

# 1

## COMMUNICATION

### Words Are Not Enough

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

**After students have completed this chapter, they will be able to do the following:**

1. Identify the importance of communication skills in criminal justice professions
2. Describe the process of communication
3. Distinguish between the verbal and nonverbal components of communication
4. Describe the flow of communication in organizations
5. Explain the impact of generational differences on the communication process

*For law enforcement professionals, communication skills are the most important of all the skills necessary to succeed in your profession. Understanding this reality is a must for law enforcement officers.<sup>1</sup>*

—Lt. Jim Glennon, Lombard, IL (Ret.),  
*PoliceOne*

*As correctional officers, we owe it to ourselves and our partners to strive for quality leadership in our chosen profession. . . . It's no secret that communication is key to successfully doing this job. Learn how to communicate effectively. . . . Communicate with your peers, whether good or bad in nature, and do so directly but diplomatically.<sup>2</sup>*

—Harriet Fox, California  
correctional officer, *CorrectionsOne*

*In the case of security officers, being able to carry out a conversation in a clear and concise manner is a must. It eliminates the risk of getting lost in translation and being misunderstood. On the other hand, an officer's inability to communicate properly can restrict his job performance.<sup>3</sup>*

—Jonathan Maliwat, *Security Matters*  
magazine

The dangers of law enforcement are well documented. The threat of bodily harm is a daily occurrence. However, navigating the obstacles on the path to effective communication can also be particularly hazardous for unprepared or ill-prepared criminal justice professionals. In an era when the law enforcement profession has become identified with racism and racist statements of officers as well as a lack of communication skills—demonstrated via the use of malapropisms of personnel—an effort to train law enforcement personnel to use communication skills effectively to enhance the image created by speech is essential.

Turn on the television, access any radio station or news network, check any social media site, read any newspaper, and you hear about the latest problems in the law enforcement community. A police officer accepts a bribe, a state trooper assaults a speeding motorist, a federal agent supplies sensitive information to a foreign power—mishandled evidence, perjury on the witness stand—the accounts go on and on.

Review the fiascos involving the fatal shooting of Walter Scott in North Charleston, South Carolina; the fatal shooting of Daniel Kevin Harris, a deaf driver, stopped by a North Carolina trooper for speeding; the applying of an improper chokehold to Eric Garner by a New York City police officer that resulted in Garner's death; and the fatal shooting of Oscar Grant III by a BART police officer in Oakland, California—all cases in which law enforcement failed in its attempt to serve the ends of justice. Not only did law enforcement fail, but its image was severely tarnished because of these abysmal events. Can a single cause or a series of causes be identified that resulted in these less-than-successful outcomes? While poor planning and execution might be the explanation offered by law enforcement, more likely than not the proximal cause may be a lack of adequate communication skills on the part of officers, agents, and other personnel.

Communication issues arising in the corrections area occur with regularity, too. Recent occurrences in Cayuga County, New York, at the Auburn Correctional Facility show that corrections officers can find themselves embroiled in investigations in which they are subjects because of misleading or false statements made against inmates. In several cases involving inmates at the Auburn Correctional Facility, Corrections Officer Matthew Cornell fabricated evidence against nine inmates, claiming those inmates possessed contraband that he collected from them. Mr. Cornell went on to testify against these inmates, and they were convicted based almost entirely on his testimony. The Cayuga County district attorney Brian Leeds agreed to dismiss the cases in which Cornell was the complaining witness. However, Mr. Leeds reiterated that the inmates involved in these complaints voluntarily pleaded guilty to the charges—despite Cornell's alleged wrongdoing. He explained that the cases were dismissed as a precautionary measure and that no evidence existed that any wrongdoing or misconduct occurred in these cases.

The defense attorneys representing inmates at the Auburn Correctional Facility disagree with Mr. Leeds's perceptions and explanation. They believe other corrections officers to be involved in these acts. As one attorney pointed out, "As it turns out, the least 'credible' people in our society were telling the truth while trusted officials fabricated evidence."<sup>4</sup>

Private security officers have been embroiled in situations, sometimes as off-duty police officers, in which they have overstepped the bounds of their legally prescribed responsibilities. So all criminal justice agencies have a mandate to better train and equip their personnel to communicate effectively within their jurisdictions—whether a correctional facility, jail, community, or corporation—to avoid bad publicity and perceptions of bias or wrongdoing on their part.

## WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

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**Communication** has been defined in numerous fashions. Notwithstanding the varying definitions, however, the common elements in any communication process

are the exchange of information through a shared system of symbols between two or more persons. The essence of communication is conveying a message—a common understanding between the sender and the receiver. This concept is not particularly difficult or abstract when viewed superficially but is one for which the true key to grasping the essence of communication is appreciating all of the nuances involved in this process. When people communicate optimally, both the sender and the receiver can transmit, receive, and process information.

In the communication process, the parties involved engage in certain unconscious behaviors which direct the flow of communication. When we break this process down, we see that it involves a **sender**, a **receiver**, a **message**, a **communication channel**, **encoding**, **decoding**, and **feedback**.<sup>5</sup>

The sender of the message is the party with whom the idea originated. Think of a light bulb being turned on when the switch is flipped, and you have the concept of what the sender experiences when he or she has an idea and wishes to communicate that information to another party or parties. The sender then encodes the message by converting his or her idea into words or gestures that will convey meaning to the receiver. In essence, encoding involves putting the idea into a shared system of language that both parties understand. A major problem can occur at this stage of the communication cycle since words have different meanings for different persons. To avoid this mishap of **bypassing** (a barrier to communication that will be discussed later in the chapter), the sender must choose his or her words carefully, selecting those with concrete meanings that are sure to elicit the same meanings from both sender and receiver. An important point to remember is that since the sender is the person who initiated the communication process, he or she has primary responsibility for its success. Taking care to ensure the selection of the appropriate words or symbols is the first step in successful communication.

