COMMUNICATION
AND
CONFLICT
MANAGEMENT

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AND CHRISTIAN
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KENNETH O. GANGEL
and
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PREFACE

A few years ago I took a group of doctoral students to the American Airlines training center just south of the Dallas/ Fort Worth International Airport. Upon taking my turn in the cockpit simulator, I asked the pilot hosting our visit what he considered to be the most important function carried out in flight among the members of the cockpit team. Without any hesitation he replied, "Crew coordination." The pilot, copilot, and navigator must have a constant working relationship—a harmony of duties—or trouble can break out at any time.

This book is about "crew coordination"—not in an airplane cockpit, but in churches and Christian organizations. In the insightful article cited at the beginning of our first chapter, Robert W. Kirkland suggests, "The church lives in the midst of a world in conflict. The world is searching for solutions. The church's ability to handle its own conflicts properly will influence its own vitality and its impact on the world. Properly managed conflict is one of church's greatest assets."

My colleague Dr. Samuel Canine is an expert in communication and my own expertise rests in administrative process and organizational supervision. Together we have designed a book that emphasizes the integration of communication and conflict management. We have placed strong emphasis on interpersonal relationships and tried to develop not only theoretical foundations (as important as those are), but also show how solid theology and communication theory can be put into practice in environments in which Christians work together.

It is our viewpoint that the major problem facing sincere Christians in this decade has little to do with theology, the occult, secularism, or humanism. These genuine threats have been with us since the inception of the New Testament gospel. Far more insidious, however, is our inability to work

together, to function harmoniously and creatively, and to constructively manage conflict when it does erupt. In short, we have not been very effective at "crew coordination."

The following chapters draw from the disciplines of administration, education, sociology, psychology, and theology to explain and interpret how communication works and how it serves conflict management. We treat such basic topics as "learning to listen." We demonstrate conflict management examples from Scripture and church life, and we show how all of this impacts such practical and constant leadership functions as recruitment, training, and supervision. It is our wish and prayer that the book will serve the broad body of Christ and its many functions in the world at the end of the twentieth century.

Kenneth O. Gangel

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WHY COMMUNICATION
IS IMPORTANT

Writing in the summer 1990 issue of *Search*, Robert Kirk-
land recorded what he called "a shocking discovery—the liter-
ature related to conflict management in the church is in its
infancy." He cited only three works of merit on the subject and
proposed a suggestion as to why more helpful material has not
been produced.

> Perhaps the church has tried to keep its conflicts hidden in
> the church closet. I propose that image in my efforts to help
> the contemporary church regarding the managing of con-
> flict. Recent writers have brought the fact of the church's
> struggle with conflict out of the church closet. Now everyone
> knows that Christians experience conflict![1]

Not only can we document almost 2,000 years of conflict
in the church, but the history of management science might
well be told as a study of role conflict between individuals
and institutions, between persons and organizations. Down
through the years, experts have employed different terminol-
ogies to describe this phenomenon and the leadership style
related to it. Perhaps most common are the terms *nomothetic*
(institution oriented) and *idiographic* (individual oriented).

In this case, one emphasis in conflict with the other empha-
sis only adds up to one confusing question: How can we keep a
ministry producing and achieving while at the same time
keeping its workers satisfied and self-actualized? Enter the
role of interpersonal relations (IPR) and interpersonal com-
munication (IPC). Somehow leaders must coordinate roles and
responsibilities of people in a work group, their relationships
with each other, and their individual and collective relation-

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ships to the organization. Just when the leader expects people
to be consistent, logical, and perfect, they turn out to be
inconsistent, illogical, and imperfect.

In the church, the problem can be alleviated or com-
pounded. The oil of the Holy Spirit provides a supernatural
lubricant not available to secular organizations. When prop-
erly lubricated, the organization will work very well toward
achieving both individual goals and the total objectives of the
congregation. To this extent the church is organism *before* it is
organization. Our problems come when we try to think *only* in
terms of organism (the supernatural and invisible union of
the body), forgetting that the church must also be viewed as
organization, or when we think *only* of organization, forget-
ting organism.

