

3



# LANGUAGE &



## WHAT'S TO COME

- 67 | What Is Language?
- 73 | Definitions
- 77 | Evaluating Definitions
- 80 | Communication Styles
- 86 | The Use of Language to Manipulate
- 94 | Critical Thinking Issue: Perspectives on Free-Speech Zones on College Campuses

**O**n February 1, 2003, the space shuttle *Columbia* broke up as it reentered Earth's atmosphere. All seven members of its crew perished. In their investigation, the Columbia Accident Investigation Board concluded that poor communication among the NASA staff members was the main contributing factor in the disaster. Miscommunication kept engineers from getting photos of the space shuttle while it was in orbit—photos that might have alerted the crew to a potential danger that they could fix. Astronaut Sally Ride, who was a member of the investigation board, said it appeared that “one group was saying, ‘Let’s wait until the analysis is complete to see whether we need photos,’ and then that was interpreted as ‘There will be no photos.’”

# COMMUNICATION

# Think FIRST >>

- What are the primary functions of language?
- Why is important to pay close attention when evaluating and interpreting definitions of words?
- What is a rhetorical device, and how is it used?



... It was a real web of interpersonal [mis]communication." Miscommunication not only cost the lives of seven astronauts but also set the space program back several years.

Good communication skills are an essential component of critical thinking and effective decision making. Effective communication entails not only keeping avenues of communication open but also being clear and accurate in our communication, being careful of how we use words, and being aware of our own and other people's communication styles.

For example, in the Milgram study on obedience (Chapter 1), the men who refused to continue the experiment were able to clearly communicate why they thought the experiment was wrong and why they would not continue giving electric shocks to the study subject. Those who continued to obey the experimenter's orders, in contrast, were unable to articulate their misgivings about the experiment and were often at a loss for words when the experimenter kept insisting that they continue to deliver the shocks.

In this chapter we describe some important aspects of language and explain the relationship between language and critical thinking. In this chapter we will

- Define what we mean by language and discuss its relation to culture
- Learn the different functions of language
- Discuss ways in which language and stereotypes shape our view of the world
- Learn the different types of definitions
- Differentiate between a purely verbal dispute and a genuine disagreement
- Look at communication styles and how sex and culture may influence them
- Examine the role of nonverbal communication
- Look at ways in which language and rhetoric can be used to manipulate people

Finally, we will examine the issue of free-speech zones on campuses and the justification for having rules restricting speech that would normally be protected off campus.

# WHAT IS LANGUAGE?

**Language** is a system of communication that involves a set of arbitrary symbols, whether spoken, written, or nonverbal, as in the case of sign language. Communication without representational or symbolic elements includes the vocalizations of babies to signal a state of discomfort and the purr of a cat to signal contentment.

Human language is profoundly social—we are born into a language. By creating a shared reality among people, language is the primary means of transmitting cultural concepts and traditions.

Although there are 6,800 known languages in the world, according to linguist Noam Chomsky all human languages use the same basic universal grammatical rules or syntax; in other words, we are born with an innate ability to acquire language.<sup>1</sup> These very basic, inborn rules, he claims, allow us to combine words and phrases into unique utterances and to discuss any topic. Not all linguists accept Chomsky’s theory. Geoffrey Sampson believes that it is possible for children to learn a language without these inborn rules.<sup>2</sup> While most languages do seem to share a universal grammar, Sampson maintains that this is based on a sampling error because linguists tend to study more common languages.\* He points out that there are at least a few languages, such as some indigenous Australian and Papuan languages, that do not seem to use universal rules of grammar.

\* For an explanation of sampling error, see Chapter 7, pages 207–208.

# Functions of Language

Language serves many functions; it can be informative, expressive, directive, or ceremonial, to name only four. One basic function of language is the communication of information about ourselves and the world. **Informative language** is either true or false. Examples of this type of language include the following: “Princeton University is located in New Jersey” and “Capital punishment does not deter crime.”

**language** A system of communication that involves a set of arbitrary symbols.

**informative language** Language that is either true or false.

**directive language** Language used to direct or influence actions.

**expressive language** Language that communicates feelings and attitudes.

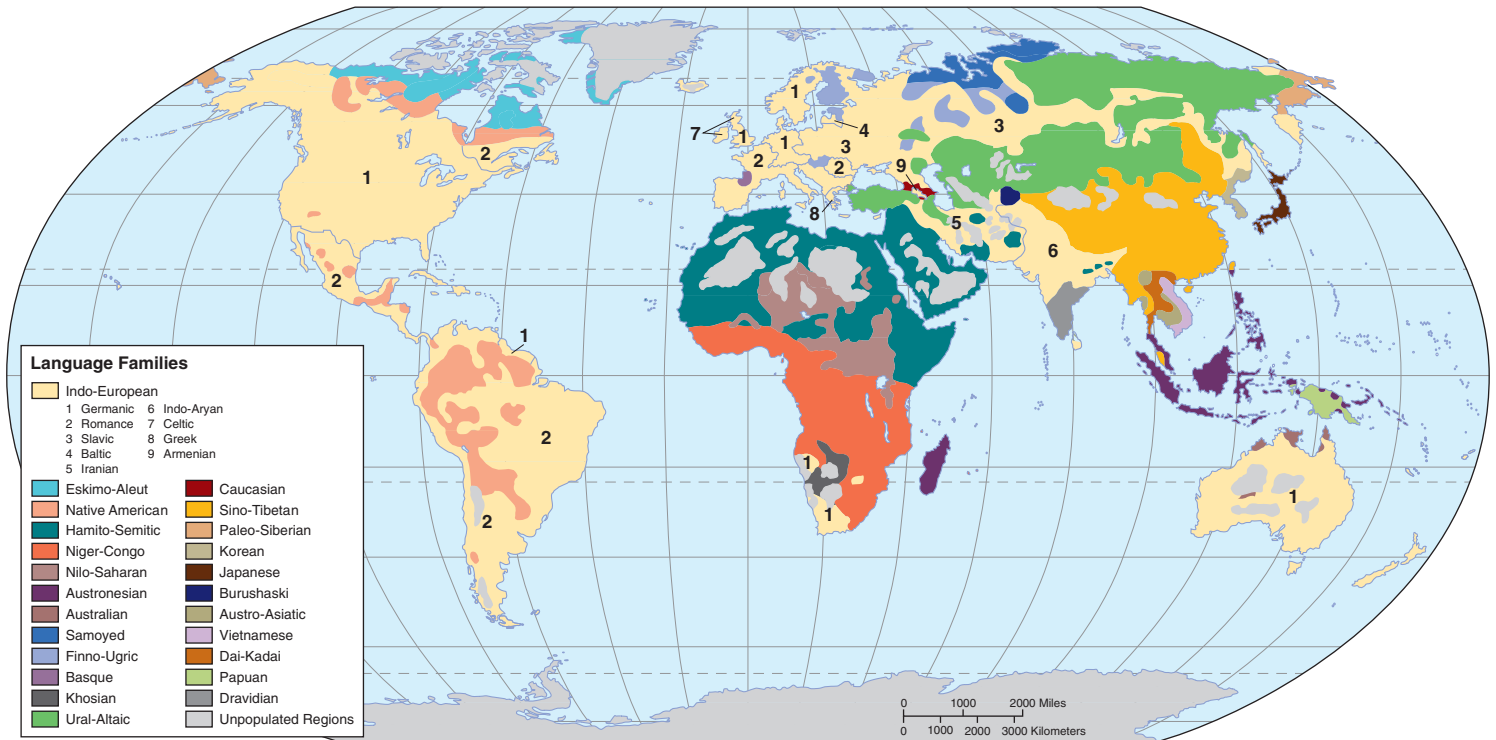
**Directive language** is used to direct or influence actions. The statements “Close the window” and “Please meet me after class” are examples of directive language. Nonverbal language such as a hand gesture can also serve a directive function.

**Expressive language** communicates feelings and attitudes and is used to bring about an emotional impact on the listener. Poetry is for the most part expressive language. Religious worship may also function to express feelings of awe. Expressive language may

## Connections

**How can a sampling error lead to an erroneous conclusion in science?**  
See Chapter 12, p. 393.

# Languages of the World





**Not all language is verbal**—much can be communicated through gesture, expression, and body language.

include **emotive words**, which are used to elicit certain emotions. In an America Online article on toddlers who snatch toys, when it was a boy who snatched the toy, he was labeled “strong willed.” When it was a girl, she was labeled “pushy.” Both terms describe the same action, yet each evokes quite different emotional reactions and thereby reinforces cultural sex stereotypes. We’ll be looking in more depth at emotive language and stereotypes later in this chapter.

**Ceremonial language**, the fourth function of language, is used in prescribed formal circumstances such as the greeting “How are you?” and

**ceremonial language** Language used in particular prescribed formal circumstances.

“I do” in a marriage ceremony and “Amen” after a prayer. Bowing or shaking a person’s hand also serves a ceremonial function in many cultures. While some languages, such as Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, English, Arabic, and Hindi, are widespread, 60 percent of the world’s languages have fewer than 10,000 speakers.<sup>3</sup> Several of these languages have a purely ceremonial function. Some indigenous North American and Australian languages, for example, are used only once a year in rituals and have just a few speakers. These ceremonial languages are fast becoming obsolete as the elders who know the language die off.

Most language serves *multiple functions*. For example, the statement “The final exam is at 3:00 P.M. on May 16” both informs us about the time and date of the exam and directs us

to turn up for the exam. Being able to recognize the function(s) of an utterance will improve our communication skills. After all, we don’t want to be the sort of boorish people who take the ceremonial utterance “How are you?” as a request for detailed information about their health and lives and then end up wondering why people avoid us.

Being able to use language effectively to convey information, provide directions, and express our feelings is essential to collaborative critical thinking and fulfilling our life goals. Astronaut Sally Ride’s exemplary communication skills, for example, contributed to her success as the first American woman in space (see “Thinking Outside the Box: Sally Ride, Astronaut”).

The flexibility of human language and the multiple functions that it serves allows us to generate an almost unlimited number of sentences. Like culture, human language is constantly changing. The English we know bears only minor resemblance to the English used 1,000 years ago. Today, with globalization there is more sharing of words between languages.

The flexibility and open-ended nature of human language, while greatly enriching our ability to communicate ideas and feelings, can also contribute to ambiguity and misunderstanding. For example, when the person who is

---

In a study of junior high and high school students, more than half of the boys surveyed said that when a male took a female out for an expensive dinner, it was understood that she would reciprocate the invitation by having sex with him.

---

talking to you at a party says, “I’ll call you,” it’s not always clear what he or she means. Even apparently simple sentences such as this are dense with meaning. Is it a straightforward informative sentence? Or is there more to it? Is he (or she) asking you for a date? Is he expressing interest in spending more time with you? Or is he merely saying he’ll call to be polite, but not really meaning it? And what if he does call the following day and suggests, “Let’s go out to dinner”? Once again, is he asking you for a date? Is he implying that he is going to pay for the meal, or does he expect you to split the cost or even pay the whole bill? Does he expect something in return for taking you to dinner?

If we don’t first clarify what the other person means or what his or her expectations are, there may be serious and dire consequences. For example, miscommunication

**What should you be aware of when viewing images in advertising and the media? See Chapter 10, p. 325.**

**What procedures do judges use to make it less likely that jurors will be swayed by irrational arguments and preconceptions based on a defendant’s appearance? See Chapter 13, p. 433.**

## Connections

## Outside the Box

### SALLY RIDE, Astronaut

As a child, Sally Ride (1951–) loved to solve problems. Her friends from college describe her as “calm and totally focused . . . always able to see to the heart of things . . . to quickly think, figure it out, crystallize it.”\* An exemplary critical thinker, she is able to clearly articulate and develop strategies to meet her life goals. Realizing the importance of communication skills to achieving her goals, at college she double-majored in English and physics.

Ride was just finishing up her Ph.D. in physics at Stanford University when she saw an announcement in the college newspaper that NASA was looking for a new group of astronauts. She applied that day. She was one of 35 picked for the astronaut class of 1978 out of more than 8,000 applicants. In part because of her outstanding analytical and critical thinking skills, Ride in 1983 became the youngest as well as the first female American astronaut in space. Because of her exemplary communication skills, Ride was chosen to serve as capcom for the first and second shuttle flights—the person on the ground who handles all the ground-to-staff flight communication. She later helped create NASA’s Office of Exploration.