The communication channel is the medium by which the message is physically transmitted. Messages may be transmitted by phone (voice or text), e-mail, letter,

**TABLE 1.1 ■ Selecting the Appropriate Communication Channel**

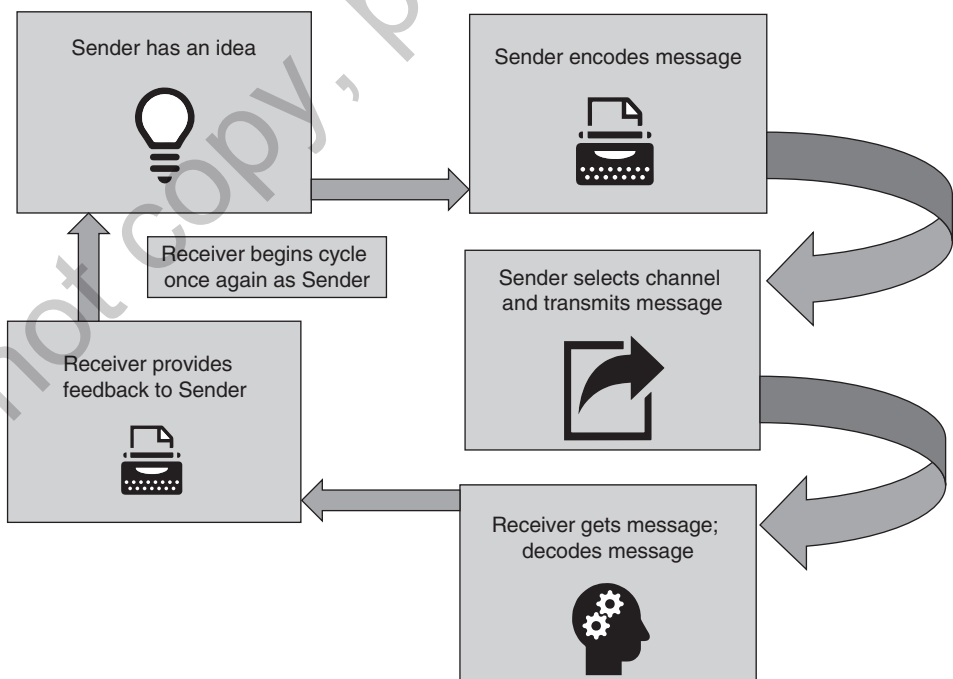
Ask yourself these questions:		
Does this message require a written record?	YES	E-mail/memorandum OR Letter OR Report
Do I need immediate feedback?	YES	Phone call OR Personal visit OR E-mail/text message
Does this message require careful organization and supporting documentation?	YES	Long memorandum OR Reports with visuals (charts, graphs, etc.)
How urgent is this message?	URGENT	Personal visit OR Phone call
	ROUTINE	Memorandum OR Letter

memorandum, report, announcement, picture, face-to-face delivery, or some other medium. Senders must choose the communication channel very carefully since situations dictate which method of delivery is most appropriate. Both verbal and nonverbal messages are conveyed through communication channels, and the sender must ensure that both verbal and nonverbal signals are in harmony with each other as well.

**Noise** is anything that interrupts the communication process. While most people think of noise as physical sounds that are disruptive and prohibit the communication from being heard, things such as typographical or spelling errors in reports, letters, or memoranda may also be damaging to the transmission of a message. Channel noise might also include the annoyance of a receiver at the sender's inappropriate selection of a medium for transmitting the message, such as when a person is fired via a memorandum. The issue of selecting the appropriate medium for sending a message will be discussed later in this chapter.

The individual to whom the message is sent or transmitted is the receiver. The receiver must translate the message from the sender into words or symbols that he or she can understand. This process is called decoding. Communication can only take place when the receiver decodes the message and understands the meaning intended by the sender. Decoding is not a simple process, however. As mentioned previously, many problems exist in communicating between individuals. Since no two people share the same life experiences and no communication process is free

**FIGURE 1.1** ■ The Communication Process Basic Model



from barriers—physical, cultural, and semantic—decoding a message to derive the meaning intended by the sender is very difficult.

The response a receiver makes to the message communicated by the sender is called feedback. In an optimum communication situation, the receiver will provide the sender with comments that let the sender know the message was received and processed as it was intended. The sender and receiver can engage in questioning or paraphrasing techniques to ensure a clear understanding of the ensuing messages. In any event, feedback is the final step in the initial communication process. Once the receiver provides feedback to the sender, communication may continue in a to-and-fro rotation between the parties, again encompassing the communication process.

## COMMUNICATION STYLES<sup>6</sup>

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In most instances, interpersonal communication means being able to talk with our friends, family, business acquaintances, colleagues, and others. In the criminal justice profession, however, optimal communication can mean the difference between life and death, success and failure, or guilty and not guilty. Merely knowing how to speak is not sufficient in these situations; law enforcement officials must be able to overcome many barriers to the communication process as well.

Effective communication occurs between a law enforcement officer and a citizen if—and only if—each person involved in the process assumes the appropriate communication style for the occasion. Traditionally, the style among law enforcement personnel has been authoritative, as in, *I'm the police officer here, and I will act in your best interests.*

The typical police officer really did not solicit any input or information about making a decision concerning the enforcement of law. This concept worked in its infancy because of the time frame and society's expectations concerning law enforcement. However, as the song says, "the times they are a-changing," and law enforcement officers have been mandated to change the way they relate to the public.

The turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s made police officers reevaluate not only their training regimen but also how they dealt with the public. The 1968 Chicago Democratic National Convention in which Mayor Daley advised his police officers that public order would be maintained is a prime example of a clash between the old traditional concept of communication and the change to a more adaptive communication style.

In 1996, the Pittsburgh Police Department became embroiled in an investigation conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice as the result of a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union concerning the accusation of an institutionalized pattern of brutality over the last decade against minority citizens. The Department of Justice (DOJ) recommendations were not readily accepted by the mayor and chief of police in Pittsburgh. Rather than accept them in a constructive manner, Mayor Murphy, in a press conference that followed on the heels of the DOJ's announcement concerning its investigation, made the statement that "If they [think they] understand what it means to run a police department in a city today, then my son knows more than they do. And he is 6 years old."<sup>7</sup> This defensive posture is typical of the position taken by traditional law enforcement, and this stance further exemplifies the difficulty in transition from the traditional policing approach to the popular concept of **community policing**.

This defensive posture was typical of the position taken by traditional law enforcement at the time, and this stance further exemplified the difficulty in transitioning from the traditional policing approach to the popular concept of community policing.

As late as 2015, the United States attorney general launched an investigation into the Chicago Police Department and the city's Independent Police Review Authority (IPRA) as the result of a pattern of behavior by police officers involving use of force; racial, ethnic, and other disparities in the use of force; and the department's own systems of accountability.

On January 13, 2017, the Department of Justice announced its findings, saying, "The Justice Department . . . has found reasonable cause to believe that the Chicago Police Department (CPD) engages in a pattern or practice of using force, including deadly force, in violation of the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution." The report went on to say that CPD officers' practices were the result of systemic deficiencies in both training and accountability. Further, it stated that CPD officers were not properly training in de-escalation of situations and that the Chicago Police Department itself had failed to conduct proper investigations into cases involving uses of force.

In contrast to Pittsburgh's response to the Department of Justice report in 1996, the City of Chicago willingly entered into an **agreement in principle** with the United States Department of Justice in January 2017 to show its commitment to working with the DOJ to ensure that the Chicago Police Department acted in accordance with citizens' rights to afford them the services they deserve, to increase the trust between officers and communities, and to promote public and officer safety.<sup>8</sup>

As you can see from these examples, communication styles come in various forms. Researchers are unable to reach a consensus on the exact number of styles; however, most are willing to concede that they cluster around four dimensions: **blaming, directing, persuading,** and **problem solving**. The old style in law enforcement would be most comfortable with the blaming and directing dimensions; but with the advent of community policing, persuading and problem solving are rising to the forefront.