If a Christian ministry (particularly the church) operates in
accordance with Scripture, it will be the most exquisite dem-
onstration of interpersonal relations principles the world has
ever seen. A spirit of *koinonia* and unity can permeate the
body and radiate from it to all its surrounding environment.

Review of Foundational Sociology

Studies of both interpersonal relations and communication
are part of the broader perspective of the social sciences and,
more specifically, sociology. When studied as a part of man-
agement science, these subfields bring together a social psy-
chology. Within the church and other Christian organizations,
we deal with the integration of faith and learning, making it
necessary for us to review aspects of sociology within the light
of Scripture. Even more elementary, we must return to the
field itself.

Nature of the Discipline

Sociology offers a scientific study of the processes and prod-
ucts of human interaction. In interpersonal relations all hu-
man conduct involves a plurality of actors. Sociology asserts
that human beings develop their human abilities in social
interaction. All that is human must be embodied in language
in some way. The word *culture* describes the way of life of
people (or of *a* people), essentially made up of prominent social

institutions like family, religion, government, recreation, economy, education, and welfare. Within these categories communication goes on continuously among friends, groups, clubs, churches, and other forms of people-gatherings.

Human beings live in constant group relationship. Social interaction follows given patterns; therefore, our study of interpersonal communication must presuppose collectivity, as is illustrated in the following hypothetical story of a 35-year-old Christian man named Brian.

Sample Application

Brian's day begins in a small collectivity called a household or family. When he leaves that group, his path leads to another small group at work (meanwhile his children are at school and his wife at the club or at Bible study). Yet even on his way between these primary groups, Brian joins other small groups, such as his car pool or people he may meet for coffee just before work begins.   When the work day ends, Brian may stop at a fitness center interacting with a com-pletely different group. (Meanwhile his children are at basketball and cheerleading practice, and his wife is shopping.) Shortly after he regathers with the family group. They all head out to some school activity such as a musical program or an athletic event. *In an ordinary day most individuals move in and out of at least five or six other small-group settings.*

Although this may be a bit early in our study to narrow our thinking on dialogue, the interpersonal episode between two people provides the foundation of all communication. Inter-personal dialogues produce social activity and create culture, but *only when people believe and act upon a shared concept does it become significant to the interpersonal relationship.*

Practical Implications

One general exception to all of this is what sociologists call "audience behavior." Think about that exception in relation-ship to large classrooms, church services, political rallies, and even television viewing. We know that audience behavior does not easily create behavioral change in people. We also know that large organizations consist of many small groups. Several practical implications seem to emerge immediately:

1. A study of interpersonal relations and communications must focus on dialogue and small groups—not organizations and institutions.
2. Interpersonal communication is essential for interpersonal relations.
3. Interpersonal communication and interpersonal relations provide the context for social maturity and spiritual growth.
4. Our "audience behavior" society does not generally lend itself to the advancement of strong interpersonal communication/interpersonal relations.

Understanding Human Groups

While we are reviewing sociological theory it might be useful to begin with groups. One classic work on the subject (*The Human Group* by George Homans) develops a conceptual scheme focusing on three elements of human behavior that determine group outcomes: activity, interaction, and sentiment. Homans places a good deal of importance on interaction but also emphasizes a number of other elements that must be taken into account in the study of human behavior. One of the major hypotheses of the book states that "If the interactions between the members of a group are frequent in the external system, sentiments of liking will grow between them, and these sentiments will lead in turn to further interactions."[2]

Let us purge ourselves immediately of the view that communication always implies media and hardware. That is a form of communication but not the dimension we will be studying. You will want also to distinguish carefully between *communication theory* and *information theory*. The latter deals with terms like sender, receiver, message, encoding, decoding, and feedback. It forms the basis from which media communication has developed. Our concern in this book centers in interpersonal communication which deals exclusively with people and primarily with words. But let us get back to our three code words.

Mutuality, Presentality, Simultaneity

When we think about group members interacting and communicating, three words surface, again from the writings of

sociologists, particularly symbolic interactionists: *mutuality, presentality,* and *simultaneity.*

Mutuality deals with what happens in communication when all the parties recognize their responsibility for *message* and *meaning.* To put it another way, IPC and IPR are always mutual, never singular, always dialogue, never monologue.