An excellent speaker and writer, she has addressed the United Nations and put together the report for NASA, *Leadership and the American Future in Space*. Ride has also written several children’s books on space exploration. Today she heads Sally Ride Science, which sponsors, among other things, camps that encourage girls’ interest in science and also help them to develop their leadership, writing, and communication skills.



#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Looking back at the characteristics of a good critical thinker listed on page 7 in Chapter 1, discuss ways in which Ride exemplifies these qualities.
2. Has there ever been a time when you missed a great opportunity? Discuss what role, if any, lack of good critical-thinking skills played in this.

\*Carole Ann Camp, *Sally Ride: First American Woman in Space* (Springfield, NJ: Enslow Publishers, 1997), p. 19.

is sometimes a factor in rape. In a study of junior high and high school students, more than half of the boys surveyed said that when a male took a female out for an expensive dinner, it was understood that she would reciprocate the invitation by having sex with him. Nonverbal language in particular may be misinterpreted. In a similar study, most college men said they considered lack of resistance on the part of a woman as consent to sex.<sup>4</sup> Intellectual curiosity and being mindful of how language is being used, two of the critical thinking skills, can make us less susceptible to misunderstandings and manipulation.

### Nonverbal Language

We often look to nonverbal cues, such as body language or tone of voice, when interpreting someone’s communication. Indeed, many jurors make up their mind about a case mainly on the basis of the nonverbal behavior of the defendant.<sup>5</sup> Although some nonverbal communication is universal, such as smiling when happy, raising the eyebrow to signal recognition, and making the “disgust face” to show repulsion, much of it is culturally determined.

We frequently use nonverbal communication to reinforce verbal communication. A nod when we say yes, a hand gesture when we say “over there,” folding our arms across our body when we say “no”—all serve to reinforce our words. Because much of nonverbal communication

occurs at a less conscious level, people tend to pay more attention to it when it conflicts with the verbal message.

Images, such as photos and artwork, can also be used to communicate ideas and feelings. It is said that “a picture conveys a thousand words.” Images not only convey infor-



**ANIMAL LANGUAGE\*** Language seems to be limited to highly social animals and serves to enhance group cohesiveness. Honeybees use symbolic gestures in the form of dances to communicate the direction and distance the other bees must fly to reach food sources or other things of interest. Birds, ground squirrels, and nonhuman primates such as the velvet monkey have different alarm calls that are recognized by other members of their species even when the predator is not present. Male domestic chickens also use language to communicate their food preferences and the presence of female chickens.

Like humans, these animals understand the relationship between the signals they use and the events these signals refer to. They are not simply expressing an emotion or communicating about something that is only in the moment. They are actually using symbolic language to refer to things in the outside world, things that do not need to be immediately present for them to understand what is being communicated.

Many animals—including apes, chimps, dolphins, dogs and parrots—can also understand several words in human languages and respond to commands containing strings of words. The gorilla Coco, for example, has a vocabulary of more than 1,000 human words. The border collie Rico has a vocabulary of more than 200 words.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Humans also use nonverbal communication, such as dance. Come up with examples of ways in which you use nonverbal language such as dance or gestures to communication information.
2. Discuss how barriers to critical thinking such as narrow-mindedness can prevent us from seeing the use of language by other animals as well as keep us from appreciating the richness and diversity of languages of other cultures.

\*For more information on language in nonhuman animals, see Jacques Vaclair, *Animal Cognition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), and Donald R. Griffin, *Animals Minds: Beyond Cognition to Consciousness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001). See also [www.thelowell.org/content/view/1202/28/](http://www.thelowell.org/content/view/1202/28/) for more on primatologist Netzin Gerald-Steklis's work on communication with gorillas.



**NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION AND A DEATH-ROW DECISION** Keeping an accused killer from testifying on the stand does not ensure that jurors won't observe the defendants' nonverbal communication. On December 13, 2004, a California jury recommended the death penalty for Scott Peterson, who was convicted of killing his wife Laci and their unborn son Conner. Although lack of an emotional response is not conclusive evidence of guilt, according to jurors, their decision was swayed by Scott Peterson's lack of emotional responsiveness during the six-month trial and "stony demeanor, even during wrenching testimony about his dead wife and son." Scott was found guilty of murdering his wife and unborn son despite the fact that all the evidence was circumstantial; there was no actual physical evidence directly linking him to the crime.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was your initial reaction upon seeing pictures of Peterson on trial? Do these images change the way you feel about the evidence given in the case?
2. Should jurors be allowed to see a defendant during a trial, or should a law be put in place that sets the defendant out of their view so as to not influence their decision? Support your answer.

mation but also can evoke emotions that may motivate us to take action in ways that words often cannot. At Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, the soldier who blew the whistle did so only after seeing photos of detainees in sexually humiliating positions. "Words can't describe my reaction," said Sgt. Joseph Darby. "I was shocked. I was very disappointed and outraged."<sup>6</sup> The images outraged people throughout the world and led to questions about the morality of the war in Iraq and to the reform of interrogation practices at Abu Ghraib prison.

In summary, we should keep in mind that language is, to a large extent, a cultural construct. Furthermore, because of the different functions and the flexibility of human language, our choice of words and our nonverbal cues can affect how a message is interpreted—or misinterpreted—by other people. As good critical thinkers, we need to be clear in our communication and conscious of how language is being used in a particular instance. We need to be willing to ask people for clarification if we are uncertain about the meaning of their communication.





1. Identify which language function(s)—informative, directive, expressive, ceremonial—are most likely served by each of the following passages. (For additional exercises, go to the *Online Student Workbook* for Chapter 3.)
  - a. The planet Pluto was first observed at the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona.
  - b. Ouch!
  - c. God bless you. (In response to someone sneezing).
  - d. Wow! I'm so happy. My application for a scholarship just got approved.
  - e. "Honor thy mother and thy father."—Deuteronomy
  - f. "A thing of beauty is a joy forever."—John Keats
  - g. "A national debate is raging between women's groups and law-enforcement types stepping in to protect the health of a fetus from a mother who they believe will not, or cannot, look after it."<sup>7</sup>
  - h. You should be careful about what you eat at college. The average college student puts on 15 pounds during his or her freshman year.
  - i. Thank you.
2. Working in small groups, make a list of variations in language used by students at your college who come from different regions of the United States or Canada. Discuss how these variations reflect cultural differences in these regions.
3. Most humans and dogs are able to communicate basic messages or feelings to each other. What kinds of behaviors do you (or someone you know who owns a dog) engage in when you want to express anger, happiness, or playfulness? How does the dog communicate if it wants to eat, go outside, or chase a squirrel?
4. Discuss ways in which the following passages from religious scripture might be interpreted and what role culture plays in these interpretations.
  - a. Passion for gold can never be right; the pursuit of money leads a man astray. (Ecclesiastes 31:5)
  - b. Whosoever kills even one human being, other than for man slaughter or tyranny on earth, it would be as if they had killed all of humankind. (Koran 5:32)
  - c. Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord; for the man is the head of the woman, just as Christ also is the head of the church. (Ephesians 5:22–23)<sup>8</sup>
  - d. The Master said, A young man's duty is to behave well to his parents at home and to his elders abroad, to be cautious in giving promises and punctual in keeping them, to have kindly feelings towards everyone, but seek the intimacy of the Good. (*The Analects of Confucius*, Book I: 6)
5. The borrowing of words from other languages is evident in Spanglish, in which Latin American immigrants and their descendants in the United States use Spanish and English interchangeably, even in the same sentences. Spanglish is heard not only on the streets and in shops but also on some radio and television stations.<sup>9</sup> Some people maintain that Spanglish should not be taught in schools. Others claim it is a legitimate and evolving language. Discuss what you would do if you were a professor and a student wanted to hand in an essay written in Spanglish or used Spanglish in a class.
6. We can rearrange words and phrases into novel sentences, some of which have never before been uttered. Write a five-word sentence. Type the sentence in quotation marks into an Internet search engine such as Google. As of 2008, Google has indexed over one trillion pages on the World Wide Web. Did the search engine find your five-word sentence on any of these pages?<sup>10</sup> Discuss the results of your search.
7. Find an argument in a newspaper or on the Internet that is trying to persuade the reader to adopt a certain point of view, such as an article on why you should get involved in sports or an article on why the education system is failing children. Write a page on how the writer is using language or discourse to achieve this objective.
8. Research the history of a language such as English, Spanish, Japanese, Navaho, or Arabic. Identify and write a short essay on two ways in which the evolution of this language reflects the history of the people and their culture.
9. Theologian Mary Daly writes: "The Biblical and popular image of God as a great patriarch in heaven ... has dominated the imagination of millions over thousands of years. The symbol of the Father God, spawned in the human imagination and sustained as plausible by patriarchy, has in turn rendered service to this type of society by making its mechanisms for the oppression of women appear right and fitting."<sup>11</sup> Discuss Daly's claim that the identification of God as male is oppressive to women. Should we change the language used in religious texts and services to gender-neutral language? Support your position.

## DEFINITIONS

The English language has one of the largest vocabularies in the world—about a quarter of a million different words. This is in part because English has incorporated so many foreign terms. Some of these words in the English language are no longer in use, and some have acquired new meanings over time.

That is why we cannot simply assume that someone else is using a word or phrase as we are. In addition to understanding the history of a term, it's helpful to understand the difference between the denotative and connotative meanings of words, as well as to be familiar with some of the different types of definitions, in order to communicate accurately and clearly.

### Denotative and Connotative Meanings

Words have both denotative and connotative meanings. The **denotative meaning** of a word or phrase expresses the properties of the object, being, or event the word is symbolizing; it is the same as its lexical or dictionary definition. For example, the denotative meaning of the word *dog* is a domesticated member of the family *Canis familiaris*. Any being that has both of these properties (domesticated and a member of the family *Canis familiaris*) is a dog by definition.

The **connotative meaning** of a word or phrase includes feelings and personal thoughts that are elicited on the basis of past experiences and associations. The word *dog* may elicit thoughts of a loyal pet or—at the opposite extreme—something that is worthless or of poor quality, a despicable person, or an ugly person. The connotative meaning(s) of a term may be included in a list of dictionary definitions, or a particular connotative meaning may simply be shared among a specific group of people.

Language is not neutral. It reflects cultural values and influences how we see the world. Language reinforces cultural concepts of what it means to be normal through the use of stereotypes that have certain connotative meanings. In **stereotyping**, rather than seeing people as individuals, we see and label them as members of a particular group. The labels we use shape the way we see ourselves and others. Labels can also stigmatize and isolate people. The label *mentally ill* reinforces our worldview that some illnesses are all in the mind, thus legitimating the withholding of appropriate medical care and health-care benefits from people with this label. Sexist language such as *chick* and *ho* reinforces gender stereotypes and the view



that women are irrational and inferior to men and therefore deserve inferior treatment in the workplace and at home.

### Stipulative Definitions

Most of us probably think of *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* or the *Oxford English Dictionary* when we hear the word *definition*. However, lexical definitions are only one type of definition. Other types include stipulative, precisising, theoretical, and persuasive. A **stipulative definition** is one given to a new term such as *bytes* and *decaf* or to a new combination of old terms such as *skyscraper* and *laptop*. A stipulative definition may also be a new definition of an existing word, such as the addition of “heterosexual” to the definitions of the term *straight*.

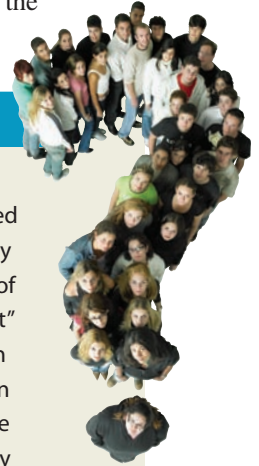
### Connections

How can you be more aware of stereotypes that are sometimes promoted by the news media and advertising? See Chapter 11, p. 348.

### Did You Know

In the U.S. Supreme Court case *Boy Scouts of America v. James Dale* (2000), the scouts argued that banning gay men and boys was necessary to maintain the Boy Scouts' express message of encouraging youths to lead a “morally straight” life. However, this term was first used in

the Boy Scout Oath in 1911, long before the term *straight* had any implications regarding sexual orientation.