An officer who uses the blaming style basically attempts to find fault or to ascribe blame for a problem. For instance, "If these people would stay in school, stop having babies, and get a job, I wouldn't have to be here at 3 a.m. babysitting them." Clearly, this is an example of a frustrated officer. The use of the negative tone in this communication style evokes hostile feelings in the receiver, which could lead to the escalation of hostilities in an already tense situation. Since officers may find themselves in situations that are hostile by their very nature (domestic disturbances, neighborhood disorders, and assaults), one of the parties present may already be in a combative state or in an emotionally charged state. This style of communication should be avoided unless and until all other avenues of communication have been pursued and all of the facts of the case are absolutely clear.

The directing style of communication is just another name for the authoritative style of management. "It's my way or the highway!" No feedback is solicited; communication flows unidirectionally (from the top) and often creates an insurmountable barrier for communication. In limited situations, however, the directing style may be essential (SWAT teams or special operations) to ensure the safety of an individual or the successful conclusion of an operation, such as, "Halt! Put the gun down, or I will fire." Another example would be, "Put your hands on your head, and drop to your knees, crossing your ankles." Clearly, these examples of unidirectional

communication are confrontational by definition and designed for prompt compliance, leaving no room for discussion. Due to the very nature of the aforementioned strategic teams, the directing style of communication is required so as to reduce or eliminate any ambiguities or confusion. The members of a special operations team are not only familiar with but also comfortable with this style of communication because it provides them with a sense of security and operational effectiveness.

The persuading style of communication involves information-sharing and acceptance techniques. Interviewing and interrogating suspects requires criminal justice personnel to utilize this method of communicating. When a police officer is attempting to persuade someone to reveal information that may be against his or her best interests in a court of law or an institutional hearing, he or she must use tact. Professionals realize that a great deal of psychological comfort may be attained by a suspect when the barrier of concealment is finally broken. Therefore, the officer will work to lower this barrier by being as persuasive as possible.

Crisis negotiation is another example where the persuading style would be effective and essential. The ultimate goal in this situation is to have the suspect surrender and neither the suspect nor the hostage(s) to be injured or killed. An officer utilizing a truly persuasive communication style will be able to have the suspect realize that resolving this standoff as peacefully as possible is in his or her best interest. To engender a peaceful resolution, however, mutual concessions are necessary. Utilizing a blaming or directing communication style in these types of situations may only serve to inflame the situation or to make the suspect more resolute in his or her efforts to carry out the original plan of action.

One problem with the persuasive style of communication is that it is not always productive. While an individual may be able to persuade others to follow his or her course of action, merely accepting or following does not ensure an identification or resolution of the original problem. If the problem can be identified and resolved, no need exists to revisit persuasion.

In discussing the four dimensions of communication styles, the evidence presented demonstrates that no single style is perfect for every occasion. The ability to select the appropriate style and to adapt your inherent communication style to fit that situation is the key to successful interaction with other individuals through verbal communication.

## Types of Communication

Communication exists on two levels: verbal and nonverbal. To better understand communication, you must first understand the differences between the verbal and nonverbal processes of communicating. Whether a person acts in the capacity of police officer, district attorney, or judge, he or she must recognize the subtle differences conveyed through nonverbal communication to secure arrest, conviction, and punishment for the offender. The old adage, "It's not what you say but how you say it," is as true today as ever.

The person who believes that nonverbal communication is an unimportant component in this process is ill-informed. Nonverbal communication makes up 93%<sup>9</sup> of the information that is exchanged in a face-to-face situation. The old adage, "It's not what you say but how you say it," is particularly relevant because of its reference to the use of paralanguage as a nonverbal communication technique. Therefore, law

enforcement officials, like all other people, must make sure that their spoken words and their nonverbal cues complement each other.

### Verbal Components

**Verbal communication** includes the spoken word and the written word as well. Reports, memoranda, e-mail, and directives are all vital to the transmittal of information within a law enforcement agency. They provide the network by which individuals convey information and messages essential to the efficient operation of the department or agency. Chapter 6 will deal with these components in more detail.

The oral aspect of verbal communication is more spontaneous in nature and generally considered easier by most people. The reason for this belief is because we learn to speak long before we learn to write, and we spend a majority of our adult life engaged in conversation. While a great deal of difference exists between the casual conversation and a public presentation, they also share some commonalities.

Generally, three purposes are associated with either casual conversation or public speaking: to inform, to persuade, or to entertain. While law enforcement officials frequently are seen in the role of informing the public or persuading individuals to comply with various legal requirements, seldom are they placed in a position to entertain. Even though many officers have been placed in a particularly entertaining situation, this was not intentional on the part of the law enforcement officer. Chapters 2 and 3 will discuss further aspects of public presentations in greater depth.

### KISS/Verbal Obfuscation

Early in my career, I had occasion to hear a radio transmission which advised all units to be on the lookout for a suspect in a particularly nasty malicious wounding described as a “corpulent, Caucasian female with a recently deviated septum.” Of the 30 units which received this transmission, only 2 were able to decipher the encrypted message: “Fat, white woman with a broken nose.” [Actual example from Dr. Grubb’s police officer career]

**KISS** is an extremely effective acronym. “Keep It Short and Simple” is not an indicator of a lack of intelligence or professionalism but rather an efficient way to communicate. Some police officers, through a sense of misplaced importance, feel compelled to use language that is inappropriate for the situation—inappropriate in the sense that it does not fit well in the context of the conversation or in the message that the officer is attempting to convey.

To try to create or enhance an already established air of authority, officers may talk “above the heads” of suspects, witnesses, and the general public. Given that most local newspapers are written on a sixth-grade reading level, these language skills could serve as barriers to the communication process. The ability to utilize speaking skills on a continuum, ranging from the most basic elementary levels to a more sophisticated professional status, distinguishes the stereotypical police officer from the truly effective law enforcement officer.

*Jargon or slang.* Another common error is the use of **jargon or slang** in an attempt to ingratiate or include the police officer in the closed or cloistered community. Young police officers frequently endeavor to master the local jargon in an effort to solicit information or develop informants at the local level. While in some instances, this



may be effective, the police officer's personality must still mesh well with the local language pattern. A Caucasian police officer with military bearing or persona would experience a great deal of difficulty in being accepted by a minority community. Even mastering the lingo would prove fruitless in this situation. For example, this officer might state, "I followed the dude to his crib, and homey tried to rabbit out the back." Rather than being accepted as a peer or ingratiating himself or herself to the community, this type of officer would be viewed as offensive if he or she did not possess the concomitant demeanor. In fact, the minority community might be insulted at his or her attempt to fit in because they would see it as a form of mockery, and this would serve to further alienate the community and the officer.