Presentality tells us communication must be explained in terms of the here and now. Two weeks ago Brian may have felt very warm about his job, very confident and secure in his future. Then the company announced layoffs, cutbacks, and a possible relocation to another state. Details will still be forthcoming; but as Brian goes to work after such an announcement, immediate policy, not how the company may have related to him in the past, is the issue.

The idea of *simultaneity* argues that we cannot think of communication as a table tennis game in which messages are batted back and forth. Unlike the philosophical psychology of behaviorism, communication cannot be viewed as stimulus—response. Both (all) figures act simultaneously. Look again at the story of Brian.

Something went wrong at the basketball game, and on the way home Brian finds himself in an argument with his junior-high son Terry, age 13. In the heat of the discussion, Brian may be tempted to use an expression common to our culture: "You make me mad." However, that would be inaccurate, a denial of mutuality. An exact rendering of what happened between father and son during the forty-minute drive home would have to emphasize that Brian and Terry did it together. Both were involved in Brian's being upset.

Generalized Others and Significant Others

Like almost any professional field, sociology has its own jargon. People at work or church with whom we must speak on occasion or even quite regularly are called "generalized others." When our generalized others are "with us" in the communication flow, both meaning and message seem positive. Theoretically, if we could all be constantly in a state of openness, vulnerability, and transparency rejecting our hiding mechanisms, insecurities, and defensiveness, we would face very

few communication problems. When they did arise, we would
feel comfortable in asking one another for explanations.

Parallel to the generalized other is the "significant other."
We develop and share ideas in the presence of people signifi-
cant to us. We anticipate and act upon ideas in ways we
believe these significant others see us. We then build this
relationship by repetition and habit. This helps explain why
sons or daughters often act the same way in the presence of a
mother or father as they did ten, twenty, or thirty years ago or
why deacon-pastor conflicts tend to be so difficult to solve,
even over long periods of time.

Most husbands and wives think they know each other well,
and that may be largely true. They might be amazed in some
cases, however, to really know how the other thinks and acts
in unusual situations. Social theorists argue that persons can
change in any direction at any time if they can change signifi-
cant others, generalized others, and their handling of lang-
uage.

Our emphasis in this book has nothing to do with changing
significant others or generalized others; in fact, we reject that
notion (from such a view comes divorce, running away from
home, stamping out of church meetings, etc.). But changing
language? Understanding the process of IPR and IPC? Now
we are talking about possibility! We will come back to these as
the study proceeds.

The Nature of Communication

Communication does not occur in isolation, and it does not
have to be verbal. The process of socialization within groups
takes place primarily through interpersonal communication even
when it results in hostility rather than agreement. Effective
leaders learn to participate in the communication process in such
a positive way that their involvement bolsters the unity of the
group and enhances the quality of interpersonal relationships.

Definition of Communication

Perhaps a simple definition might be helpful here: *commu-
nication is meaning exchange, not word exchange.* As someone
once remarked, "I'm sure you believe you understand what

you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard was not what I really meant." Such is the problem we tackle in this book.

Keep in mind the context of our study—group leadership in Christian organizations. We have to focus first on Interpersonal Communication as a dialogue between two people. In the broader sense, however, the communication process has to reach out to the organization: church, mission, parachurch ministry, publishing house, and whatever other setting you envision. Ernest Bormann and associates speak primarily from an information-processing point of view, but they pick up the difficulty of transferring the communication process into the wider context.