**denotative meaning** The meaning of a word or phrase that expresses the properties of the object.

**connotative meaning** The meaning of a word or phrase that is based on past personal experiences or associations.

**stereotyping** Labeling people based on their membership in a group.

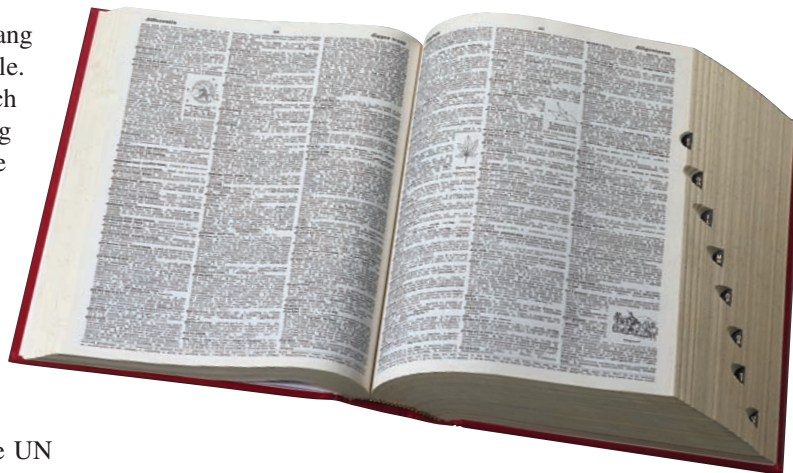
**stipulative definition** A definition given to a new term or a new combination of old terms.

Stipulative definitions often start off as jargon or slang and are initially limited to a particular group of people. Young people may create their own terminology, such as *beer goggles* and *hooking up* as a way of distancing themselves from previous generations. A stipulative definition is neither true nor false—merely more or less useful.

The creation of new terms and stipulative definitions reflects cultural and historical changes. The term *genocide* was introduced in the early 1940s by Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jewish lawyer who had fled Nazi-occupied Europe and settled in the United States. He lobbied the United Nations to adopt a convention against genocide. In 1948, the UN Genocide Convention was adopted, which defined genocide as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.”

The terms *date rape* and *sexual harassment* were coined during the feminist movement in the 1970s to call attention to occurrences that were previously not regarded as noteworthy. The introduction of the terms *pro-life* and *pro-choice* contributed to the public’s conceptualization and the polarization of the abortion issue. Trade names such as Jell-O, Band-Aid, and Kleenex have also become part of our general vocabulary to refer to any of these products in general.

If a stipulative definition becomes commonly accepted, then it will become a lexical or dictionary definition. For example, the term for sneakers among some Chinese is now “Nai-ke,” a term that Nike, which is trying to create a market for its athletic shoes among China’s youth and rising middle class, hopes will catch on and become part of the Chinese vocabulary.



carries a negative connotation. In Canada and England, in contrast, the term *homely* means “comfortable and cozy” or “homey.”

Just as new words are continually emerging, so too can words that were once in common usage become obsolete. Eventually, outdated terms that are no longer useful are dropped from the dictionary. For instance, we no longer use the term *lubitorium* for “service station,” since it is no longer descriptive of the modern self-service stations.

Controlling the definitions of words can be used to create an advantage in discussions of controversial issues. For instance, in 2004 textbooks that defined marriage as “a union between two people” were withdrawn from use in Texas public schools until the definition could be changed to a “a union between a man and a woman,” thus giving control in public discourse to those who oppose same-sex marriage.

## Lexical Definitions

A **lexical definition**, as we noted earlier, is the commonly used dictionary definition or denotative meaning of a term. Unlike a stipulative definition, whose meaning is fluid depending on the circumstances, a lexical definition is either correct or incorrect. Most dictionaries are updated annually. The criterion that dictionary editors use in deciding if a new word or stipulative definition should become part of the dictionary is whether the word is used in enough printed sources.

The two primary purposes of a lexical definition are to increase our vocabulary and to reduce ambiguity. To determine if we are using a lexical definition correctly, we simply consult a dictionary. Of course, some words have several lexical definitions. In these cases we need to clarify which definition we are using. Even within one language, lexical definitions of a word may vary from country to country. *Homely* in the United States usually means “lacking in physical attractiveness; plain” and

**lexical definition** The commonly used dictionary definition.

**precising definition** A definition used to reduce vagueness that goes beyond the ordinary lexical definition.

## Precising Definitions

**Precising definitions** are used to reduce vagueness which occurs when it is not clear exactly what meaning a word or concept encompasses. Precising definitions go beyond the ordinary lexical definition of a term in order to establish the exact limits of the definition. For example, the terms *class participation* or *term paper* in a course syllabus may need to be defined more precisely by the instructor for purposes of grading.

Similarly, ordinary dictionary definitions may be too vague in a court of law. Under what precise circumstances does “date or acquaintance rape” occur? How should *coercion* and *consent* be defined for legal purposes? Did an alleged victim give her consent to have sexual intercourse by not rebuffing his advances, or did the accused use coercion? Should “consent” in these cases, as some argue, require explicit verbal communication between the man and the woman regarding approval to engage in sexual interaction?<sup>12</sup>

Confusion can result if a definition is too vague or lacks precision. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act defines a *learning disability* as a “disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in under-

# Critical Thinking in Action

## Say What?

**New words of the 1970s:** acquaintance rape; bioethics; biofeedback; chairperson; consciousness-raising; couch potato; date rape; disk drive; downsize; Ebonics; focus group; gigabyte; global warming; he/she; high-tech; in vitro fertilization; junk food; learning disability; personal computer; pro-choice; punk rock; sexual harassment; smart bomb; sunblock; VCR; video game; word processor

**New words of the 1980s:** AIDS; alternative medicine; assisted suicide; attention deficit disorder; biodiversity; camcorder; CD-ROM; cell phone; codependent; computer virus; cyberspace; decaf; do-rag; e-mail; gender gap; Internet; laptop; mall rat; managed care; premenstrual syndrome; rap music; safe sex; sport utility vehicle (SUV); telemarketing; televangelist; virtual reality; yuppie

**New words of the 1990s:** artificial life; call waiting; carjacking; chronic fatigue syndrome; dot-com; eating disorder; family leave; hyperlink; nanotechnology; senior moment; spam; strip mall; Web site; World Wide Web.

**New words of the 2000s:** biodiesel, bioweapon; blog; civil union; carbo-loading; counterterrorism; cybercrime; desk jockey; enemy combatant; fanboy; google; hazmat; hoophead; infowar; insourcing; jihadist; labelmate; nanobot; powerhead; sexile; speed dating; spyware; supersize; taikonaut; truthiness; webinar; w00t

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Identify five other words that have been added to the English language since 2000. Discuss what these words tell us about our society and changes since 2000.
2. What are some of the differences between the words used by you and those used by your parents and grandparents? How do these reflect differences in the culture that you were brought up in?

1940s–1990s from *Random House Webster's College Dictionary* (New York: Random House, 2001), pp. xx–xxii.



standing or in using spoken or written language, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations.” However, this definition is so vague that it is difficult to determine whom it covers. Indeed, estimates of the percentage of the population with a learning disability vary widely from 1 percent to 30 percent.<sup>13</sup>

Precising definitions may have to be updated as new discoveries or circumstances demand a more accurate definition.

In 2007, with the discovery of several new bodies orbiting the sun in our solar system, the International Astronom-

ical Union voted to add a new requirement to its definition of *planet*. The new definition required that planets had to not merely orbit the sun and be “nearly round;” they also have to “dominate their gravitational domains.” This more precise definition eliminated Pluto from the pantheon of planets.

**theoretical definitions** A type of precising definition explaining a term's nature.

**Theoretical definitions** are a special class of precising definition used to explain the specific nature of a term. Proposing a theoretical definition is akin to proposing a theory. These definitions are more likely to be found in dictionaries for specialized disciplines, such



What is the role of operational definitions in science? See Chapter 12, p. 379.

Connections

as the sciences. For example, alcoholism is defined, in part, in the *Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary* as “a chronic, progressive and potentially fatal disease. . . . Alcoholism is

an illness and should be so treated.” Unlike a lexical definition, which merely describes the symptoms or effects, this medical definition puts forth a theory regarding the nature of alcoholism—it is a disease, not a moral failing.

**Operational definitions** are another type of precisifying definition. An operational definition is a concise definition of a measure used to provide standardization in data collection and interpretation.

**operational definitions** A definition with a standardized measure for use in data collection and interpretation.

The lexical definition of obese—“very fat or overweight”—is not precise

enough for a medical professional trying to determine if a person’s weight is a health risk or if the person is a candidate for gastric bypass surgery. Instead, the medical profession defines obesity operationally in terms of body mass index, or BMI.

Operational definitions may change over time. For instance, the definition of poverty varies from country to country as well as over time. In the United States the poverty threshold was defined by the U.S. Department of

**HIGHLIGHTS**

**TYPES OF DEFINITIONS**

**Stipulative definition:** A definition given to a new term or a new definition of an existing word.

**Lexical definition:** The commonly used dictionary definition.

**Precising definition:** A more in-depth definition used to reduce vagueness. Precising definitions include (1) **theoretical definitions**, which provide a theory about the nature of something, and (2) **operational definitions**, which involve a concise definition of a measure used to provide standardization in data collection and interpretation.

**Persuasive definition:** Definition used to influence others to accept our point of view.

Health and Human Services in 2008 as \$10,400 for a single individual. In 1982 the poverty threshold was defined as \$4,680 for a single individual.<sup>14</sup>

**Weight in Pounds**

	120	130	140	150	160	170	180	190	200	210	220	230	240	250
4'6"	29	31	34	36	39	41	43	46	48	51	53	56	58	60
4'8"	27	29	31	34	36	38	40	43	45	47	49	52	54	56
4'10"	25	27	29	31	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48	50	52
5'0"	23	25	27	29	31	33	35	37	39	41	43	45	47	49
5'2"	22	24	26	27	29	31	33	35	37	38	40	42	44	46
5'4"	21	22	24	26	28	29	31	33	34	36	38	40	41	43
5'6"	19	21	23	24	26	27	29	31	32	34	36	37	39	40
5'8"	18	20	21	23	24	26	27	29	30	32	34	35	37	38
5'10"	17	19	20	22	23	24	26	27	29	30	32	33	35	36
6'0"	16	18	19	20	22	23	24	26	27	28	30	31	33	34
6'2"	15	17	18	19	21	22	23	24	26	27	28	30	31	32
6'4"	15	16	17	18	20	21	22	23	24	26	27	28	29	30
6'6"	14	15	16	17	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	27	28	29
6'8"	13	14	15	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	28

Underweight   
  Healthy Weight  
 Overweight   
  Obese

**Body Mass Index**

**Persuasive Definitions**

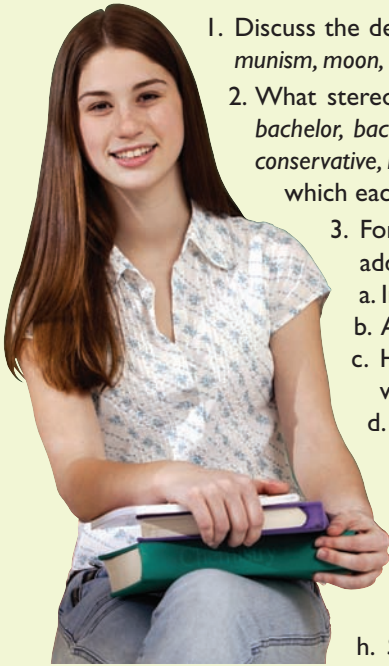
**Persuasive definitions** are used as a means to persuade or influence others to accept our point of view. The definition of *taxation* as a form of theft and of *genetic engineering* as playing God with the human genome are both examples of persuasive definitions. Persuasive definitions often use **emotive language**, such as the negative term *theft* in the first definition.

There is nothing inherently wrong with using persuasive or emotive language. Emotive language in poetry and fiction, for example, is clearly appropriate. However, if our primary intention is to convey information, then it is best to avoid using it. Persuasive definitions, because their primary intention is to influence our attitudes rather than convey

information, can be a problem in critical thinking when they distract us from getting to the truth.

