

Chapter 1
Reasoning in a Democratic Society
from
Public Speaking: An Idea Focus
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[Return to Table of Contents](#)

General Educational Objectives: This chapter helps you:

1. understand the nature and workings of public speaking in a democratic society.
2. appreciate the importance of public speaking in a democratic society.
3. function more responsibly and ethically in a democratic society.

Specific Testable Objectives: As a result of studying this chapter, you should be able to:

1. discuss how public speaking is a learned skill.
2. identify personal and social functions of public speaking.
3. distinguish reasoned discourse from other means of affecting behavior.
4. define five arenas of communication.
5. explain how reasoned discourse can function at all levels of communication.

You are reading a book designed to help you become an effective public speaker. I trust that, if you don't already, you will come to appreciate that becoming an effective communicator is a life-long endeavor. This text will help you develop and improve many relevant skills. These skills are essential and will empower you to succeed in any future speaking situation. However, you will recognize that these skills are not the entirety of what you need in order to be most effective.

Likewise, during this term, you will learn many rules and principles that will help you anticipate what will be required of you in situations that you have never been before; the anticipation will enable you to be successful in many of these situations. However, as you probably know already, we humans often responded in ways that are unpredictable: The rules and principles won't always be correct. So, remember: rules and principles are guides to help you; they should not be your master. The successful person in communication is the one who understands the rules well enough to discern when to break them, and also realizes that sometimes his or her best isn't going to be sufficient for success, at least not with the first attempt.

Then, often as you read this book, you may find that I am telling you something that is in disharmony with what you think you know about public communication. In those cases, it might help you to know that I have over 40 years of experience in teaching public speaking in the beginning course. I also have many years of actual public speaking before diverse audiences. However, I don't ask that you believe me just because of my experiences, only that you give

me an opportunity to reason with you about the process and to be open to the possibility that indeed I do have key insight about speaking in public.

I trust that you want to improve your skills at public speaking because you recognize that they will help you to be more employable and/or to be more successful in your chosen field. I hope that you also will consider that, as a person skilled in public communication, you will be a more effective leader as you function as a citizen in our democratic system. Indeed, we as a people, through our governments at all levels, help to support higher education because we believe firmly that an educated citizenry is essential for democracy at its best.

For a society to survive, it is essential to have control. For a democracy to survive, it is essential to have freedom. Thus, there exists a paradox in the democratic society. The key to this paradox requires a large measure of individual control directed freely to maintaining the democracy for the good of others as well as oneself: i.e. a high degree of enlightened self interest. Specifically, we must all have internalized a belief that what is good for us individually is the protection of a democratic system. This belief is instilled in us through symbols.

For a society to prosper, it must change and adapt, in reasonable, productive, appropriate ways. It is often difficult for us, as individuals, to know what behaviors are required of us to help produce these changes and to adapt to them as they occur. It is sometimes necessary, then, for us to be taught ways to behave so that we can adapt to these changes in a manner that benefits us without doing harm to the fabric of the society that supports us. Often, this teaching takes the form of informative speaking. We all benefit from quality informative speeches. In like manner, as citizens we have a responsibility to support the system by making informative speeches designed to help others. In Chapters 4 -10, we will focus on how to generate quality informative speeches.

In like manner, in order to generate appropriate change in a democracy, we need to engage in overtures to persuade others to believe that the change will benefit them as well as us. We also must listen with an open mind to those who believe differently than we do. Because our system of society depends on all sides of an issue having a fair hearing, we each have an obligation to ensure that our viewpoint is presented in the most persuasive manner possible. This is best done in some form of persuasive speech. In Chapters 11-21, we discuss issues of persuasive communication.

Participation in public communication is a moral obligation of the citizens of a democratic society. Each of us should, with maximum good judgment, use ideas in a strategic way to help others to change, and, to function with enlightened self interest. This view supports, as ethical, the manipulation of symbols toward the single goal of helping others to reach their own conclusion as to what is best for them. The listeners must be able to make these decisions when not under any direct influence or consequences of the speaker. See Inset 1-1 for a categorizing of means of affecting beliefs and behaviors that fall outside of the positions I am advocating.