> Communication problems are intensified by the fact that persons in an organization are in a continual state of flux. Staff additions and replacements may be hired. New policies and procedures are continually modifying the hierarchical structures.
>
> All other things being equal, people will communicate most frequently with the people geographically closest to them.
>
> All other things being equal, people will communicate most frequently with people closest to their own status within the organization.
>
> All other things being equal, people will communicate most frequently with people in their own unit.[3]

Context of Communication

We have not said much about the social situation in which messages are produced. Context deals with the general surroundings of any given communication transaction, and the personal elements people bring to the context are far more important than the physical environment. For example, *sensitivity*, one's skill and ability to perceive and interpret with empathy, is crucial to the process. *Self-disclosure* deals with revealing the truth about oneself including desires, needs, or goals, and doing so honestly and candidly. *Trust* makes self-disclosure possible. It gives us "permission" to disclose ourselves to others. *Risk* (the willingness to accept adverse outcomes that may result from trusting other people in the

relationship/communication milieu) is also a factor within the context of communication. Gerald Wilson explains these four aspects:

> Thus feedback, sensitivity, self-disclosure, trust, and risk are interrelated. The ability to interact in a game-free exchange—one in which the participants are open to each other; one in which they grow—depends on these interpersonal events.[4]

One non-technical way of thinking about context is to substitute the word *climate*. One thinks immediately about temperature, sunshine or rain, and other aspects of the physical environment. We also talk commonly about *climate* with respect to interpersonal communication. An angry husband and wife, staring sullenly at one another across the table in frozen silence, have created a certain climate for that moment. Obviously they have rejected self-disclosure and trust and therefore have designed a very poor climate for communication.

Communication and Organizational Theory

Three Eras of Theory

If we were to review the history of organizational structure, we might agree with Amitai Etzioni that the twentieth century has contained essentially three eras: (1) classical theory of scientific management, (2) the human relations era, and (3) the structuralist approach that, more or less, synthesized the first two. One senses that we are in a change mode now, moving from structuralism toward a cybernetic-systems approach appropriate for the knowledge explosion at the end of this century.

Early years of research ushered in the human relations era (about 1925-1950), moving management away from its obsession with formal organizations, rational behavior, and maximal production, toward the view that the most satisfying or rewarding organization would be most efficient. However, the pendulum swung too far, failing to deal with the balance.

Goal Achievement and Communication

We are now in the latter days of the synthetic period of structuralism in which goal achievement and the meeting of human needs have been recognized as constant, ever-present competing forces in every organization. Most organizations, including churches and seminaries, still err in the direction of goal achievement rather than interpersonal communication and need-meeting.

Years ago Amitai Etzioni wrote:

> The ultimate source of the organizational dilemmas reviewed up to this point is the incomplete matching of the personalities of the participants with their organizational roles. If personalities could be shaped to fit specific organizational roles, or organizational roles could fit specific personalities, many of the pressures to displace goals, much of the need to control performance, and a good part of the alienation would disappear.[5]

When I first read that, my eyes began to sparkle, and my mind moved forward in anticipation, only to find this noted authority suggesting that such personality shaping and role matching is virtually impossible. A great deal of research has been done since the publication of that work more than thirty years ago, but the problems have not changed. If they had, it would hardly be necessary to prepare this book on communication and conflict management, which many church leaders believe may be the most dominant problem Christian organizations face at the end of the twentieth century.

Cyclical Organizational Patterns

Part of this problem may simply arise from the cyclical pattern of an organization. Dissatisfaction with existing structures tends to produce an incipient organization, which then gives way to formal organization through the rise of visionary leadership. The organization then moves toward maximal efficiency during which rational organizational structure (bureaucracy) replaces the initial charismatic leadership. First generation leaders die off, and administration comes to be viewed as a means and not an end.

Then the program of the institution becomes all-important, and what was *communication process* becomes *information process*. Now workers in the organization no longer doubt they exist to serve it, whether or not it serves them at all. Ultimately overinstitutionalization ensues, and death comes in one form or another. Death may not be extinction but merely spiritual, moral, or social stagnation. Apply that formula to any organization you know—a church, a Christian college or seminary, a mission board, or even a family—and you will discern, to a greater or lesser extent, how each of the various phases fit.