**persuasive definition** A definition used as a means to influence others to accept our view.

**emotive language** Language that is purposely chosen to elicit a certain emotional impact.



1. Discuss the denotative and connotative meanings of each of the following words: *gay, communism, moon, marriage, doormat, easy, mouse, death*.
2. What stereotypes come to mind when you hear the following words: *African American, bachelor, bachelorette, college dropout, computer nerd, frat boy, housewife, illegal alien, liberal, conservative, hockey mom, superstar, Third World country, tomboy, white person*? Discuss ways in which each of these stereotypes conveys cultural values.
3. For each of the following, identify which type of definition is being used. (For additional exercises on definitions, see the *Online Student Workbook*.)
  - a. Intoxication is defined as having a blood alcohol content of .08 percent.
  - b. A *dream* is our unconsciousness acting out and expressing its hidden desires.
  - c. How about adding the following definition for the word *cellblock*: those idiots who always have their cell phones pressed to their heads?
  - d. *Abuse* is the willful infliction of injury, unreasonable confinement, or cruel punishment.
  - e. A *genius* is person with an IQ of 140 or above.
  - f. A *human* is a primate of the genus *homo* that evolved from its *Australopithecine* ancestor in Africa some 1 million to 4 million years ago.
  - g. *Capital punishment* is state-sanctioned murder.
  - h. *Spanglish* is a form of Spanish that includes many English words.
  - i. *Neglect* is defined as “the failure to provide for one’s self the goods or services which are necessary to avoid physical harm, mental anguish, or mental illness, or the failure of a caretaker to provide such goods or services and includes malnourishment and dehydration, over- or undermedication, lack of heat, running water, or electricity; unsanitary living conditions; lack of medical care; and lack of personal hygiene or clothes.”<sup>15</sup>
  - j. *Religion* is the opiate of the masses.
4. Create your own stipulative definition of a term. Introduce your term and definition to the class. Vote on which ones the class thinks are most useful. Looking at the three most useful terms, discuss what might be done to make these become lexical definitions someday.
5. Define *hunger* and *love* using lexical, persuasive, and operational definitions.
6. *Beer goggles*, *catching feelings*, and *hooking up* are all new terms that are currently popular on college campuses. Discuss how the use of these terms reflects how young people think about college life and relationships. Does the use of these new terms affect how you think about college and relationships?
7. How would you answer the Gallup poll question “Do you consider yourself a feminist, or not?” Include a definition of, or list of attributes of, *feminist* as part of your answer. Compare your definition with those used by others in the class. Discuss the extent to which differences in definitions of this key term explain the current polarization on feminism.
8. Collect passages from magazines and newspapers of language used to describe people of different sexes and different racial and ethnic groups. Write a short essay discussing whether these descriptions are important to the story or are more a reflection of stereotyping and reinforcing a particular cultural view. Share your findings with the class.
9. How do the labels you use for yourself influence your self-esteem and your goals? If you want to, share some of your labels, and the impact of these labels on your life plan, with others in the class.

## EVALUATING DEFINITIONS

Clearly defining key terms is an essential component of clear communication and critical thinking. Knowing how to determine if a particular definition is good makes it less likely that we will get caught up in a purely verbal dispute or fallacious reasoning.

### Five Criteria

There are several criteria we can use to evaluate definitions. The following are five of the more important ones:

1. A *good definition is neither too broad nor too narrow*. Definitions that include too much are too broad; those that include too little are too narrow.

For example, the definition of *mother* as a “woman who has given birth to a child” is too narrow. Women who adopt children are also mothers. Similarly, the definition of *war* as “an armed conflict” is too broad because it would include street fights, police action against suspected criminals, and domestic violence. Some definitions are both too broad and too narrow, such as the definition of *penguin* as “a bird that lives in Antarctica.” This definition is too broad because many other species of birds live in Antarctica and too narrow because penguins also live in other regions of the Southern Hemisphere such as South Africa.

2. *A good definition should state the essential attributes of the term being defined.* The definition of a community college as “an institution of higher education, without residential facilities, that is often funded by the government, and is characterized by a two-year curriculum that leads either to an associate degree or transfer to a four-year college”<sup>16</sup> includes the essential characteristics of a community college.
3. *A good definition is not circular.* You should avoid using the term itself, or variations of the term, within the definition, as in “a teacher is a person who teaches,” and “erythropoiesis is the production of erythrocytes.” Since a circular definition gives little or no new information about the meaning of the term, it is understandable only to a person who already knows the definition of the term.
4. *A good definition avoids obscure and figurative language.* Definitions should be clear and understandable. Some definitions are written in such obscure terms that they are understandable only to professionals in the field. The definition of *net* as “anything reticulated or decussated at equal distances with interstices between the intersections”<sup>17</sup> uses obscure language.

Political scientist Arthur Lupia maintains that the disconnect between the hard scientific evidence of human-caused global warming and the public’s failure to address the problem stems in large part from the overuse of obscure and technical language by scientists. Too many scientists use highly technical terms, such as *distribution functions* and *albedos* in defining and explaining global warming to laypeople. Lupia suggests that science should treat effective communication itself as a subject of inquiry.<sup>18</sup>

Figurative language should also be avoided in definitions. “Love is like a red, red rose” may be a moving line in a poem, but it is hardly an adequate definition of love.

5. *A good definition avoids emotive language.* The definitions of a feminist as “a man-hater” and of

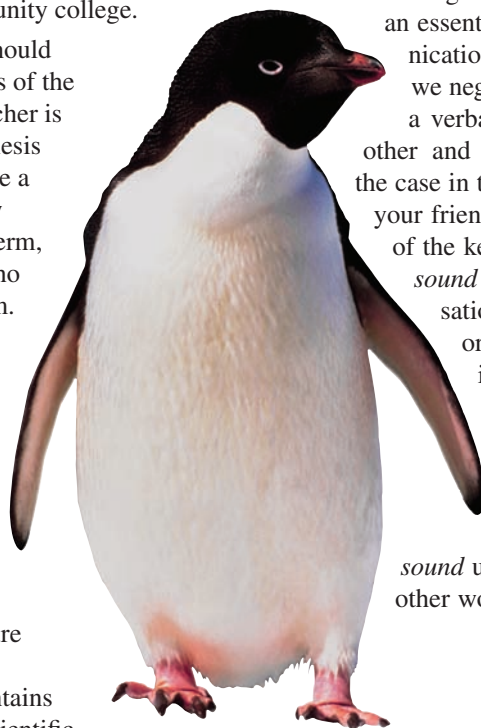
a man as “an oppressor of women” are just two examples of definitions that are geared to inflame emotions rather than stimulate rational discussion of an issue.

Knowing how to evaluate definitions contributes to successful and clear communication.

## Verbal Disputes Based on Ambiguous Definitions

If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound? You argue that it doesn’t; your friend just as adamantly argues that it does. You both end up upset at what appears to be pure obstinacy on the other’s part. But before getting into a full-blown argument, step back and ask yourself if you and your friend are using the same definition for the key term(s).

Defining key terms, as we noted above, is an essential component of clear communication and good critical thinking. If we neglect to do so, we may end up in a verbal dispute as we talk past each other and get increasingly frustrated. In the case in the previous paragraph, you and your friend are using different definitions of the key term *sound*. You are defining *sound* in terms of perception: “the sensation produced by stimulation of organs of hearing.” Your friend, in contrast, is defining *sound* as a physicist would: “mechanical vibrations transmitted through an elastic medium.”<sup>19</sup> And these are only two of the thirty-eight definitions of *sound* used in a standard dictionary! In other words, your dispute is purely ver-



### FIVE CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING DEFINITIONS

1. A good definition is **neither too broad nor too narrow.**
2. A good definition should state the **essential attributes** of the term being defined.
3. A good definition is **not circular.**
4. A good definition **avoids obscure and figurative language.**
5. A good definition **avoids emotive language.**

bal. Once you both agree on the definition of the key term *sound*, what appeared at first to be a heady philosophical dispute disappears.

Verbal disputes occur more often than most of us probably realize.

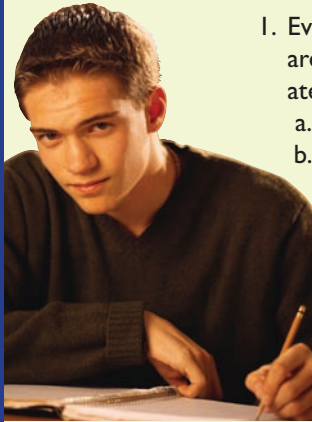
However, not all disagreements can be resolved by our agreeing on the definitions of key terms. In some cases we have a genuine disagreement. For example, one person may argue that capital punishment is an effective deterrent; another may argue that it has no deterrent effect. Both agree on the definition of capital punishment but disagree on its deterrent effect. Disagreements about factual matters can be resolved by researching the facts.

## Did You Know

In a 2002 Gallup poll, only 20 percent of men and 25 percent of women answered yes to the question “Do you consider yourself a feminist or not?” However, when asked if they supported equal rights for women, one of the primary lexical definitions of *feminism*, the majority said yes. In the case of the poll, it turned out that many of the people were defining the term *feminist* quite differently.



### EXERCISES 3-3



- I. Evaluate the following definitions and indicate what, if anything, is wrong with them. If they are poor definitions, come up with a better definition. (For additional definitions to evaluate, go to the *Online Student Workbook*.)
  - a. “Third World feminism is about feeding people in all their hunger.”<sup>20</sup>
  - b. A farm is a large tract of land on which crops are raised for a livelihood.
    - c. A cafeteria is a place on campus where students eat their meals.
    - d. A wedding ring is a tourniquet designed to stop circulation.
    - e. A footstool is a stool for our feet.
    - f. Democracy is the tyranny of the majority.
    - g. Global warming is the systematic increase in temperature over decades on the surface albedo, the fluxes of sensible and latent heat to the atmosphere, and the distribution of energy within the climate system to the hydrosphere, lithosphere, and biosphere primarily because of anthropomorphic forcing.
    - h. Hunger is denial of dignity.
    - i. A dog is a household pet.
    - j. A misogynist is one who disagrees with a feminist.
  - k. A student is a person who attends an institution of higher education.
  - l. “Hope is the thing with feathers / That perches in the soul, / And sings the tune without the words, / And never stops at all.”<sup>21</sup>
  - m. A teenager is a person between 13 and 19 years of age.
  - n. “Rightful liberty is unobstructed action according to our will within limits drawn around us by the equal rights of others. I do not add ‘within the limits of the law’ because law is often but the tyrant’s will, and always so when it violates the rights of the individual.”—Thomas Jefferson
2. The definition of *God* changes over time and also differs among groups of people. How do you define *God*? Share your definition with others in the class. To what extent are disagreements about the existence of *God* purely verbal disputes?
3. Identify which of the following arguments are merely verbal disputes based on differing definitions and which are disagreements of fact:
  - a. “You should bring an umbrella to class today. It’s supposed to rain later this afternoon.”  
“No, it’s not. There’s not a cloud in the sky, and the one-week weather forecast from last weekend said it was supposed to be sunny all week.”
  - b. “Iraq became a sovereign nation in the spring of 2004 when the Americans handed over control of the government to the interim Iraqi government.”  
“Iraq did not become a sovereign nation in 2004, since the Americans appointed the government and Iraq was still occupied. The only way for Iraq to achieve sovereignty is to get rid of the Americans.”
  - c. “Women do not have a right to an abortion, since abortion involves taking a life and violates the moral principle of ‘do no harm.’”  
“I disagree. Women have a right to an abortion, according to the U.S. Supreme Court.”



- d. "I hear that if the military draft is reenacted, girls will be drafted as well as men."  
"That's not true. No one under the age of 18 will be drafted."
- e. "You'd better not have a second glass of wine. You might get stopped by the police and arrested for drunk driving."  
"No, a person needs to have at least three drinks in order to be over the limit for drunk driving."
- f. "Professor Santos is the best teacher in the English department. She always gets top ratings on the student evaluations."  
"Professor Kwame is the best teacher. He has more publications in academic journals than anyone else in the department."

## COMMUNICATION STYLES

Sometimes miscommunication is due to communication style instead of actual content. As critical thinkers, it is important that we be aware that there are individual as well as group differences in communication styles. What may seem "normal" to us may be viewed as aggressive, aloof, or even offensive to other people.

### Individual Styles of Communication

The way we communicate cannot be separated from who we are. Understanding our own styles and those of others facilitates good communication in relationships and critical thinking skills. There are four basic types of communication style: assertive, aggressive, passive, and passive-aggressive.\*



The *assertive style* is how we express ourselves when we are confident and our self-esteem is strong. Like effective critical thinkers, assertive communicators are able to clearly communicate their own needs but also know their limits. Assertive communicators care about relationships and strive for mutually satisfactory solutions.