*Legalese.* **Legalese**—the incorporation of legal phrases or legal terms in general conversation with the community, witnesses, or suspects—may be ill-advised. Occasions arise where officers must be in compliance with local, state, or federal codes, and a specific phrase or warning/advisement may be necessary. However, these legalistic terms generally serve to confuse or cloud the individual's understanding of the officer's message. An illustration of this caveat may be clarified by the following example:

**Police Officer (to suspect):** "You are under arrest for robbery, and I want you to listen carefully as I read you your rights."

*as opposed to*

**Police Officer (to suspect):** "You are under arrest for violation of Section 18.2–3 COV, and I am going to advise you of your Constitutional rights under the *Miranda* decision."

As evidenced in this example, the use of legal terms serves only to add to the confusion of the arrest situation. Generally, the suspect is already either feigning or actually experiencing confusion or embarrassment at this point, and this use of legal terminology only enhances the confusion—making matters worse.

### **Nonverbal Components**

Police academies teach young men and women to look, act, and behave like police officers. A variety of means are utilized to achieve this transformation, but one of the more important aspects of this socialization is the mastering of the command presence concept. In essence, recruits are instructed in how to establish and maintain control of a situation by their mere presence, and nonverbal communication plays a major role in establishing this command presence. **Nonverbal communication** comprises body language, voice, proxemics, gender, gestures, and touch.<sup>10</sup>

*Body language.* Body language is formally identified as **kinesics**. The use of the eyes, the head, posture, and stance convey meanings that sometimes might prove to be the antithesis of the verbal message. Federal law enforcement and corrections agencies instruct their investigators and correctional officers to use eye movement as one indicator of possible deception. For instance, suspects who look down and to the left may be deceptive in their description of an incident. The importance of body language in interviewing and interrogation situations has been well documented.

However, the interpretation of body language is bidirectional. (The suspect may be scrutinizing the officer's body language during the interview as well.)

*Voice.* Vocal characteristics are a type of nonverbal communication called **paralanguage**. The speed with which an individual speaks is sometimes perceived as an indicator of truthfulness or intelligence. Individuals who speak quickly are often thought of as having something to hide. Stereotypically, individuals who speak more slowly, particularly those individuals from the Deep South, are considered to be less intelligent because of their dialect.

Pitch is another voice characteristic which may be revealing. Individuals who speak in a high, shrill voice may be experiencing fear while those who speak in a deep, booming voice exude confidence and control.

*Proxemics.* The use of objects, clothing, and personal space in communication is known as **proxemics**. Police officers already present a strong nonverbal image—one that may be construed as contradictory in nature. The color blue is associated with trust. The blue uniforms and the squad cars of police officers are supposed to engender trust and integrity in the community. On the other hand, police officers are armed with guns, pepper spray, batons, and badges, which are all recognized symbols of authority and aggression. Basically, the community receives a mixed message regarding the police officer's role as protector or warrior in the neighborhood.

Law enforcement officials in cities with gang populations need to be aware of the nonverbal cues used by individuals to identify or signify membership in a particular group (flashing gang signs, wearing gang colors, and graffiti). The use of these cues frequently denotes the targeting of certain individuals for acts of violence or retaliation, as well as marking certain areas as gang turf. Officers also need to be knowledgeable concerning nonverbal communication with these groups to avoid misunderstandings and to make the communication process as effective as possible.

*Gender.* Men and women do not speak the same language. While they may use the same vocabulary, their interpretations may be radically different. Typically, female officers do not evoke or promote the "defensive response" from a male suspect. No posturing occurs with respect to establishing a sense of dominance, and therefore, hostility is not met with hostility. Rather than a combative atmosphere, a neutral atmosphere exists that frequently dissipates the suspect's anger, particularly in domestic disputes.

Female victims in domestic disputes may be more disposed to an open dialogue with a female officer than with a male officer. This is not always the case, but female officers may be perceived as more empathetic in these situations. Some female victims may find the presence of a male officer to be more comforting because it provides them with a sense of paternalistic protection and security. On the other hand, male suspects may prefer female officers to speak with them because they perceive these officers to be less judgmental and critical in certain situations. The understanding of the role of **gender** in communication is important in determining which officer may need to take the lead role in interviewing a witness, a suspect, or a victim. More information on this topic will be provided in a later chapter in this text.

*Gestures and touch.* The significance of **gestures** and touch in nonverbal communication should not be overlooked. The grip and duration of a handshake may be nonverbal signals that communicate a sense of being open and friendly or clandestine and antagonistic.

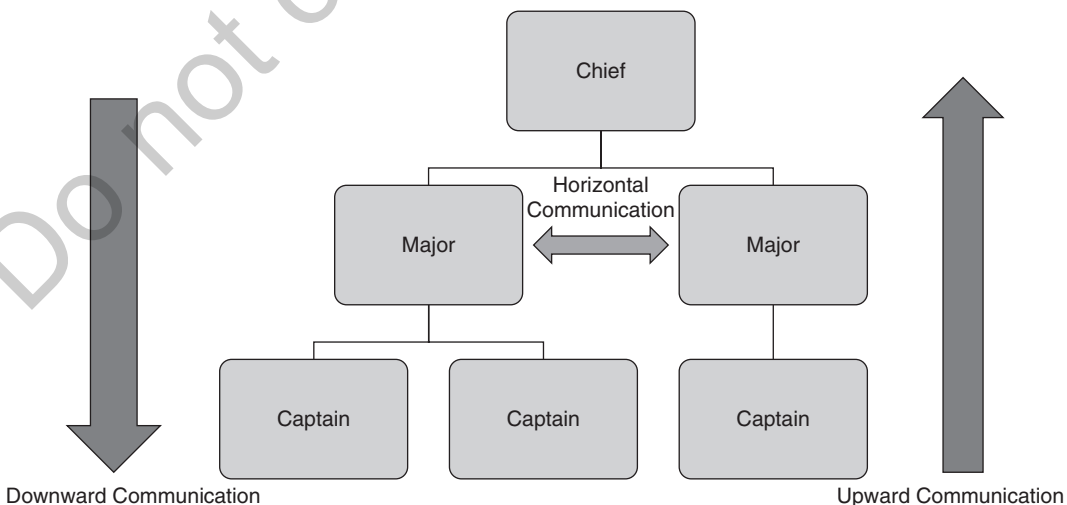
Many individuals feel that a violation of their intimate personal space that occurs with any type of touching automatically creates a fight-or-flight response. Not only does the definition of personal space vary from individual to individual, but the level of comfort also varies from culture to culture. Therefore, while a pat on the back may be an attempt on the part of the officer to provide comfort and assurance, this act may be perceived by the recipient as a threatening gesture.