Philosophy of Ministry and Leadership

Eugene Habecker said one of the reasons for leadership "is that the primary makeup of the organization is people." Using the Bible to explain, he went on to say:

> Scripture well illustrates the point that people change and leaders change. The Israelites were a different people under the leadership of Moses or Joshua than they were under subsequent leaders. The apostles performed differently after Jesus rose from the dead and returned to heaven than they did while He was still on earth. In the context of our families, our priorities as parents are different when the children are all under age ten than when all of them are in their teens. People change, leaders change, and organizations change. Leaders must be sensitive to these kinds of changes and respond accordingly.[6]

Review of the Literature

A great deal of literature was written during the 1980s on the subject of leadership. Perhaps the general social vacuum created such a need that some felt constrained to attack the problem directly. David Klopfenstein has provided a masterful review of that literature, with special focus on the models used to illustrate what he called "some Christian concerns of leading." Like many before him, Klopfenstein ended up with an emphasis on Bennis and Nanus and their book, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*:

These new leaders are identified by four strategies: vision, communication, trust, and empowerment. While these strategies may be qualities of Christian ministry and leadership, the authors were in fact describing business executives. To the Christian leader, these social science data are most helpful in shaping our questions of inquiry, refining our methods of research and teaching, building our models of ministry, and contributing to the field of leadership.[7]

Principles of an Effective Management Philosophy

What kind of philosophy of ministry creates a climate in which IPC and IPR can flourish, not only as a means but also as a biblical end? In our opinion, which has been developed in greater detail in a recent book entitled *Feeding and Leading*[8], it will be a decentralized ministry that rejects autocratic leadership except in the most unique and demanding situations. The ministry will be one in which the body functions together as a team, providing a wide variety of need-meeting instructive experiences.

We obtained these principles of ministry by generalizing the way the disciples understood the teaching of Jesus and applied that teaching in the Book of Acts and in the preparation of the New Testament Epistles. Teaching and preaching may be essential, but they are carried out within a climate of caring and nurture that not only makes possible IPC and IPR but elevates them to a major goal within the organization. In short, a people-centered ministry provides congregations with the privilege and responsibility to think and strategize about ministry without having everything so absolutized and programmed that people merely serve the bureaucracy.

Conclusion

We close this first chapter by referring to the words of Peter Drucker, widely viewed as the father of modern management. At Claremont Graduate School where Drucker teaches, the curriculum of the Peter F. Drucker Graduate Management Center centers in the belief that management cannot be viewed merely as a set of quantitative skills, but it should be seen as a profoundly human activity. The classes do not em-

phasize specialization but integration. Drucker himself acknowledged, "Management always lives, works, and practices in and for an institution. An institution is a human community held together by a bond that, next to the tie of family, is the most powerful human bond—the work bond."[9]

If leaders want to win and develop people, they must know their followers—their spiritual conditions, their personal abilities and limitations, their weaknesses and strengths, and their needs. That knowledge presupposes a highly developed, indeed, a spiritually sophisticated network of interpersonal relations and interpersonal communication—a goal toward which this book is dedicated.

Notes

1. Robert W. Kirkland, "Conflict Management in the Church," *Search* (Summer 1990): 13.

2. George C. Homans, *The Human Group* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1950).

3. Ernest G. Bormann, et al., *Interpersonal Communication in the Modern Organization* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 47-48.

4. Gerald L. Wilson, et al, *Interpersonal Growth Through Communication* (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Publishers, 1985), 16.

5. Amitai Etzioni, *Modern Organizations* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 75.

6. Eugene B. Habecker, *The Other Side of Leadership* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987), 29-30.

7. David E. Klopfenstein, "Research in Leadership," *Christian Education Journal* (Winter 1989):52.

8. Kenneth O. Gangel, *Feeding and Leading* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989).

9. Peter Drucker, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 10, 1988, 83.

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COMMUNICATION MODELS

Introduction

Many believe that changes in the fast-moving world of communication have left the church behind. Could it be that congregational fights, church splits, and the generally short tenure of ministerial staffs stem from something as basic as communication deficiencies? Not only *could* it be, it probably *is* in many of those unfortunate cases.

Over fifty-five years ago Elton Mayo wrote a book entitled *The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization*. The industrial civilization has given way to the information society, but the human problems persist. One must understand, Mayo was a product of his time, basically chronicling the transfer in management studies from the scientific management era of Frederick Taylor to the human relations era that followed the Hawthorne studies.