The *aggressive* communication style involves the attempt to make other people do what we want or meet our needs through manipulation and control tactics. Passive communicators do the opposite. They don't want to rock the boat and often put their needs after those of others. *Passive* communication is based on compliance and efforts to avoid confrontation at all costs.

*Passive-aggressive* communicators combine elements of the passive and aggressive styles. They avoid direct confrontation (passive) but use devious and sneaky means of manipulation (aggressive) to get their own way.

\* To learn more about your own communication style, go to [www.humanmetrics.com/assertive/assertivenessintro.asp](http://www.humanmetrics.com/assertive/assertivenessintro.asp)

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### COMMUNICATION STYLES

Assertive communicators clearly and respectfully communicate their own needs and strive for **mutually satisfactory solutions.**

Aggressive communicators attempt to get their own way by **controlling** other people through the use of manipulation and control tactics.

Passive communicators **avoid confrontation** and are compliant, often putting their own needs after those of others.

Passive-aggressive communicators **avoid direct confrontation** but use devious means to get their own way.

## SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE (COMMUNICATION STYLE)\*

For each of the following scenarios, select the answer choice that best describes what you would do.

1. You are a customer waiting in line to be served. Suddenly, someone steps in line ahead of you. You would
  - a. Let the person be ahead of you, since he or she is already in line
  - b. Pull the person out of line and make him or her go to the back
  - c. Indicate to the person that you are in line and point out where it begins
2. A friend drops in to say hello but stays too long, preventing you from finishing an important work project. You would
  - a. Let the person stay, then finish your work another time
  - b. Tell the person to stop bothering you and to get out
  - c. Explain your need to finish your work and request that he or she visit another time
3. You suspect someone of harboring a grudge against you, but you don't know why. You would
  - a. Pretend you are unaware of his or her anger and ignore it, hoping it will correct itself
  - b. Get even with the person somehow so that he or she will learn not to hold grudges against you
  - c. Ask the person if he or she is angry, and then try to be understanding
4. You bring your car to a garage for repairs and receive a written estimate. But later, when you pick up your car, you are billed for additional work and for an amount higher than the estimate. You would
  - a. Pay the bill, since the car must have needed the extra repairs anyway
  - b. Refuse to pay, and then complain to the motor vehicle department or the Better Business Bureau
  - c. Indicate to the manager that you agreed only to the estimated amount, then pay only that amount
5. You invite a good friend to your house for a dinner party, but your friend never arrives and neither calls to cancel nor to apologize. You would
  - a. Ignore it but manage not to show up the next time your friend invites you to a party
  - b. Never speak to this person again and end the friendship
  - c. Call your friend to find out what happened
6. You are in a discussion group at work that includes your boss. A coworker asks you a question about your work, but you don't know the answer. You would
  - a. Give your coworker a false but plausible answer so that your boss will think you are on top of things
  - b. Not answer but attack your coworker by asking a question you know that he or she could not answer
  - c. Indicate to your coworker that you are unsure just now but offer to give him or her the information later

\* Questions are from Donald A. Cadogan, "How Self-Assertive are You?" (1990) <http://www.oaktreecounseling.com/assrtquz.htm>.

As we noted in Chapter 1, effective communication skills are one of the important characteristics of a good critical thinker. A healthy, assertive communication style and the ability to correctly interpret others' communication are important in positions of leadership, such as that assumed by astronaut Sally Ride. Good communication skills are also one of the most important factors in the establishment of an intimate relationship. As relationships develop, the judgment of how effectively and appropriately each person communicates appears to outweigh other factors, such as appearance or similarity, in determinations of relationship satisfaction.

---

A healthy, assertive communication style and the ability to correctly interpret others' communication are important in positions of leadership.

---

Unfortunately, many of us are notoriously inaccurate at interpreting others' communication. In a recent study, participants correctly interpreted only 73 percent of their intimate partner's supportive behavior and 89 percent of their negative behavior.<sup>22</sup> Failing to notice the communication of affection on the part of our partner may leave him or her wondering if we really care. At other times, we may misinterpret our partner's or colleague's behavior as angry or pushy and needlessly provoke an argument that is

based on our misperception. Thus, it is important to establish effective communication behaviors and patterns if you want a relationship—whether personal or professional—to succeed.<sup>23</sup>

## Communication Style, Sex, and Race

Our sex influences which communication style we tend to prefer. In her book *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Communication*, linguist Deborah Tannen notes that “communication between men and women can be like cross cultural communication, prey to a clash of conversational styles.”<sup>24</sup> Women, she notes, tend to use communication to create and sustain relationships, whereas men use it primarily to get things done and solve problems. Most men think that as long as a relationship is working well and there are no problems, there is no need to talk about it. Women, in contrast, think of a relationship as going well if they can talk to their partner about it. When men are uninterested in discussing a relationship or their feelings, a woman may misinterpret this reticence on the man's part as lack of interest (see “Critical Thinking in Action: He Says/She Says: Sex Differences in Communication”).

Most scientists, as well as Deborah Tannen, believe that genetics plays a role in these differences in communication style. Indeed, recent studies have found that men and women use different parts of their brain for language.<sup>25</sup> Others believe that these sex differences are primarily or even solely a result of the way in which we are socialized.<sup>26</sup> Boys are taught to assert themselves, whereas girls are taught to listen and be responsive.

Sex differences in communication, whether innate or the result of socialization, have real-life consequences other than just those in personal relationships. In negotiating, women are usually less assertive than men; they tend to set lower goals and are quicker to back down. Women also tend to view negotiations as having two goals: getting the result you want *and* maintaining (or improving) your relationship with the person on the other side. Rather than adopting the more aggressive male negotiating style, women ask, “Can we find a way that this can work for both of us?”<sup>27</sup> Not surprisingly, because they are more willing to compromise, women on the average earn less than men and pay more than men do for a new car. Why are women so reluctant to negotiate assertively? “We teach little girls



Different communication styles, especially between men and women, can lead to miscommunication, so it is important to be aware of how you communicate.

# Critical Thinking in Action

## He Says/She Says: Sex Differences in Communication

### Women's Communication:

- Primary purpose of communication is to establish and maintain relationships with others.
- Equality between people, rather than control of conversation, is more important. Typical ways to communicate equality include "I've done the same thing many times," "I've felt the same way," and "The same thing happened to me once."
  - Inclusive style of communication: "Tell me more" or "Tell me what you mean."
  - Tentative style of communication used to keep conversation open and ongoing.
  - Communication is more personal, concrete, and responsive to others.
  - Women use more nonverbal communication, such as eye contact, smiling, and attentive body posture, than men do to express their personal feelings and to invite others into the relationship.

### Men's Communication:

- Primary purpose of communication is to exert control, preserve independence, entertain, and enhance status.
  - Command over the conversation is important. Men tend to talk more and interrupt and challenge more.
  - Assertive, sometimes aggressive, style of communication and tendency to give advice; for example: "This is the way you should handle this problem" or "Don't let him get to you."
- Men express themselves in fairly direct, assertive ways. Their language is typically more forceful and authoritative than women's language is.
  - Communication is more abstract and conceptual and less responsive.
  - Men use nonverbal communication, such as leaning forward and using open hand gestures, primarily to emphasize their verbal messages.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Looking at the above list, discuss differences, if any, in the nonverbal communication styles of men and women.
2. Discuss whether men and women have different communication styles. What has been your experience regarding sex differences in communication? Share your experience with the class.

Summarized from Julia T. Wood, *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender, and Culture* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001), pp. 125–130; 138.

that we don't like them to be pushy or overly aggressive," explains Sara Laschever, coauthor of *Women Don't Ask: Negotiation and the Gender Divide*. "Once adulthood is reached, studies are conclusive that neither men nor other women like women who are too aggressive."

Different ethnic and cultural groups tend to define masculinity and femininity differently. For instance, in Thailand, Portugal, and the Scandinavian countries, men's and women's styles of communication tend to be more "feminine," as defined by mainstream American standards.<sup>28</sup> This is mainly because nurturing relationships are a priority in these countries, whereas in the United States men

are socialized to be more individualistic, competitive, and assertive or even aggressive in their communication.

Racial identity can also influence our communication style. African American women, for example, are generally socialized to be more assertive. They tend to smile less in a conversation and maintain less eye contact than European American women. In addition, African American men are less comfortable with self-disclosure and are more likely than European American men to use confrontation rather than compromise in conflict resolution.<sup>29</sup>

Social segregation and bias contribute to racial differences in communication styles. To succeed in college and



**INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY AND NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION** In Arab cultures it is perfectly acceptable for men to hold hands. When the infirm 80-year-old Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia reached out for President George W. Bush's hand for support while walking along an uneven path in Texas, Bush graciously took his hand. The incident disturbed many Americans and was played up by the media as an inappropriately intimate encounter between the two heads of state. "Most everyone this side of Riyadh was appalled," noted one journalist.\* Only First Lady Laura Bush—when asked by Jay Leno on the *Tonight Show*, "Are you the jealous type?"—thought that her husband's gesture was "sweet."

The reaction of both the American media and the public betrayed our ignorance of nonverbal communication styles in Arabic countries. Such ignorance of cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings as well as biased reporting.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was your first reaction when you saw the photo of Bush and Crown Prince Abdullah holding hands? What was the basis of your reaction?
2. Look back at a time when you misinterpreted a gesture or body language of someone from a different culture. How did this affect your ability to communicate effectively with that person? Discuss ways in which improving your understanding of cross-cultural behavior can help you to be a better communicator and critical thinker.

\*Joe Klein, "The Perils of Hands-On Diplomacy," *Time*, May 9, 2005, p. 29.



the professional world, African Americans may abandon the communication styles of the African American community and adopt those associated with the dominant European American culture. Research shows that to succeed in the college and business environments, African American males often adopt the strategy of “talking white” and “playing the part” to avoid being stigmatized by racial stereotypes. One researcher notes that the demands on African Americans of “playing the part,” which involves being superficial and cautious and not being yourself “. . . is a constant struggle. . . . You have to play a double role if you’re a black male on campus. You have to know when not to do things and when to do things.”<sup>30</sup>

### Cultural Differences in Communication Styles

Culture plays a key role in shaping our communication style. For example, respect and dignity are highly valued by the Chinese. Consequently, they may be hesitant to ask someone to repeat themselves if they don’t understand the communication.<sup>31</sup> In many eastern Asian cultures, nodding does not necessarily mean that the person agrees with or even understands what you are saying. Instead, it is used to show that he or she is listening. The use of silence in communication also varies from culture to culture. European Americans tend to be uncomfortable with silence, whereas silence plays an important role in communication among the Apaches of Arizona, as well as in many Asian cultures.

Communication in Hispanic cultures and among Hispanic Americans is more often oriented toward facilitating group cooperation rather than individual needs. In addition, respect is generally highly valued and formal commu-

nication styles and titles are preferred over first names.<sup>32</sup> Hispanics also tend to be very polite in their communication, which may be misinterpreted as a subservient attitude.<sup>33</sup>

Nonverbal language also varies from culture to culture. In Algeria the U.S. wave of hello means “come here,” whereas in Mexico the U.S. arm gesture for “come here” is an obscene gesture. Cultural groups have their own rules for personal space as well. In the United States, Canada, and northern Europe, personal space tends to be larger and touching is less frequently used in communication than in southern European, Arab, and Latin American countries. Indeed, Arabs sometimes misinterpret the “standoffish” behavior of many Americans as distant and rude.

Even clothing serves as a type of nonverbal language. Indeed, we sometimes say that a person is “making a fashion statement.”<sup>34</sup> Many Americans dress more casually than people from other cultures, who may interpret the T-shirts and ragged jeans of an American tourist as a sign of disrespect or slovenliness. In the United States, women, unlike men, are required to wear tops on almost all public beaches, whereas this requirement is seen as restrictive and puritanical by the French and some other Western countries, including parts of Canada. On the other hand, many non-Muslim Americans view the requirement that Muslim women wear a head scarf, or *hijab*, as restrictive and a sign of oppression of women by Islam. Most Muslim women, however, prefer to wear a *hijab*, considering it a sign of respect or decorum.



*Clothing communicates information about a person and their cultural beliefs. How does what you wear communicate something about you?*

As critical thinkers we need to be aware of differences in communication styles. Some of us can move easily from one style to another, depending on what the situation requires. Others, however, have one dominant style and more difficulty seeing the situation from another's perspective. Research on communication and culture has led to the

creation of the discipline of cross-cultural studies and diversity training for students, business personnel, and government employees. Being aware of our own and others' communication styles, and being able to adjust our style to fit a specific situation, can go a long way in improving communication and facilitating effective critical thinking.