From an ethical viewpoint, a verity we need to hold is that the most moral way to effect change in others is through reasoned discourse. The primary goal of this chapter is to establish the importance of reasoning through symbols as the most important means of effecting social action.

Inset 1-1

SELF-INSTRUCTION BLOCK

Q: What are some other means of accomplishing change in behavior beyond changing a person's beliefs?

A: Could be any or all of the following:

Reflex – one of several triggers built into the body. For example, someone can make me jump by saying boo.

Signed response – a learned and specific (set) way to respond to a particular stimulus in the right context. For example, sound a siren behind me while I'm driving and I will automatically brake.

Suggestion -- any unthinking, automatic response to a prompt from another. For example, if you raise your palm forward as I'm walking toward you, I'm likely to stop.

Environmental change – a complex reflex response. For example, brighten a room and I'll likely be more talkative in it.

Maturation – natural changes that occur as a person ages. For example, I began to respond more positively to spicy food as certain of my taste buds changed.

Coercion—any response that is due to fear of reprisals from the speaker that are linked to noncompliance. For example, if a thief aims a pistol at me, I will give him or her my money.

Reward (positive coercion) -- any response to a promise of desirable consequences offered by the speaker. For example, I may clean my desk if my wife promises an ice-cream pie if I do.

Social pressure -- anytime a person responds due to a sense of obligation to another person or a group. For example, I wear a tux to the wedding of a family member.

Q: How does symbolic action differ from signed response and other items in the list above?

A. In symbolic action, the response is not predictable; the person selects from several possible alternatives in deciding how to respond. In the others, there is one predictable and, generally, immediate response.

Q: How can you distinguish all of the items in the list above, in general, from the use of symbols to effect ethical change?

Before you answer, please consider the elemental difference in what is manipulated to produce change: That is, what is the “agent of change” Also, what is changed, simply behavior or beliefs of the individual.

Is the person acting to get what he/she wants, or changing what he/she wants in any way?

A: Ethical manipulation uses symbols to change the person’s view of what she/he wants to do. In coercion, a message is involved in the production of the effect, but it is not the agent of change. It might be argued that the individual has the freedom to select whether to act or to suffer the consequences; but, in actuality, coercion works because the person does not perceive “suffering the consequences” as a viable option. It is the intent of the speaker to remove choice, not to encourage the person to select. In an atmosphere of freedom, the intent of the speaker is to help the individual feel and believe that the speaker is advocating a most reasonable alternative, but the choice remains with the listener. The key difference is that the speaker is the source of the consequences

Efficiency of Reasoned Discourse

Changing individuals by reasoning with them is the most ethical means to produce change. You may question the effectiveness of this approach. It may seem that other means of producing change in behavior are more effective. Certainly force does, with rare exception, get results. It makes more sense, when information is needed immediately for national security, to get it by coercion; we’re not likely to change the mind of a person who believes so firmly in his or her cause as to become a suicide bomber for that cause.

Alternative means of generating desired behavior are clearly more effective in the short run. Further, in the long run, they are also capable of maintaining change especially when the operable influence remains near enough to be felt by the person. Indeed, research shows that coercion can produce long-range attitude change, as in the case of racial integration. Probably good parenting is a combination of forms of affecting the immediately desired behavior with the constant instilling of desired beliefs.