### Flow of Communication

Communication in organizations, whether public or private, tends to follow two succinct channels: **formal communication** or **informal communication**.<sup>11</sup> Formal communication follows the chain of command in an organization. Information concerning policies and procedures is most often communicated from the top of the organizational structure to the bottom (**downward**) through this formal channel. Formal communication flow, however, is not limited to downward but may also be upward or horizontal. **Upward** communication in organizations may take the form of employee feedback through memoranda, reports, departmental meetings, suggestion systems, and exit interviews. **Horizontal** communication occurs when workers at the same level share information. Horizontal communication may take place through e-mail, personal contact, memoranda, or meetings.

Informal communication takes place in organizations through the unofficial communication channel called the “grapevine.” A recent study indicated that as much as two-thirds of an employee’s information comes from the grapevine.<sup>12</sup> While social situations lend themselves to discussions of organizational problems and

**FIGURE 1.2** ■ Formal Communication Channels



processes, heavy reliance on the grapevine to disseminate detail suggests that insufficient information is being released through formal channels.

## Barriers to Communication

As in any act of communicating, incidences of misunderstanding are likely to occur in criminal justice. No matter how attentive, empathetic, or effective an individual is during communication, certain barriers will arise that impede the flow of or the correct interpretation of information. These barriers or distractions to effective communication may be reduced or eliminated if the officer is aware of their existence. Having the knowledge to recognize and compensate for these differences may also allow agency personnel to acquire information that may have eluded them previously.

### Bypassing<sup>13</sup>

Because individuals are different, they attach different meanings to the same words. Most people attempt to understand messages based on the context in which they are delivered. They decide what the words mean by the way in which they are used in conversation or in written documentation. Unfortunately, the meanings attached by the receiver are not always the ones intended by the sender. For example, an examination of the English language produces an overwhelming number of meanings ascribed to the word *fast*. As shown, *fast* has as many as eight different meanings. To avoid bypassing, the sender and receiver must attach the same meanings to words.

When faced with the task of creating understanding, law enforcement officials must assist the public in applying the appropriate meaning to statements delivered to the community. One way to avoid semantic bypassing is to define any terms that could be misunderstood. Another method for creating a common understanding is to use words properly in sentences. Most of the meaning behind our language comes from the way we arrange our sentences and paragraphs. We derive an understanding of what is said from the surrounding descriptions and concomitant arrangement of words.

### The Meanings of Fast<sup>14</sup>

- A man is *fast* when he can run rapidly.
- But he is also *fast* when he is tied down and cannot run at all.
- And colors are *fast* when they do not run.
- One is *fast* when she or he moves in suspect company.
- But this is not quite the same thing as playing *fast* and loose.
- A racetrack is *fast* when it is in good running condition.
- A friend is *fast* when she or he is loyal.
- A watch is *fast* when it is ahead of time.
- To be *fast* asleep is to be deep in sleep.
- To be *fast* by is to be near.
- To *fast* is to refrain from eating.
- A *fast* may be a period of noneating—or a ship's mooring line.
- Photographic film is *fast* when it is sensitive to light.
- But bacteria are *fast* when they are insensitive to antiseptics.

## Listening

Most individuals can process the spoken word at a rate of 400 words per minute.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, the average speaker has a rate of only 125 to 185 words per minute. This creates a critical gap during which the receiver may be distracted by a variety of sources. Daydreaming, forming a response or an answer, forming a question or rebuttal, noise, and time factors or constraints all serve to cloud or block effective listening. This cloud not only obscures the complete receipt of information but also obscures the interpretation of information.

Listening is an active process that requires an individual to be alert to both verbal and nonverbal cues. An active listener will note an increase in blood pressure, an increase in pulse rate, and a tendency to perspire. This physiologic response is indicative of a situation where an individual is observing nonverbal behaviors and processing verbal information, such as one would see in a therapist's office. By its very nature, law enforcement requires officers to be active listeners, not only in seeking the truth but also in providing them a means of protection.

## Cultural/Language

Most law enforcement agencies actively seek recruits who possess a fluency in a second language, as it enables them to be more effective in communicating with a specific minority community. However, fluency in a language is not necessarily sufficient, in and of itself, to overcome cultural barriers. This knowledge of the language must be accompanied by an understanding and appreciation of the associated culture. The significance here is that the officer does not send or receive mixed messages but effectively communicates with citizens in the community.

## Psychological (Defensiveness)

Traditionally, police officers have been wary of change, as it creates a new environment in which they must operate. Law enforcement officers feel a certain level of comfort and security with measures that have withstood the test of time. When officers are forced to change, they experience a great deal of anxiety because the environment is unfamiliar and may present new obstacles or dangers. Typically, fear and anxiety evoke a defensive response. This defensive response may be transmitted to the community.

A prime example of this type of reaction would involve community policing and the use of citizen police academies. Police officers who do not believe that involving the community in the prevention or detection of crime will be resistant to acceptance of these types of associations. Purely philosophical differences may be at the crux of the issue; however, in most situations, the law enforcement officers view community involvement as a loss of control for departments and officers. This loss of control results in the adoption of a defensive stance, thus creating a barrier to communication surrounding this issue.

## Physical

The environment (light, heat, cold, wind, rain, noise, etc.) frequently competes with an individual trying to convey a message. The officer's attention may be distracted by any number of elements. Large groups of people milling about and talking, cars passing, and dogs barking serve as impediments to the communication process.

## Experiential

When most individuals converse, they do so from a platform or base of experience. Unfortunately, not all individuals share the same experiences or view the same experience in the same manner; therefore, bias is built into the communication process. These differences or biases in experience serve to hinder effective communication and understanding; they are **experiential barriers to communication**. For instance, officers frequently experience difficulty in communicating with each other because of the wide gap created by varying levels of rank, seniority, income, education, previous military experience, and social class. Resentment may occur among senior officers due to perceived opportunities or privileges afforded younger officers prior to their entering the law enforcement profession. This resentment may also be transferred to citizens within the community.

Officers may also find communicating with citizens whose prior experiences are not synchronous with those of the officer to be difficult. The ability to empathize with and understand others decreases when shared experiences are not present. Since most law enforcement personnel view life through the window of their individual experience, adapting that perspective to the background of suspects, victims, or witnesses is difficult. Nevertheless, protecting the public and upholding the law is the responsibility of any officer, and part of that obligation encompasses the communication process.

## Overcoming Communication Barriers

In addressing the barriers to the communication process, we must also identify methods for overcoming those barriers. As you plan your communication, ask yourself the following questions to ensure that you have anticipated communication obstacles.