## EXERCISES 3-4



1. Write a sentence or two describing the weather today. Once you have finished, get into small groups and compare your description with those of others in your group. Critically analyze what differences say about the communication style of each person in the group.
2. Take two minutes and write a few sentences on what these statements mean to you:
  - a. "I love you." [college male to college female]
  - b. "I love you." [college female to college male]Explain whether the sex of the person saying "I love you," as well as your own sex, influenced your interpretation.

3. What is your negotiating style? How is it influenced by your sex and culture? Does your negotiating style work to achieve the ends you desire? Give an example of a time when your negotiating style worked and one when it didn't. Discuss what you might do to improve your negotiating style.
4. Discuss the desirability of co-ed housing and cohabitation—two unmarried people of opposite sex who are sexually intimate and living together—on campus. Observe the ways in which the men and the women in the class communicate regarding this issue. Now discuss the issue again, this time switching sex roles. Did putting yourself in the role of the other sex enhance understanding?
5. In what ways is your communication style influenced by your sex and cultural background? Describe a time where you altered your communication style because you were talking to a person of another gender or racial or ethnic background. Were these adjustments appropriate? Did they enhance or impede communication? Explain.
6. Look at the clothing of the people in your class or around campus. What do the clothes say to you about each person and their culture? Are your conclusions accurate? Discuss your conclusions with others in the class.
7. Claudine, a junior at State University, came to see her professor about her grades. She was wearing a cropped top, which exposed her midriff, and a very short skirt. The professor glanced down at her legs as she sat down and said, "That outfit is very flattering on you." His comment made her feel uncomfortable. Was this sexual harassment? Discuss the roles of verbal and nonverbal language, including dress, in sexual harassment.
8. *Journal Assignment.* Complete Journal Assignment 4 on "Communication Style" in your *Online Student Workbook*. Discuss in class how your communication style contributes to or interferes with your relationships and the achievement of your goals. Also share your plan for improving your communication style. If appropriate, modify your journal entry in light of feedback from the class.

## THE USE OF LANGUAGE TO MANIPULATE

Language can be used to manipulate and deceive as well as to inform. Manipulation can be carried out through the use of emotive language, rhetorical devices, or deliberate deception. The old adage "sticks and stones will break my bones but words will never hurt me" ignores the profoundly social nature of humans and the use of words to shape our

self-concept. Words can raise our spirits, but they can also hurt and degrade us.

### Emotive Language

Emotive language, as we noted earlier, is used to elicit a certain emotional impact. For example, the terms *regime*, *flip-flopper*, *obstinate*, and *anal retentive* are used to arouse feelings of disapproval. In contrast, the terms *government*, *flexible*, *firm*, and *neat* evoke positive feelings. In the 2008



News publications often rely on headlines to grab attention and bolster sales.

presidential election, the word “change” was bandied around by both Obama and McCain primarily to evoke a positive response rather than to convey any actual information.

When a factual issue is at stake, emotive language can slant the truth and obscure our ability to be critical thinkers. It is particularly dangerous when emotive language is used to cover weak arguments and insufficient facts or when it masquerades as news in the media. For example, because the term *terrorist* arouses such negative feelings, the *New York Times* tries to use the term as little as possible. Deputy foreign editor Ethan Bronner explains: “We use ‘terrorist’ sparingly because it is a loaded word. Describing the goals or acts of a group often serves readers better than repeating the term ‘terrorist.’”<sup>35</sup> The *Times* also avoids the use of the term *reform* in describing legislation, since it implies to the reader that the legislation is automatically desirable.

Emotive language is often found in debates about controversial political and moral issues, especially when feelings are running high. Consider the following argument from a letter to the editor regarding the use of embryos left over from in vitro fertilization for stem-cell research:

Both procedures tamper with embryos or attempt to play God, if you will; why is one acceptable while the other is seen as a threat to life? How is it that discarding leftover embryos—throwing them in the trash, practically a daily occurrence in this country—is seen as less of a travesty than using them to try to save people’s lives? How can it be acceptable to manipulate embryos to make more people, especially when there are so many living children in desperate need of homes, but unacceptable to manipulate them to save people

living with terrible diseases? I find this viewpoint hypocritical and self-righteous.<sup>36</sup>

In this letter, the writer relies on using emotive language and attacking opponents of stem-cell research rather than presenting a logical argument for stem-cell research.

Advertising slogans, such as “Things go better with Coke,” “The taste that satisfies,” and “Like a rock,” are designed to manipulate people into buying a certain product rather than actually providing information. Two of the most famous state slogans are “I love New York” and “Virginia is for lovers.”<sup>37</sup> Las Vegas’s slogan “What happens here, stays here,” may have helped bring in a record 35 million tourists in 2003.\*

The words we use have real-life consequences. Gang rapes often occur as part of a game or ritual in which the selected victim is referred to as a *nympho* or *slut*—words that suggest she “asked for it.” The use of these emotively negative terms makes it easier for men to participate in gang rape without seeing themselves as rapists.

## Rhetorical Devices

Like emotive language, **rhetorical devices** use psychological persuasion, rather than reason, to persuade others to accept a particular position. Common rhetorical devices include euphemisms, dysphemisms, sarcasm, and hyperbole.

**rhetorical devices** The use of euphemisms, dysphemisms, hyperbole and sarcasm to manipulate and persuade.

**euphemism** The replacement of a term that has a negative association by a neutral or positive term.

A **euphemism** is the replacement of a negative term with a neutral or positive one to cover up or sugarcoat the truth. Sometimes euphemisms are humorous and easy to see through (see “Critical Thinking in Action: What Those Code Words in Personal Ads Really Mean”). Other times they obscure the truth and create a false image of the world. One of the more insidious euphemisms was the use of the term “the final solution” for the attempted extermination of the Jews in Nazi Germany.

## Connections

**How does the media manipulate you through the use of emotive language and sensationalism? See Chapter 11, p. 345.**

**How can you recognize and avoid being taken in by manipulative language in advertisements? See Chapter 10, p. 325.**

\* For more on how to determine if the slogan was a causal factor in the increased tourist traffic or was simply correlated with the increased tourism, see Chapter 7, pages 221–225.



# Critical Thinking in Action

## What Those “Code Words” in Personal Ads Really Mean

### EUPHEMISM

40ish  
 Beautiful  
 Enjoys long walks  
 Flexible  
 Free spirit  
 Fun-loving  
 Good sense of humor  
 Life of the party  
 Outgoing  
 Physically fit  
 Stylish  
 Thoughtful  
 Uninhibited  
 Wants soulmate

### TRANSLATION

52 and looking for a 25-year-old  
 Spends a lot of time in front of mirror  
 Car has been repossessed  
 Desperate  
 Substance abuser  
 Expects to be entertained  
 Watches a lot of television  
 Poor impulse control  
 Loud  
 Still breathing  
 Slave to every fad that comes down the road  
 Says “please” when demanding a beer  
 Lacking basic social skills  
 One step away from stalking

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Using specific examples, discuss how the use of euphemisms, such as those listed above, can lead to miscommunication and false expectations.
2. What are some euphemisms you use to describe yourself when you’re trying to make a favorable impression on someone?

From *Fortune Cookies*, <http://personal.riverusers.com/~thegrendel/euph.html>

Euphemisms are often used to smooth over socially sensitive topics. Using the term *pass away* instead of *die* masks our culture’s discomfort with the topic of death. Instead of *vagina* or *penis*, we use “cute” terms such as *private parts* or *south of the border*. Similarly, pop star Janet Jackson’s Super Bowl Sunday exposure of her breast was referred to as a “wardrobe malfunction.” These euphemisms reveal our culture’s discomfort with sexually explicit language.

Language has the power to alter how we think about reality. People may use euphemisms to get others to see something from their point of view. In times of war, leaders on both

Why do advertisers use euphemisms and other rhetorical devices? See Chapter 10, p. 328.

### Connections



sides try to win the support of their citizenry by convincing them that the war is acceptable and even noble. For example, the United States is engaged in Operation Enduring Freedom and “nation building” in Iraq, rather than an invasion or occupation. Our soldiers there are “serving the target” rather than killing enemy soldiers. Enemy civilians who are inadvertently killed in warfare are “collateral damage.” The accidental shelling of our own troops is termed “friendly fire,” a phrase that seems almost neighborly. Our soldiers who are killed in the war are shipped home in “transfer tubes” rather than body bags. And the private soldiers who work for the U.S. military in Iraq are “private security consultants” rather than mercenaries.

Businesses also make up new terms because of negative connotations associated with old terms. Companies no longer fire employees; instead they downsize, dehire, or practice workforce management or employee transition. Eventually these terms may be deemed too negative. The term *downsize*, for example, has recently been replaced by the more appealing term *right-size*. And the terms *used cars* and *pre-owned vehicles* have morphed to *experienced vehicles*. Sometimes euphemisms become so widely accepted that they become lexical definitions. For example, *downsize* was added to dictionaries in the 1970s.

Politically correct language is often based on euphemisms in which terms such as *crippled* and *crazy* are replaced with neutral or more positive terms such as *physically challenged* and *mentally ill*. The politically correct movement has been somewhat successful in limiting hate speech, especially on college campuses. More than a hundred colleges and universities in the United States have had, or still have, speech codes that place restrictions on some forms of speech, including hate speech and speech that “violates civility

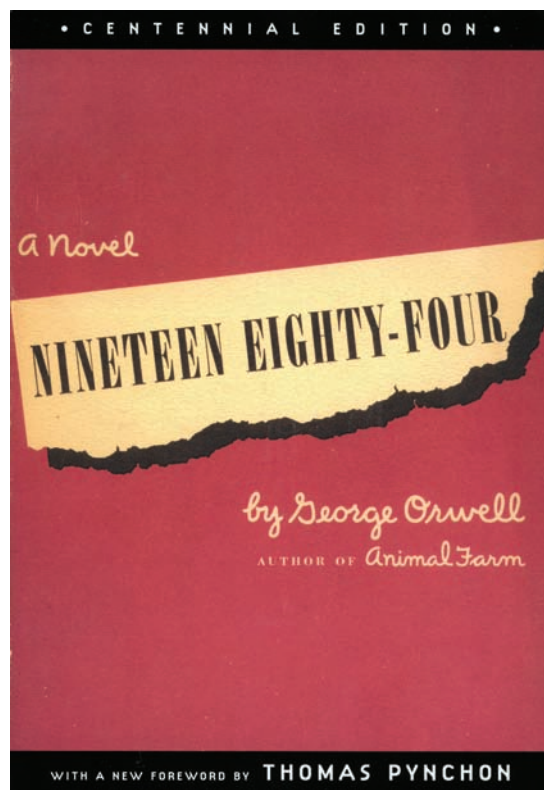


Politicians are notorious for their manipulative use of language, especially during campaigns, and will often skirt around direct questions by supplying the answers they think their constituents want to hear.

codes.”<sup>38</sup> For more on restricting free speech on campuses, see “Critical Thinking Issue: Perspectives on Free-Speech Zones on Colleges Campuses” at the end of this chapter.

While some people support speech codes as encouraging tolerance and diversity, others argue that these codes are self-defeating and force the issue of bigotry and intolerance underground by censoring open discussion and critical thinking about the issue. The tacit suppression of so-called racist views, for example, can leave us believing that prejudice and segregation are no longer a problem, when in fact, many of our nation’s schools are even more segregated than they were in 1954 when the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* outlawed school segregation.

George Orwell wrote his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* about the insidious role of language manipulation in society, especially by those in power. Orwell warned that by purging language of politically dangerous or offensive words and concepts and substituting euphemisms for them, freedom of speech becomes impossible and resistance to tyranny dif-



**dysphemism** A word or phrase chosen to produce a negative effect.

**sarcasm** The use of ridicule, insults, taunting, and/or caustic irony.

**hyperbole** A rhetorical device that uses an exaggeration.

effect. The term *death tax* for inheritance tax was coined to create a feeling of disapproval toward this tax. In the abortion debate, the term *anti-choice* creates a negative feeling toward people who are opposed to abortion rights.