Recognizing the impact of other forms of producing change does not mean that changing beliefs is ineffective. Changing beliefs can produce immediate change and is most effective in maintaining change over time. Examination of social movements in the USA produces significant evidence of what change can be produced. Consider the women’s movement, the movement for racial equality, the movement against drinking and driving and the drive to buckle up, just to name a few. Each of these have made great strides in changing behavior, and each trace their origins back to single individuals,

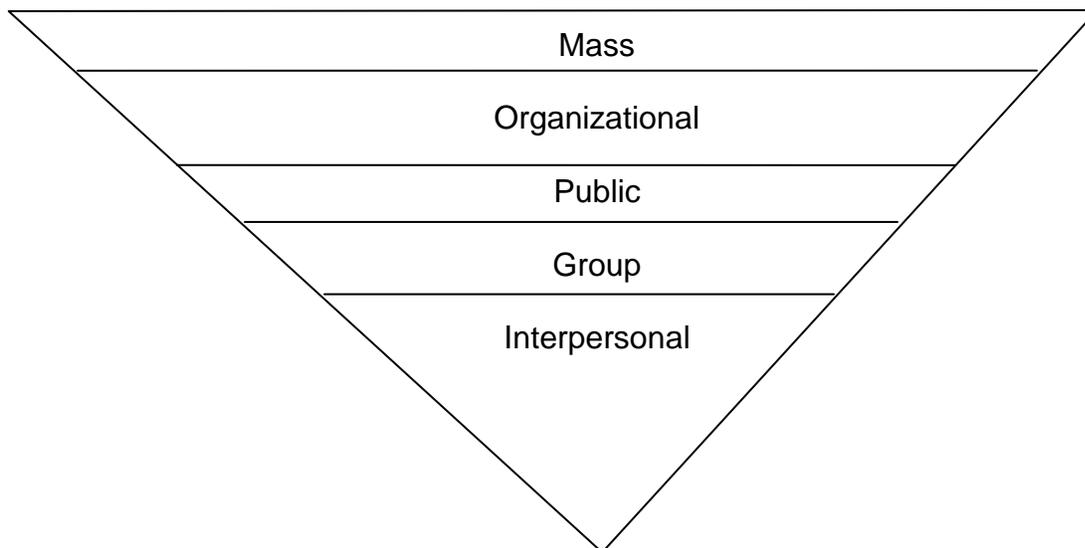
individuals exactly like you, who made great contributions in either starting the movement or igniting it only through the use of communication.

Arenas where Reasoned Discourse is Needed

While this book focuses on giving speeches to an assembled audience, we hope that you don't limit your view of public communication to this area. Public communication can occur whenever the need exists to either change the thinking of others or to gain help in recognizing how our own thinking needs to change in regards to factors that affect the society of which we are apart. Below, I provide a brief discussion of public communication in five areas of communication: See Figure 1-1: The Cone of Arenas, which is patterned after Ruesch and Bateson's Levels of Communication.

Figure 1-1

The Cone of Arenas



Mass

As you are already aware, our technological age is saturated with attempts to change our behavior. You are probably also aware of the means that you can use, through mass media, to influence others. You may already be involved in these media, like with a personal blog. Hopefully, you already see all these uses of modern media as part of our public communication. While not teaching you about mass communication, this course will enable you, not only to use media more effectively, but also more ethically.

Inset 1-2

Helpful Information Relevant to Meaningful Participation in the Mass Arena

Steps in Producing Adoption matched to **Stages in the Adoption Process**

Gain Attention
Inform
Justify
Develop Intent
Actuate

Awareness
Interest
Evaluation
Trial
Adopt

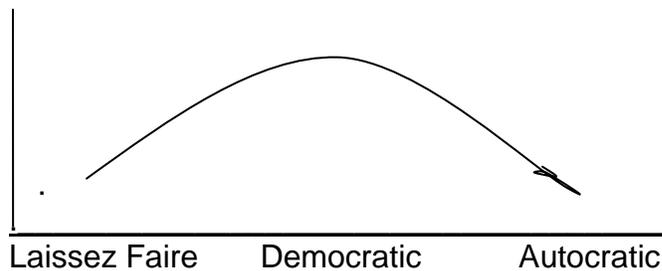
Organizational

You may, also, already be involved in organizational communication, such as in a professional organization (PRSA, SNEA, FFA, and/or a fraternal organization). Participation in organizations typically increases on entering the work place. Even if you work for a small company or own your own, you will find it linked to suppliers and customers in a network – an organization. You are likely to become more involved with service organizations and networks for recreation and leisure activities. Again, you will find, if you haven't already, that these networks depend on public speaking, and themselves are continually promoting behaviors they see as important in our society. Certainly, this course will enable you to be more effective in providing ethical leadership in these organizations.