Much of Mayo's emphasis on human factors is still highly relevant today. For example, he argued that "the chief difficulty of our time is the breakdown of the social codes that formerly disciplined us to effective working together," and "we have too few administrators alert to the fact that it is a human-social and not an economic problem which they face."[1] These ideas, still applicable in the 1990s, bring us back again to the emphasis on interpersonal communication as *the transmission of ideas between persons in a language common to both*.

No two people can meet without transmitting and reacting to signals of some kind. Communication of one depends on the response of the other and vice versa. Positive communication promotes appropriate attitudes and actions. For Christians,

those attitudes and actions must line up with biblical standards for communicating persons and the roles they hold.

Of course, language does not merely consist of words: it includes any means by which we convey facts, ideas, attitudes, and feelings to other people. Sometimes language can be a barrier to communication because abstract words and evaluative terms become ambiguous. Even concrete terms achieve their true significance only in the mind of the person using them. In so far as the users are able to transmit their meanings to others, they have achieved genuine communication.

Over the past fifty years communication models have been developed in industry to enhance communication in the organizational setting. For example, the *rational-logical model,* based on Aristotelian logic and organizational structure, used as its foundation the work of Korzybski and others. The *persuasion-emotional need model* deals with motivations, emotions, and territories and again links to Korzybski, or perhaps even more to Roethlisberger. The *social/nonrational model,* emphasizing group and self-space, consists of emphases on sentiments, social structure, status, group roles, and syndromes. The latter takes its cue from the work of Pareto and Henderson.

Primarily because of their complexity and the necessity of having some background in social psychology to really draw any value from such models, we only mention them for some advanced students who will want to look further. In this chapter, however, we want to draw upon five more-basic models that provide a balance between information theory and communication theory.

Field of Experience Model

This has been a favorite communication model for a quarter century. Developed by Dr. Donald Ely at Syracuse University, the model is both complete and simple. Dr. Ely wrote about his concept:

> The communication process is dynamic, ongoing, ever changing, and continuous. There is no beginning, no ending, not even a fixed sequence. The components within a process

interact, each element affecting another. When the process is diagrammed, as in the drawing, we arrest its dynamism and analyze it as a static representation. But it is not at rest. It is always moving.[2]
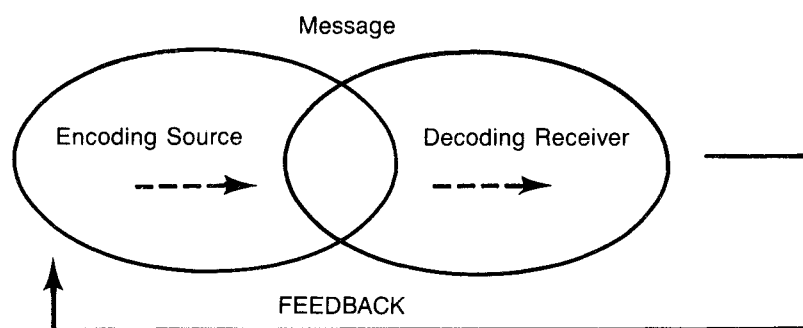
Message

Encoding Source

Decoding Receiver

FEEDBACK

The title of the model emphasizes that broad climate or milieu in which all communication takes place. We discussed this in chapter one. Leaders can ensure better reception of their message if they take into consideration the "field of experience" with which followers must deal. Included in such a field are attitudes, intellectual levels, cultural backgrounds, emotional readiness, and numerous other elements.

The *source* of an idea in person-to-person communication is the mind of the communicator. When a message has been decided on, it must be verbalized or symbolized in some way so it can be communicated to other people. Information theorists refer to this as *encoding*. Encoding is futile unless accompanied by an adequate process of *decoding*, and two things are significant here. First, if the originator of the message wishes the receiver to decode properly, he or she must take pains to encode the message clearly in a form that will be understandable to the *receiver*. Furthermore, the sender must be somewhat confident that the receiver has the wherewithal to carry on the decoding process.