1. Have you anticipated problems in communication? People are different, and in these differences, communication problems thrive. Be proactive in planning communication so that you address the needs of the receiver. Just knowing that things can and do go wrong will help you to prepare appropriate communication strategies to reduce any misunderstanding caused by bypassing.
2. Have you focused on the receiver and his or her frame of reference?  
Experiential barriers occur because people engaged in the communication process are inherently different, coming from different backgrounds, and having varied outlooks on life. Question what the receiver knows about your subject matter. Ask questions like these: “What does the receiver know about my message?” “Does he or she know as much as I do about the subject?” “How is the receiver likely to respond to my message—will he or she be happy, angry, frustrated, etc.?” The more often you put yourself in the receiver’s place and attempt to anticipate questions he or she might have, the better you will be at successful communication. Remember to put yourself in the shoes of the receiver and to look at the subject matter from his or her perspective, and you will achieve effective communication.
3. Have you planned to listen? Unfortunately, most people are not taught to listen. If anything, families and schools teach us that we get more response

if we talk. We learn at an early age that if we ask someone to repeat what was said—whether it was an assignment for homework or a name or telephone number—he or she will repeat the requested information. This positive reinforcement of a bad behavior, poor listening, carries us into adulthood with little ability to hear and process information. In law enforcement, listening is often the key to a successful conclusion to a case. Often, witnesses or suspects do not verbalize every detail of a case in straightforward terms. The police officer must rely on his or her ability to hear what the suspect or witness is not saying. The only way to “hear between the lines” is to actively listen. Active listening requires you to focus on the speaker and to hear what is being said, as well as to process the nonverbal cues of the speaker. Overcoming the listening barrier to communication is not easy, but you can learn some techniques that will help you to be a more productive listener.

4. Have you created a psychologically appealing environment? When you are communicating with people, try to ensure that any defensiveness is eradicated as soon as possible. When people assume a defensive posture, they may fail to adequately listen or to communicate with you. As a law enforcement officer, you should try, wherever possible, to create a climate of acceptance and concern. If a suspect or witness is anxious or defensive, you will be unlikely to garner any cooperation from him or her. Try questioning witnesses in their own environment, in particular their homes. People are more willing to speak with an officer on their own turf. Merely having to go to the police station can cause witnesses to assume a defensive stance, which you will find difficult or impossible to overcome.
5. Have you eliminated physical barriers? Physical barriers, such as loud competing sounds or background noise, heat, cold, wind, rain, and so forth, cause communication mishaps. People will often get distracted by loud noises or inclement weather conditions. When possible, law enforcement personnel should move into an area to question witnesses or suspects where no physical barriers to the communication process exist. Something as simple as having a witness sit in the patrol car during questioning may be enough to eliminate noise distractions. Another example of a physical barrier to communication is distance. If a witness is not located in the same area as the police officer who is investigating a case, the officer should do whatever is possible to reduce the distance when speaking with the witness. This distance problem may mean that the officer must travel to speak with or to interview the witness. Eliminating the distance means that the officer also eliminates a physical barrier to the communication process.

#### Checklist for Improving Listening<sup>16</sup>

- Stop talking. Accept the role of listener by concentrating on the speaker’s words, not on what your response will be.
- Work hard at listening. Become actively involved; expect to learn something.
- Block out competing thoughts. Concentrate on the message. Don’t allow yourself to daydream during lag time.

- ❑ Control the listening environment. Turn off the TV, close the windows, and move to a quiet location. Tell the speaker when you cannot hear.
- ❑ Maintain an open mind. Know your biases, and try to correct for them. Be tolerant of less abled and different-looking speakers.
- ❑ Provide verbal and nonverbal feedback. Encourage the speaker with comments like “Yes,” “I see,” “Okay,” and “Uh-huh,” and ask polite questions. Look alert by leaning forward.
- ❑ Paraphrase the speaker’s ideas. Silently repeat the message in your own words, sort out the main points, and identify supporting details. In conversation, sum up the main points to confirm what was said.
- ❑ Take selective notes. If you are hearing instructions or important data, record the major points; then, verify your notes with the speaker.
- ❑ Listen between the lines. Observe nonverbal cues, and interpret the feelings of the speaker. What is really being said?
- ❑ Capitalize on lag time. Use spare moments to organize, review, anticipate, challenge, and weigh the evidence.

## COMMUNICATION ACROSS GENERATIONS

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For the first time, more than two generations of people are living, working, and interacting together. Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials compose the working public, with Millennials currently being the largest generation in the United States labor force.<sup>17</sup> These generations differ significantly in what they support or follow, in how they view their work, and, most importantly, in the way they communicate with others.

### Definitions and Characteristics of Generations

The defining parameters of the generations vary by demographer, researcher, and/or author, each being identified by a specific range of birth years. However, each generation has a distinct set of descriptors that need to be understood to effectively build and maintain relationships. For purposes of its research studies, the Pew Research Center defined the generations as follows: the **Greatest Generation**, born before 1928; the **Silent Generation**, 1928–1945; **Baby Boomers**, 1946–1964; **Generation X**, 1965–1980; and the **Millennial Generation**, 1981–1997.<sup>18</sup>

The Greatest Generation members and most of the Silent Generation members have retired from the workplace; at the time this book is being published, their ages range from 73 to 100. However, in some workplaces, people 70-plus are still productive employees and continue to contribute to the organizational culture. So the Silent Generation needs to be included in this discussion. As this book is being published, the youngest Baby Boomer is 54 years of age and the oldest is 72. Members of this generation are still active participants in the U.S. labor force, and this group is included in the discussion. For now, Generation X and the Millennials make up the largest portion of the workforce, surpassing Baby Boomers.

The next generation to follow the Millennials has been absent from workplace-related research as members of this group have yet to enter full-time employment or



have been employed for a period of time considered too brief to be of any consequence at this point. Members of this group have been labeled **Generation Z** (also called iGen, Founders, and Centennials).<sup>19</sup> Defining the parameters of generational divides is more of an art than a science, and marketers and demographers often disagree on the birth years of a specific generation.<sup>20</sup> However, most agree that members of Generation Z were born in 1996 and after.<sup>21</sup>

Generation Z is larger than the Millennials, outnumbering them by 1 million members. They are already impacting technology and will soon become the fastest growing group of consumers and employees.

### The Silent Generation (1928–1945)

In its 2015 report, the Pew Research Center revealed that the Silent Generation accounted for 2% (3.7 million) of the United States labor force, down from 18% a decade earlier.<sup>22</sup> The Silent Generation grew up in the shadow of the Great Depression and World War II; members either fought in the war or were children during this time. Husbands usually worked and wives stayed home to raise the children. The Silent Generation has been labeled the wealthiest generation.<sup>23</sup> Characteristics of the Silent Generation include the following:

- Believe in the motto “Waste not, want not”
- Want to feel needed
- Strive for financial security
- Conservative
- Appreciate/desire simplicity and conformity
- Demand quality
- Patriotic
- Team players
- Patient
- Believe in the nobility of sacrifice for the common good<sup>24</sup>

As employees, Silent Generation members demonstrated numerous qualities of value to employers:

- Loyalty to employers—and expected the same from employers
- Measured work ethic on timeliness and productivity—and not drawing any untoward attention
- Raises, promotions, and recognition based on job tenure
- Enjoyed flexible job arrangements to work on their own schedule
- Possessed superb interpersonal skills<sup>25</sup>

### The Baby Boomers (1946–1964)

In the first quarter of 2015, Baby Boomers accounted for 29% of the United States labor force, after seeing a decline in numbers during the previous year.<sup>26</sup> In 2014, the number of Baby Boomers in the workforce decreased due to retirements, and the number of Millennials (the fastest growing segment of the workforce) reached a record high. Baby Boomers grew up during the civil rights movement and the cold war. As such, they are very social cause oriented.