Inset 1-3

Helpful Information Relevant to Work in Organizations
Adams' Arch of Leadership.

Faith
In
Reasoned
Communication



Public

Standing before an audience, both to tell them information that they may need and to persuade them, have long been esteemed, especially in democratic societies. In Greece, at the roots of democracy, Aristotle was teaching *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos* to his public speaking students. These ideas are represented in current advice to be logical, to use motive appeals, and to maintain a worthy image. These skills come naturally to very few, and yet can be learned by most individuals. It is a matter of learning the principles and developing the skills. It is also through developing the patience and the concern for others. Having seen many students become quality communicators, I know that you can also. It is for this reason that I have written this book. I feel confident to say to you that by studying this book, you will become a more effective speaker. Also, you will develop sufficient abilities as to be an encouragement to others and to be a more ethical member of a free society.

Inset 1-4

Helpful Information Relevant to Presenting Speeches

The Classical Canons

Invention: create and develop quality ideas

Arrangement: order your ideas in a logical framework

Style: word you ideas in the most appropriate way

Delivery: present your ideas in the most effective manner

Memory: keep your ideas in mind as your speaking

Group

Many of the times you're sitting around discussing a common topic with a group of individuals, you are not involved in public communication. However, the times when these discussions reflect public discourse also exist, especially if you are in, or when you enter, the work force. Most business decisions are made through committee. In those discussions, you will find much that you learn from this text to be relevant. In addition, I'd hope you'd carry the essence of the ethical stance found in this book into your other discussions. For example, you should work to influence the norms that function in all of your groups to be open to new ideas and to permit the members opportunity for independent thought and action.

Inset 1-5

Helpful Information Relevant to Working with Group

Modified Dewey Problem Solving Method.

Define the Problem: analyze the problem sufficiently to have a clear understanding of its causes, scope and impact

Establish Criteria: establish abstract standards against which to weigh the particulars of any solution

List Possible Solutions: research similar situations and brainstorm to generate all possible means of solving the problem

Analyze Possible Solutions: evaluate each solution in terms of the established criteria.

Select Best Solution: seek consensus where possible in supporting the group recommended solution.

Interpersonal

Even more than in the group arena, you will find that your direct interactions with a single person often are personal, not public in nature. However, even in your most intimate relationships, you discuss issues of public importance. You need to respect the other person enough to know that she or he is capable of understanding and accepting a reasonable position and to point out where your position isn't reasonable. Also, you need to engage your own ability to do the same, and to change your position when it fails the test. Indeed, your goal in all communication should be to have this respect for your audience, your position, and yourself.

Inset 1-6

Helpful Information Relevant to Interpersonal Relationships

Some Disconfirming Responses

Impervious: ignoring the comments of another

Interrupting: not allowing another to finish stating an idea

Irrelevant: responding with a topic not connected to the speaker's

Impersonal: responding to a personal request as if it wasn't personal

Ambiguous: responding so as the person cannot understand the answer

Incongruous: letting the actions contradict the verbal response

Inset 1-7

SELF-INSTRUCTION BLOCK

Q: What is a good definition for each of the five arenas of communication, as used above?

A: Mass – Where media is used to reach many diverse audiences.
Organization – Interactions among various groups in a designated network.
Public -- Presentations of one person directly to an audience.
Group – Discussions among a few people on a common topic
Interpersonal -- Talks between two individuals.

Summary

In this chapter, I have argued for the moral use of reasoning to instill, maintain and change the beliefs and thus behavior in others. It is my strong belief that this course in basic communication will enable you to better contribute to a free society. I also presented five arenas of communication and suggested how you could contribute to democracy within each. In the public area, that will be primarily through being a quality listener and an effective speaker. The remainder of this book is designed to provide the essential information needed to help you become that effective speaker.

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