The term *receiver* represents the person for whom the message is intended: work group, wife or husband, children, students, or a friend. Feedback helps the source interpret

whether or not the receiver has understood and internalized the message.

The central poignant idea of the Ely model shows that *no message gets through until decoding overlaps encoding*. Ely would add that two people engaged in a relationship must possess some level of overlapping experience if they hope to achieve successful communication. Each must understand what the other thinks in terms of his or her own world.

Interpersonal Episode Model

Only slightly more complex than the Ely model is the Interpersonal Episode Model (IEM) that definitely focuses on human-interaction rather than the information-processing slant of communication.
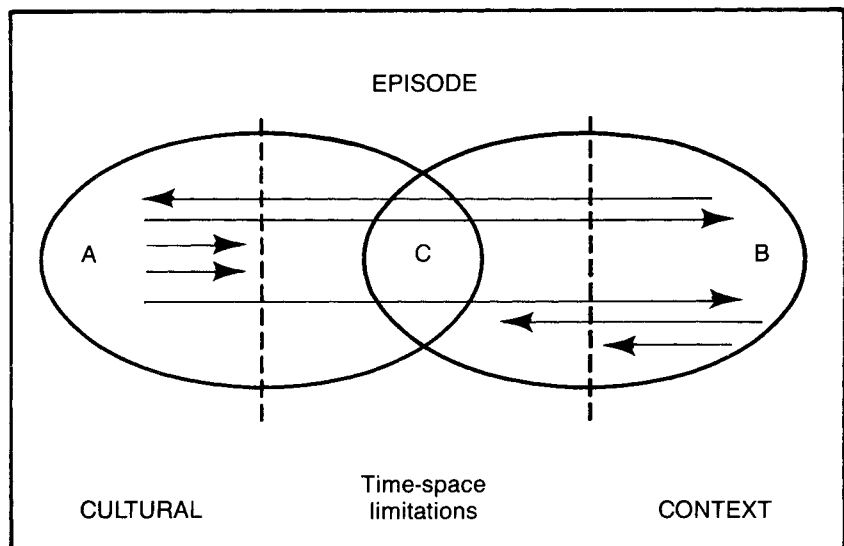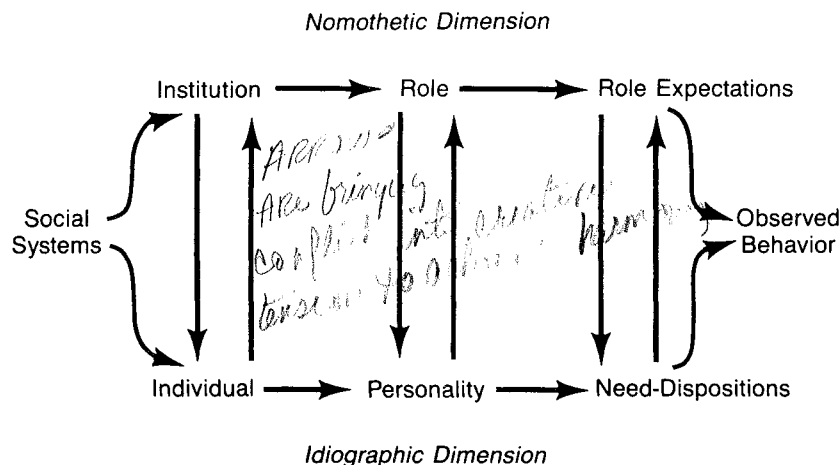

In the model, C equals concepts, categories, and constructs that are shared. The episode takes place within time-space limitations in a cultural context. Each person (A and B) brings his or her concepts to the episode, and the overlap represents the commonality of persons in interaction. Remember, this all happens simultaneously.

Some of A's statements to B (or B's to A) proceed through the commonality (note the arrows), but others do not because of the many impeding elements that hinder communication, such as the time-space limitation. The cultural context dilutes interpersonal meanings. Concepts and categories are not all held in commonality. A and B talk *to* each other, sometimes talk *by* each other, and hopefully talk *with* each other.