Dysphemisms can be used to win over one group of people while at the same time alienating others. Politicians may use dysphemisms to exaggerate cultural differences and create an us-versus-them mentality. The use of the term *axis of evil* for Iraq, Iran, and North Korea was accompanied by a swing of public opinion in the United States in 2002 against these countries and support for the idea of attacking those countries.<sup>40</sup>

**Sarcasm**, another rhetorical device, involves the use of ridicule, insults, taunting, and/or caustic irony. It derives its power from the fact that most people hate being made fun of. Like other rhetorical devices, sarcasm is used to deflect critical analysis and to create a feeling of disapproval toward the object of the sarcasm, as in the following letter to the editor from *Newsweek*:

We're in a blood-soaked foreign war, the national debt threatens our financial future, hatred of Americans is soaring and the issue that finally inflames conservative

Oregon voters is the possibility of some people marrying their same-gender loved ones? Wow! I'll have to get my priorities straight.<sup>41</sup>

Sarcasm is often dismissed as humor by those who use it. However, it is anything but funny to its intended target. As good critical thinkers, we need to be able to see through this rhetorical device and not be belittled by it.

**Hyperbole** is a type of rhetoric that uses exaggeration or overstatement to distort the facts. "I thought I would die when the professor called on me in class today," moans a college student. Some journalists use hyperbole for the purpose of sensationalism and exaggerating a story to the point of absurdity. "Morgue Worker's Snoring Wakes the Dead," read a headline in the *Weekly World News*.<sup>42</sup>

Hyperbole is also found in politics when a grain of

difficult. Unless we resist this trend we will get caught up in doublethink and become soulless automatons incapable of engaging in critical thinking.<sup>39</sup>

**Dysphemisms**, in contrast to euphemisms, are used to produce a negative



## Hot or Not?

Is lying for the greater good ever justified?

truth is exaggerated and distorted. During the early months of the war in Iraq, Iraqi Information Minister Muhammed Saeed al-Sahaf engaged in hyperbole when he reported sweeping Iraqi triumphs over the coalition forces, despite all evidence to the contrary. Former abortion rights advocate Dr. Bernard Nathanson also used hyperbole when he exaggerated the number of maternal deaths due to illegal abortions in order to gain public support for the legalization of abortion. "I confess that I knew the figures were totally false," he later wrote. "But in the 'morality' of our revolution, it was a useful figure, widely accepted."<sup>43</sup>

In these cases hyperbole involved the deliberate use of deception and lying.

Some people are prone to exaggeration because of the attention they get from using it. The habitual use of hyperbole, however, damages our credibility. Like the little boy who cried "wolf," we may not be believed when we finally tell it as it really is.

## Deception and Lying

Although rhetorical devices may involve deception, the deception is not always deliberate. There are also cases when deception is expected and acceptable, as in a poker game or preparation for a surprise party. A **lie**, on the other hand, is "a deliberate attempt to mislead, without the prior consent of the target."<sup>44</sup> Withholding or omitting certain information in a way that distorts a message so it is deceptive may also constitute lying.

In the 1998 Paula Jones deposition, lawyers produced a definition of *sex* before asking former President Bill Clinton if he had had sex with Monica Lewinsky. Clinton replied emphatically that he had not. His response was based on the fact that the definition provided did not specifically list "mouth" as one of the body parts involved in sex. Clinton later admitted that his answer had been intended to "mislead" and "give a false impression" regarding his inappropriate sexual relationship with Lewinsky.<sup>45</sup> Clinton was impeached by the House of Representatives in December 1998 for perjury and obstruction of justice and acquitted of the charges by the Senate two months later.

Most lies, such as that told by Bill Clinton, are told to avoid getting into trouble or to cover misbehavior. So-called little white lies may be used to ease social awkwardness, avoid hurting feelings, or put us in a more posi-

How can you evaluate political candidates when rhetoric so often dominates campaigns? See Chapter 13, p. 379.

Why do journalists use hyperbole, and how can we avoid being taken in by it? See Chapter 11, p. 345.

How does the media sometimes engage in hyperbole when reporting scientific findings? See Chapter 11, p. 351.

## Connections



Facial expressions, especially the eyes, can disclose a wealth of information. The person on the left is faking a smile while the smile of the woman on the right is genuine.

tive light. Other lies, such as Dr. Nathanson’s regarding the number of maternal deaths due to illegal abortions and lies told to the enemy during war may be rationalized as being for the greater good.

In addition to derailing honest communication, lying raises several ethical issues. Is it ever morally acceptable to lie to spare someone’s feelings or to promote what we regard as the “greater good”? How about a lie to save a life? Most ethicists agree that the great majority of lies are not justified. Lies can damage trust, as happened in the case of Bill Clinton. In addition, making a political or life decision based on someone else’s lies can have ruinous results. Wars may be waged based on misinformation. A murderer may go free if the investigating police officer or jury believes his or her lies.

Most of us are easily taken in by the lies of others. A recent study found that people lie about a third of the time in their interactions with others; only about 18 percent of lies are ever discovered.<sup>46</sup> The average person is able to tell the difference between a liar and a truth-teller only about 55 percent of the time (not much better than chance). Even when lies are exposed, the public will sometimes get caught up in doublethink—knowing that what they once believed is a lie but continuing to act as though the lie were true.

The good news is that we can train ourselves to be better at detecting other people’s lies. Skilled lie-catchers, such as police, FBI investigators, and some psychiatrists, are able to distinguish between liars and truth-tellers with 80 percent to 95 percent accuracy.<sup>47</sup> This makes them almost as accurate as a polygraph or lie-detector machine. Professional lie-catchers closely observe patterns of verbal and nonverbal communication. When most people lie, their body language as well as the tone of their voice changes subtly. For example, children between 9 and 14 who lie about sexual abuse (lies about sexual abuse are rare in children younger than 9) tend to report the alleged abuse chronologically, since it is too difficult to fabricate a story out of order. Truth-tellers, in contrast, jump around and include information such as smells, background noises,

and other sensations. Unlike liars, truth-tellers also tend to make spontaneous corrections to their stories.

Lying creates cognitive and emotional overload. As a result, liars tend to move less and blink less because of the extra effort they need to remember what they’re already said and to keep their stories consistent. Their voices may become more tense or high-pitched and their speech may be filled with pauses. Liars also tend to make fewer speech errors than do truth tellers, and they rarely backtrack to fill in “forgotten” or incorrect details.<sup>48</sup>

Scientists at the Salk Institute in California have developed a computer that can read a person’s rapidly changing facial expressions and body language.<sup>49</sup> Polygraphs, in contrast, measure reactions like heartbeat and perspiration, which some clever liars are able to control. The scientists hope that computers may someday be able to determine what emotions underlie different facial expressions. However, because some types of body language are shaped by our culture, lie detectors, whether human or computer, need to take into account cultural and sex differences in discerning if there is deception.

Although we may be initially taken in by someone’s lies, we should be willing to check what another person



Various tests and devices, such as the polygraph machine in the photograph, have been created to evaluate the validity and truth of someone’s assertions.

tells us—be it a friend, relative, or the media—against other evidence. As critical thinkers, we should be ready to check out sources of information and make sure they are reliable to avoid falling prey to deception. We also need to be aware of manipulative language. Emotive language

## Connections

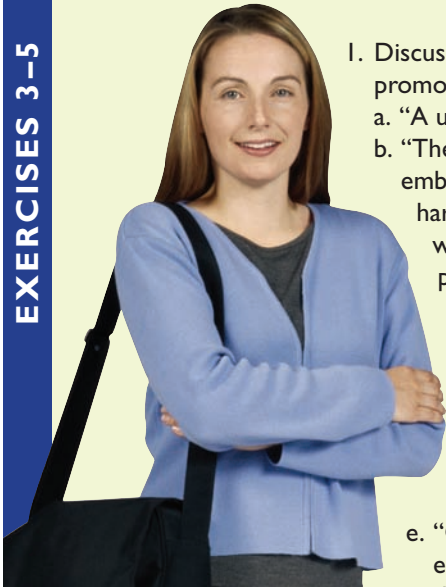
**How does the impeachment process act as a check on the misuse of executive power? See Chapter 13, p. 421.**

and the use of rhetorical devices can be used to distract us from the issue at hand and to persuade us to take a position without actually providing any factual information or sound arguments.

Language is a form of symbolic communication that allows us to organize and critically analyze our experiences. Language shapes our concept of reality and of who we are. It is mainly through language that we transmit our

culture. As critical thinkers, we need to clearly define our terms and be mindful of our communication style and that of others. Unfortunately, language can also be used to stereotype or mislead, either through deliberate deception or the use of rhetorical devices. Good communication skills are vital in critical thinking and are also one of the most important factors in establishing and maintaining good relationships.

EXERCISES 3-5



1. Discuss how the use of emotive language in each of the following passages is used to promote a particular point of view. Rewrite each passage using neutral language.

- a. "A unit in Iraq defies orders, spurring questions about morale."<sup>50</sup>
  - b. "The promise of embryonic-stem cell research occurs precisely because the embryo destroyed in the process was once both alive and human. As such, the harvesting of embryonic stem cells represents a form of medical cannibalism. If we cannot protect human life at its most vulnerable stages, basic constitutional protections will wither away and die."<sup>51</sup>
  - c. "Oliver Stone's [movie] 'Alexander' will conscript you for a long forced march. Better have an exit strategy."<sup>52</sup>
  - d. "In a cramped upstairs den in South St. Paul, Minn., a CD blares with fury. 'Hang the traitors of our race,' the singer screams. 'White supremacy! Whiiiiite supremacy!' Byron Calvert, 33, leans back in his chair, smiling and snacking on veggies. Calvert is a mountainous man with a swastika tattoo, a prison record and a racist dream."<sup>53</sup>
  - e. "Christians should not shy away from such debates [about euthanasia], especially since, under question, Mr. Singer [who supports euthanasia] reveals that he lives in an ivory tower."<sup>54</sup>
  - f. "According to the National Sleep Foundation, about 60% of U.S. adults have insomnia every few days. I've been thinking more and more about those seductive commercials for Ambien, the pill that promises a full night of blissful sleep with few side effects."<sup>55</sup>
2. Should journalists and the news media avoid the use of emotively loaded words such as *terrorist* and *reform*? Is it even possible or desirable to avoid these terms? Support your answers.
3. Identify the rhetorical device(s) or type of emotive language found in each of the following passages. What point is the writer trying to make by using these? (For additional exercises, see the *Online Student Workbook*.)
- a. "Joe's between jobs. He has an interview later this week."
  - b. "We had to destroy the village to save it." [From Vietnam War, c. 1968]
  - c. "Most vegetarians look so much like the food they eat that they can be classified as cannibals."—Finley Peter Dunne
  - d. "Shocking Hubble photo reveals: Killer Asteroid Headed for Earth! Bush Calls Panic Summit with World Leaders."<sup>56</sup>
  - e. Child: "Where's Fido?"  
Parent: "We had to put Fido down. He's in doggy heaven."
  - f. "The National Rifle Association's campaign to arm every man, women and child in America, received a setback when the President signed the Brady Bill. But the gun-pushers know that the bill was only a small skirmish in the big war over guns in America."<sup>57</sup>
  - g. "I see you have a copy of the dead-tree edition of that new online magazine."
  - h. "Reader, suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself."—Mark Twain
  - i. "Management ordered the security guards to take steps to reduce inventory shrinkage."
  - j. "I never forget a face, but in your case I'll be glad to make an exception."—Groucho Marx
  - k. "NASA Rover Photographs Cat Creatures on Mars! Shocked experts say abandoned pets prove aliens visited Earth."<sup>58</sup>
  - l. "Churchill and Bush can both be considered wartime leaders, just as Secretariat and Mr. Ed were both horses."<sup>59</sup>

4. Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz argues that the politically correct movement, while claiming to promote greater diversity, has in fact limited diversity of expression. He writes:

As a teacher, I can feel a palpable reluctance on the part of many students particularly those with views in neither extreme and those who are anxious for peer acceptance—to experiment with unorthodox ideas, to make playful comments on serious subjects, to challenge politically correct views and to disagree with minority, feminist or gay perspectives.

I feel this problem quite personally, since I happen to agree . . . with most “politically correct” positions. But I am appalled at the intolerance of many who share my substantive views. And I worry about the impact of politically correct intolerance on the generation of leaders we are currently educating.

