered in tattoos (and ironically is in the business of removing tattoos for other people). After you display an image, ask students the following questions: How old is this person? What is this person's profession? What is his or her income level? What is his or her personality like? What physical characteristics lead to such inferences? Don't disclose the background of the person whose photo you have shared until after all questions and inferences have been answered. If you use a photo of Dr. David Ores, you can now put up his picture wearing a lab coat and discuss how students' perceptions may have changed.

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ADDITIONAL MEDIA RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES

1. Search for and watch the video "Labels Are for Cans, Not for People" (2015), a marketing campaign by Coca Cola.

2. Search for and watch the video "Dove Real Beauty Sketches" (2013), and relate that to your perception of self. When you wake up in the morning and look in the mirror, what goes through your mind? Do you focus on the negative, or do you engage in positive self-talk? How does that self-talk influence how you communicate with yourself and with others?

3. Listen to the Meghan Trainor song "Close Your Eyes" from her *Title* album (2015), and pay attention to the lyrics. What lessons about self-esteem can you take away from this song?

4. Listen to Brad Paisley's song "Online" from his *5th Gear* album (2007). Why might people choose to inflate the truth on their online dating profiles? What are the ramifications of doing so, or are there any?

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Create Your Own Word Cloud (Self-Concept)

Creating your own world cloud is a great exercise for helping you become more aware of your self-concept. Several websites are available for creating a word cloud, but one site that is particularly user-friendly is tagul. Some quick instructions are provided below along with a sample word cloud of the author of this *Instructor's Manual*.

1. Go to https://tagul.com.
2. Sign up for an account with a username and password.
3. Log in.
4. Select Get Started.
5. Select Create New Word Cloud.
6. Add at least 10 words that describe yourself.
7. Select your favorite colors, fonts, and a shape of cloud that tells more about who you are.



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