The Baby Boomer Generation earned its name because of the spike in the number of children born after World War II. The Baby Boomers were the largest generation and the single largest economic group. They are now often referred to as *empty nesters*. Characteristics of the Baby Boomers include the following:

- Free spirited
- Social cause oriented
- Individualistic
- Less optimistic
- Cynical
- Distrust government
- Experimental
- Believe rules should be obeyed—unless they run contrary to something they desire; then they are to be broken
- Want visual signs of their success (e.g., products and services)<sup>27</sup>

As employees, Baby Boomers created the term *workaholic* due to their belief that one's work ethic is measured in number of hours worked. Other elements of their work characteristics include their belief that teamwork is essential to success; relationship building is important; productivity is not as important as other facets of work; and people with whom they work should be loyal.<sup>28</sup>

### Generation X (1965–1980)

Generation X has been referred to as America's neglected middle child, sandwiched between the Baby Boomers and the Millennials.<sup>29</sup> Even the name, Generation X, is a *redo*. In 1953, Robert Capa, a World War II photographer, coined the term *Generation X* as the name for a picture project focusing on the futures of young people born during World War II. The name was revived almost 30 years later when Douglas Coupland published his coming-of-age novel set in Southern California, *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*.<sup>30</sup> In terms of demographics, Generation X bridges the gap between the predominantly white Baby Boomer generation and the diverse Millennials. However, Generation X spans only a 16-year time frame while other generations encompass approximately 20 years each.<sup>31</sup>

Generation X was also called the *Latchkey* Generation because as children, they were the first group to come home after school to an empty house and to be alone until a parent returned at the end of the workday.<sup>32</sup> Generation X members experienced the Space Shuttle *Challenger* explosion, the rise of the AIDS epidemic, the fall of the Berlin Wall, Watergate, and the Vietnam War. Generation X members have been called slackers, but they were the first generation to develop comfort and expertise with technology. Additional characteristics associated with Generation X include the following:

- Independent
- Very self-reliant
- Entrepreneurial
- Multitaskers
- Seek emotional security
- Expect immediate and continual feedback
- Reject rules
- Mistrust institutions
- Suspicious of Baby Boomer values
- Believe friends are not family
- Value family time<sup>33</sup>

From a labor force perspective, Generation X is interested in opportunities to “work smarter, not harder.” They want a casual, friendly organizational culture with flexibility and freedom. Generation X members are more interested in finding a person in whom they can invest their loyalty rather than a company. Additionally, Generation X desires the following:

- Involvement
- A place to learn
- Open communication (regardless of title or position or tenure)
- Control of their time<sup>34</sup>

### **Generation Y/Millennials (1981–1997)**

Millennials grew up with computers, smartphones, and the Internet—with technology. The Millennial Generation has been called the Entitlement Generation and digital natives,<sup>35</sup> and members were raised by Boomer and late Generation X parents who constantly worked to build Millennials’ self-esteem. Thus, one of the characteristics ascribed to this generation is that they want instant gratification and have the mind-set that “everybody wins!”

The Millennials are the second-largest generation to enter the workforce since the Baby Boomers, but they are often saddled with high levels of student loan debt. They want to be like their peers but not totally; they want to put their own spin on it. The Millennials are often seen as ambitious but clueless, individualistic yet group oriented, and distrustful of “the man.” Other characteristics of the Millennials include the following:

- Optimistic
- Patriotic
- Impatient
- Entrepreneurial
- Busy
- Very informal
- Short attention span
- Achievement oriented
- Financially savvy
- Accepting of change
- More culturally and racially tolerant<sup>36</sup>

Millennials in the workforce possess a different set of characteristics than those seen in previous generations. For example, they need constant communication and reassurance from their bosses. Millennials approach work from the perspective of working to live, not living to work. They search for individuals in the workplace who can serve as assets in their quest to achieve their goals. Millennials search for jobs that offer them personal fulfillment and opportunities to learn. They want to be close to their peers, but they also want—and expect—leadership from bosses, supervisors, and managers.<sup>37</sup>

### **Generation Z (Born After 1996)**

Members of Generation Z are also known as Post-Millennials, the iGeneration (iGen), Founders, the Homeland Generation, and Plurals.<sup>38</sup> In 2016, Generation Z composed one-quarter of the United States population. With their numbers continuing to increase, Gen Z will account for one-third of the population by 2020.<sup>39</sup> This

group of individuals is the most diverse of any generation, and that diversity encompasses gender, race, and sexual orientation. Members of Generation Z are entrepreneurial, with approximately 70% of teens in this generation being self-employed. Only 12% hold a traditional job.<sup>40</sup>

Generation Z members are constantly on their phones or devices, and 40% of them are self-identified technology addicts.<sup>41</sup> They have always known Amazon for online shopping—not as the river in South America.

Social media has always been a part of the lives of Generation Z, and members of this generation see social media as directly impacting how they feel about themselves. In fact, 37% believe social media affects their happiness. This generation has moved away from Facebook to embrace other platforms: Vine (54%), Instagram (52%), Twitter (34%), Pinterest (15%), and Periscope (11%). The choice of these top-five social media platforms clearly shows a movement away from social media sites favored by earlier generations. However, one cause for this divergence could be the timeframe when these social media platforms were introduced.<sup>42</sup>

Additional characteristics of Generation Z include the following:

- Independent and self-reliant
- Short attention span
- Use smartphones for entertainment rather than television
- More diverse family backgrounds (single-parent, same-sex families)
- Less likely to subscribe to traditional gender roles
- Bargain shoppers, prudent (savers, not spenders)
- Believe cell phone use is acceptable in any social setting (e.g., during a religious service, eating dinner with family, interviewing for a job, riding a bike, or during your own wedding)
- *More* concerned about online privacy than other generations in area of debit or credit card payments and online dating<sup>43</sup>

As Generation Z members enter the labor force, employers need to be aware of the items on their wish list:

- Want jobs with social impact
- Desire to make (or to feel they are making) a difference in the world
- Want to work collaboratively and remotely
- Desire constant innovation, instant communication
- Expect *dream job*<sup>44</sup>

Generation Z presents to the workplace with high expectations of their employers. They want to work from anywhere with the device of their choosing. Generation Z members also want to contribute ideas and new ways of thinking because they believe they can help the business where they work to move forward, a situation likely to cause friction with older workers and management.<sup>45</sup>

## Internal Communication Across Generations

After reviewing the characteristics of each generation, you can easily see how communication problems might arise. However, every person—regardless of generation or age—wants to feel valued on the job. They want the opportunity to be recognized and appreciated for their contributions, some of the recognition and reward coming via compensation that is representative of the current marketplace.