Do you agree with Dershowitz? What are some examples of “politically incorrect” words or phrases on your campus? Support your answer using specific examples from your own experience as a college student. Do you find that you have to be careful to think about what you say and to avoid politically incorrect terms? Does having to do so facilitate or inhibit critical thinking?

5. Look on the Internet and in newspapers and/or magazines for examples of emotive language. What is the purpose of the emotive language in the text?
6. Select a controversial issue such as animal rights or physician-assisted suicide. Write a page using emotive language and rhetoric supporting one side of the issue. Now rewrite (paraphrase) the page using neutral language. Is the argument as compelling when you used neutral language? To what extent did your argument depend on emotive language and rhetorical devices rather than reason?
7. Is self-deception ever justified? A University of California study found that patients awaiting surgery who deceived themselves about the seriousness of their condition suffered fewer postoperative complications. In a similar study, women with breast cancer who denied the seriousness of their condition were more likely to survive than those who resigned themselves to their fate.<sup>60</sup> Write a two- to three-page essay discussing whether self-deception was justified in the above cases and if it is compatible with critical thinking.

# Think AGAIN >>



1. What are the primary functions of language?
  - One of the primary functions is informative or the conveying of information about the world and ourselves. Directive language functions to influence actions, while expressive language communicates feelings. Finally, ceremonial language is used in certain formal circumstances.
2. Why is it important to pay close attention when evaluating and interpreting definitions of words?
  - Definitions are not fixed—they can have denotative meanings, which describe the properties of the word being described, and they can have connotative meanings, which include feelings and thoughts that are based on previous experience. Also, there are stipulative, lexical, precisising, and persuasive definitions.
3. What are rhetorical devices, and how are they used?
  - Rhetorical devices are used for persuasion. Euphemism, the replacement of a negative term with a positive one to cover up the truth, and dysphemisms, which are used to elicit a negative response, are both examples of rhetorical devices. Others include sarcasm and hyperbole.



## Perspectives on Free-Speech Zones on College Campuses

Almost half of American public colleges have rules restricting speech that would normally be protected speech off campus.<sup>61</sup> These restrictions are, in part, an extension of the politically correct movement. One way of restricting free speech is to limit controversial speech, as well as handing out pamphlets and carrying placards, to what are called “free-speech zones.” Free-speech zones are specifically designated areas on campuses where students or groups can hold rallies.

The main argument for free-speech zones is that noisy protests may disturb classes that are in session. According to Rob Hennig of the political science department at the University of California, Los Angeles, these restrictions are constitutional because they reasonably dictate time, place, and manner, as opposed to content, of speech. “The university has the right to impose reasonable restriction,” he argues, “if [the speech] impedes their mission. A court would look at the reasons and rationale behind restrictions, and then determine whether they are fair.”<sup>62</sup>

Many students aren’t convinced by this reasoning. In October 2001, Matthew Poe, a fourth-year West Virginia University student, was stopped by campus police for handing out flyers outside a free-speech zone. “I think America is a free speech zone, and the university has no business restricting it,” says Poe. “Rather, the university has a moral responsibility to endorse it.” He maintains that free-speech zones are simply a thinly veiled excuse “to stop campuses from becoming confrontational, like UC Berkeley” [during the Vietnam War student protests].<sup>63</sup>

The battle over limiting controversial speech to free-speech zones is gaining momentum as more complaints and First Amendment rights lawsuits are brought against college administrations by student groups. Courts have ruled in favor of the

student groups in several of these cases.<sup>64</sup> Pressure from students and civil rights groups have also forced administrators at schools such as West Virginia University and the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater to repeal their policies on free-speech zones.

Following is West Virginia University’s 2002 speech policy, which establishes free-speech zones, as well as a letter from a civil rights organization to David Hardesty, president of West Virginia University, that protests the policy, along with the president’s response to the letter.

## Policy on Free Speech Activities, West Virginia University

The following is the policy on free speech from West Virginia University’s student handbook.<sup>65</sup> The part of the policy that establishes free-speech zones is in bold.

West Virginia University recognizes the right of individuals to pursue their constitutional right of free speech and assembly, and welcomes open dialogue as an opportunity to expand the educational opportunities of our campus community. Individuals or organizations may utilize designated free speech areas on a first-come, first-served basis without making reservations.

The free expression of views or opinions, either by individuals or groups, may not violate any rights of others, disrupt the normal function of the university, or violate the provisions specified in the University Code of Student Conduct. Solicitation is not permitted.

The University reserves the right to relocate or cancel the activity due to disruption from excessive noise levels, traffic entanglement, or if the safety of individuals is in

question. Due to the limitations of space on the downtown campus, **the two designated areas for free speech and assembly will be the amphitheater area of the Mountainlair plaza and the concrete stage area in front of the Mountainlair and adjacent to the WVU Bookstore.**

### QUESTIONS

1. What is West Virginia University’s policy on freedom of speech?
2. What limitations does the university place on students’ freedom of speech, and how does it justify these restrictions?
3. Where are the free-speech zones located at West Virginia University?

## Letter to President Hardesty, West Virginia University

GREG LUKIANOFF, FOUNDATION FOR INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS IN EDUCATION

This letter was written by Greg Lukianoff, director of legal and public advocacy for FIRE (Foundation for Individual Rights in Education), to David Hardesty, president of West Virginia University.<sup>66</sup> The letter was written in support of a coalition of student groups known as the West Virginia University Free Speech Consortium.

Dear President Hardesty,

FIRE unites leaders in the fields of civil rights and civil liberties, scholars, journalists, and public intellectuals across the political and ideological spectrum on behalf of liberty, legal equality, freedom of religion, academic freedom, due process and—in the case of West Virginia’s University’s “Free Speech Zones” policy—freedom of speech and expression on America’s college campuses. Our web page, [www.thefire.org](http://www.thefire.org), will give you a greater sense of our identity and activities.

We join with the West Virginia University Free Speech Consortium in opposing WVU’s “Free Speech Zone” policy, which limits free speech to only a tiny portion of the campus. This perversion of constitutional law should be anathema to any institution committed to intellectual rigor, robust debate, and a free and vibrant community. We call on you to tear down the barriers to speech and declare **all** of WVU a “Free Speech Zone.”

The irony of this policy is that the societal function of the university, in any free society, is to serve as the ultimate “Free Speech Zone.” A university serious about the search for truth should be seeking at all times to expand open discourse, to foster intellectual inquiry, and to engage and challenge the way people think. By limiting free speech to a tiny fraction of the campus, you send the message that speech is to be feared, regulated, and monitored at all times. This message is utterly incompatible with a free society and stands in stark opposition to the ideals of higher education. You should remember, at all times, our Supreme Court’s timeless expression of the important role of our universities in *Sweezy v. New Hampshire*, 354 U.S. 234, 250 (1957):

The essentiality of freedom in the community of American universities is almost self-evident. No one should underestimate the vital role in a democracy that is played by those who guide and train our youth. **To impose any strait jacket upon the intellectual leaders in our colleges**



## and universities would imperil the future of our Nation.

No field of education is so thoroughly comprehended by man that new discoveries cannot yet be made. . . . Scholarship cannot flourish in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. Teachers and students must always remain free to inquire, to study and to evaluate, to gain new maturity and understanding; otherwise our civilization will stagnate and die. [Emphasis added] . . .

We assure you that there is nothing “reasonable” about transforming ninety-nine percent of your University’s property—indeed, *public* property—into “Censorship Zones.” The case law never intended to transform public institutions to places where Constitutional protections are the exception rather than the rule. A generalized concern about safety and order is neither specific nor substantial enough to justify this rule. . . .

For all the controversy surrounding the Free Speech Zones, it appears highly unlikely that it is a legitimate or enforceable rule at all, even by WVU’s own standards . . . considering this policy does nothing less than abrogate the protections of the Bill of Rights. As the constitutions of both the United States and West Virginia require substantial due process before denying such rights, and as WVU is obligated to make rules touching upon speech enforceable, FIRE requests that WVU immediately produce evidence of the policy’s “legitimacy.” Failure to do so is tantamount to declaring the death of free speech, and the demise of your university as a place where the fullest free speech protections are recognized.

We are categorically committed to using all of our media and legal resources to support the West Virginia University Free Speech Consortium and to see this process to a just and moral conclusion. Please spare West Virginia University the embarrassment of fighting against the Bill of Rights by which it is legally and morally bound. We urge WVU to show the courage necessary to admit its error, undo this unjust policy, and to tell the world that free speech at WVU is to be celebrated, honored, and broadened, not feared, restrained, and hidden.

We trust you will make the right decision.

Sincerely,

## QUESTIONS

1. What type of organization is FIRE, and what was its purpose in writing this letter in support of the West Virginia University Free Speech Consortium?
2. According to Lukianoff, why is freedom of speech especially important on college campuses?
3. On what grounds did Lukianoff argue that free-speech zones are unconstitutional?
4. What type of action was Lukianoff asking President Hardesty to take and why?

## Reasonable Limits Are Good

ROBERT J. SCOTT

Robert J. Scott is a constitutional law specialist, legal commentator, and managing partner of the Dallas law firm Scott & Scott. In this article from *USA Today*, Scott presents an argument in support of free-speech zones.<sup>67</sup>

Today’s debate: Free speech ‘zones’

Opposing view: Violent demonstrations illustrate need to maintain public order.

The use of “free speech zones” or “protest zones” is not new and does not present a significant threat to free-speech rights.

Protest zones have been used at political conventions and other major events, such as last year’s Winter Olympics. By creating a protest zone, governments can ensure that those who wish to express their views have a place to do so while minimizing the disruptions protests may bring.

Given the violence and vandalism accompanying recent protests, there is a real, immediate threat of disorder justifying a reasonable governmental response. Most of downtown San Francisco was shut down for two days in March by demonstrators who blocked traffic, damaged businesses and held an organized “vomit-in” around the federal building. Across the bay in Oakland, protesters attempted to disrupt access to ships transporting munitions.

Such incidents remind us that the First Amendment is not a license to do and say anything, anywhere, at any time. The Constitution does not protect protesters who break

windows, obstruct traffic, disrupt military supply lines or threaten the safety of other citizens.

It has long been recognized that governments can impose reasonable time, place and manner restrictions on speech. Obviously, the Secret Service should not be forced to allow protesters unlimited access to the president. College administrators should be able to make certain that protesters do not prevent other students from pursuing their studies.

Protest zones can be reasonable restrictions that allow free-speech rights to be expressed while decreasing safety concerns and preventing undue disruption.

Our democracy is based first and foremost on the rule of law. Reasonable protest zones are actually consistent with the basic idea that civil liberties may only be guaranteed and protected by an organized society maintaining public order.

In the words of Theodore Roosevelt, “Order without liberty and liberty without order are equally destructive.” The lawlessness, violence and vandalism seen at recent protests are the hallmarks of anarchy, not liberty. Requiring those expressing dissent to obey the law while doing so does not constitute repression.

1. According to Scott, what is the primary purpose of free-speech zones?
2. What are the benefits of having free-speech zones?
3. On what grounds does Scott argue that free-speech zones are consistent with the First Amendment and with democratic principles?

## Think >> AND DISCUSS

### PERSPECTIVES ON FREE-SPEECH ZONES

1. Evaluate Lukianoff's and Scott's arguments for and against free-speech zones on college campuses. Which person made the stronger argument? Support your answer.

2. The First Amendment to the *Bill of Rights* states:

Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; of the right of the people peaceably to assemble to petition government for a redress of grievances.

Are free-speech zones consistent with the First Amendment, as Scott argued, or do they violate it, as Lukianoff argued?

3. Are there any instances when freedom of speech should be restricted on college campuses? How about hate speech, inflammatory speech, or a display of symbols, such as a swastika?
4. What is your campus's policy on free speech? If you think the policy should be changed, discuss steps you might take to get it changed.
5. When University of Colorado professor Ward Churchill published an essay in which he compared some of the workers who died in the World Trade Center in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, to little Nazis, outraged Colorado legislators unanimously passed a resolution condemning his words as "evil and inflammatory." Churchill was also asked by the governor to resign his tenured position at the state university. What action, if any, do you think should have been taken against Professor Churchill? Support your answer.
6. When Richard Perle, chairman of the Defense Policy Board and supporter of the war in Iraq, spoke at Brown University, students continually interrupted his speech by booing and jeering. The students justified their jeering as part of their right to express their views. Discuss whether freedom of speech justifies the use of jeering to prevent someone with an opposing view from speaking. Support your answer.