Transactional Model

Although management science research deals with changing either individuals or institutions, many experts have decided on the transactional approach connecting the nomothetic and idiographic dimensions. In reality, these dimensions exist in constant relationship to and interaction with one another, rather than in separate spheres. Individuals' values will determine their behavior unless they compromise their values for some item of secondary importance, such as salary or position. Therefore, organizational values must somehow be integrated with those of individuals.

The model below, developed by Getzels and Guba, clarifies the kind of difficulties that arise in the institution-individual balance game.[3] The top line indicates institutional plans and

Nomothetic Dimension

Institution ⟶ Role ⟶ Role Expectations

Social Systems

Observed Behavior

Individual ⟶ Personality ⟶ Need-Dispositions

Idiographic Dimension

roles. The bottom line focuses on the individual. The vertical arrows show the necessity of bringing the conflict into creative tension to achieve harmony in the organization.

Certainly both the organization and the individual can change, but an emphasis on changing either one to the sacrifice of the other will lead to confusion and turmoil.

The Scripture figuratively speaks of the church as a building and of its members as various blocks of stone in the framework of that building. Just as the architects of a physical building take into account the qualities of the materials with which they work, so must the organizational architects of the church (or other Christian organizations) consider the characteristics of the personnel who make up the structure of their institutions.

The tasks of the human architect are considerably more complex. We know so little about the qualities of human materials, and they are notoriously changeable. Some people reject the organization because they feel they have given but not received. Others pose the opposite problem of taking but wanting to give nothing in return. That results in a sterile organization, which if Christian, becomes a liability rather than an asset to the ongoing ministry of God's work in the world.

If IPR and IPC are to thrive in the contemporary church, we must move to flexibility rather than rigidity in coping with institutional tension. Spontaneity and openness provide the new materials out of which creative energy can come to recharge the communication batteries of Christian organizations in these days of opportunity.

We seek not to baptize secular research and stuff it, still damp, into the organizational potholes on the road the church must travel. Rather, we apply biblical principles to communication, better understood because we have taken the time to grapple with the secular research.

Management Process Model

R. Alec MacKenzie is a name as common to students of administrative process as Peter Drucker or Douglas MacGregor. As a consultant, MacKenzie has attempted to pull to-

gether in one single (and quite overwhelming) diagram all the various components of the management process.[4] Represented here are only four concentric rings of a nine-ring oval. Since the inclusion of components expands toward the outward boundaries of the oval, we also have here the most simple and foundational segment of the diagram.
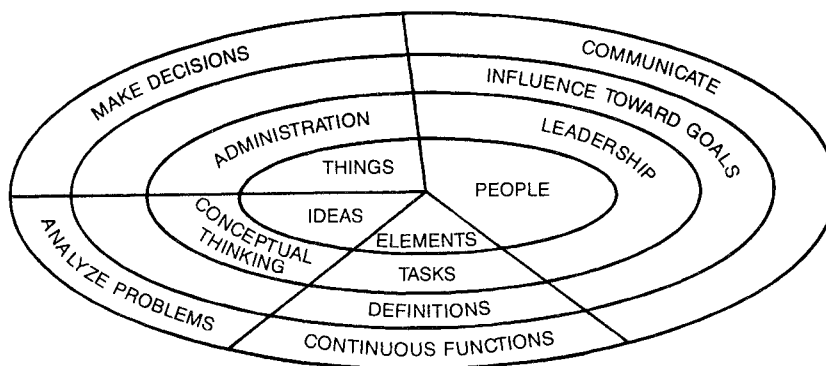
Notice that *communication*, along with *analyzing problems* and *making decisions*, appears as a continuous function because it occurs throughout the management process rather than in any particular sequence. Communication must be ongoing for many (perhaps all) functions and activities to be effective. In reality, of course, the whole process merges and if not kept dynamic and active, tends to collapse on itself and implode.

Who is responsible for sustaining the continuous functions, notably communication? One could correctly answer, "Everyone in the organization"; however, as always, the buck stops at the desk of the leader. The senior pastor is responsible for the communication of the church staff and other leadership.

Harold Westing observed a parallel between divorce and church staff disintegration: "Counselors suggest that 86% of American divorces are brought about by poor communication.