Even though people of all generations may want the same things from the workplace, you will still find conflict and disharmony among employees. Some of the issues may arise because of stereotyping and the culture of the organization, still others through the way members of varying generations process information and how they define terms (semantics) such as *loyalty* and *hardworking*.

## Barriers to Successful Communication Between and Among Generations

As discussed earlier in this chapter, communication is only successful when the individual receiving the message interprets and understands it in the way the sender of the message intended. Obviously, you have the commonplace problems of bypassing, perception, listening deficits, and other psychological and physical barriers previously addressed that create obstacles to effective communication. However, when you throw the generational aspect into the mix, you find the same barriers that you ordinarily see when people from different countries are attempting to communicate.

### Stereotyping

You hear news stories, read factsheets, observe people, and draw conclusions about those individuals. Based on a limited amount of information, you determine that all people in the same age group, ethnic group, gender, or race are the same. You stereotype. One example of **stereotyping** among generations occurs when you hear a Millennial say that he or she does not wish to work with a certain Boomer employee because that person is old and does not understand technology or that person is old and refuses to change. And this impression is rendered by the Millennial without the benefit of ever working with the specific Baby Boomer—and totally based on stereotyping. After all, Baby Boomers are known to be afraid of change, anxious about technology, slow, and resistant to working with younger people. Really? Says who?

The reverse can also be said about a Baby Boomer being asked to work with a Millennial. The Boomer can balk and complain, saying that the Millennial has no respect for the job, is too flighty, needs too much attention, will not listen, wants to do the job his or her way, has no work ethic—and so on. Again, the Boomer does not know the Millennial employee but is sure that the partnership will fail to produce any type of valid work product based on perceptions of the Millennial stereotype.

### Workplace Culture

Workplace culture is also called corporate culture. Workplace culture encompasses the shared attitudes and values, social norms and mores, and beliefs of the people in an organization. Workplace culture stems from the organization's goals, strategies, and structure, as well as its approach to managing employees, customers,

and the community as a whole. A healthy culture leads to increased employee commitment and productivity, but an unhealthy culture can inhibit growth or lead to a collapse of the business. Culture flows from the top down, so changes to it can be difficult to accomplish and will require an intense time commitment and strong leadership.<sup>46</sup>

When people work in an environment that is accepting and encouraging, they are more likely to feel comfortable with change and will more readily embrace opportunities to work with others. If they feel undervalued and anonymous with little understanding of how they fit into the “big picture” of the organization, they will have little trust and be fearful of change. In this type of environment, older workers (Baby Boomers) fear losing their jobs to the more tech-savvy Millennials or Generation Z employees and will be unwilling to share information with them.

### **Addressing the Barriers and Meeting Generational Communication Needs**

Instead of relying on tried-and-true methods of communicating or the adage “We’ve always done it this way,” criminal justice agencies need to employ training to ensure that their officers, administrators, and employees effectively communicate across generations and across hierarchical lines within the organizations. Criminal justice agencies need to build bridges across generations so that they can recruit, develop, and retain the most qualified and high-quality staff. Also, agencies benefit from multigenerational work teams because they can meet the needs of a diverse public (that they serve) and relate more effectively to their communities.

The following section discusses each generation in the law enforcement field specifically—and in criminal justice in general—and how each generation’s communication strategies can affect understanding and cooperation between and among these groups.

### **Baby Boomers in Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice**

The Baby Boomers are today’s senior members of the law enforcement community. Many have been working for decades and are part of the “command-and-control” culture that began in the 1950s and continued into the 1970s.<sup>47</sup> Also, Boomers occupy most of the leadership positions in law enforcement and think of themselves as stewards of their agencies—those who look after the culture of those agencies. Boomers passionately fought for change and believe in putting the job first.

Boomers believe that Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z must “pay their dues” just as the Boomers did when beginning their careers in law enforcement. Many Boomers are still supportive of the “command-and-control” culture, especially where leadership is concerned. In addition, most Boomers are highly competitive and do not like (nor want) to share power. They are still very entrenched in the traditions of law enforcement and corrections, especially the “rites of passage” required to get ahead (promoted).<sup>48</sup>

Baby Boomers born after 1954, termed “second-half” Boomers, brought a different set of leadership skills to criminal justice agencies.<sup>49</sup> These Boomers are more progressive and believe that employees have internal motivation to succeed, and they merely need to be encouraged, not controlled. These Boomer leaders brought community policing into law enforcement in the 1970s as a way of empowering their

officers. This participatory style of shared leadership has been shown to improve departmental effectiveness, both inside and outside.<sup>50</sup>

Because of community policing, Boomer leaders in law enforcement realized that the unidirectional flow of information should not be the norm. Instead, law enforcement agencies must change and move away from the Industrial Age to the Information Age, away from hierarchical controls of information flow and away from the detachments between and among levels of the organization. Generation X and the Millennials have moved to the Information Age, and thus, the Baby Boomer leaders in criminal justice agencies must embrace communication technologies to gain a more efficient means of communicating or transferring information to officers and supervisors. In-person communication that is favored by the Baby Boomer Generation must give way to the advancements in technology that provide alternative channels for disseminating information.

### **Generation Xers in Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice**

Generation X grew up in fear during the 1970s and 1980s. The members of this generation were raised during the time of layoffs that replaced lifetime employment, AIDS, the *Challenger* disaster, the Three Mile Island disaster, the “Black Monday” stock market crash in 1987, inflation, gas lines, and many others. They learned to distrust everyone and everything. Because many of Generation Xers’ parents lost their jobs as the result of downsizing of organizations in the 1970s and 1980s, they have no institutional loyalty.

Generation Xers are comfortable with computers; however, members of this generation use technology to avoid face-to-face contacts. Because they come from two-income families, Generation Xers grew up as latchkey kids, feeling unwanted and neglected by parents who had little time to devote to their children. Thus, they have a comfort with being alone, are self-centered, and are fiercely independent. While these characteristics may appear to be positive, they can also be disadvantages in the interpersonal communication area. Generation Xers are often labeled loners who lack the people skills needed to be successful in law enforcement.

### **The Millennial Generation in Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice**

The Millennial Generation grew up sheltered by parents who were very supportive and protective. They were affected by the “build their self-esteem” movement that left them believing they were special and capable, that they do not need others, and that they should always put themselves first. Therefore, the Millennials were never taught how to connect with others, how to care what others think, how to balance putting themselves first over others, and how to seek support from others—also called relational skills.<sup>51</sup>

While Generation Xers’ workplace communication characteristics may include direct and immediate, Millennials favor e-mail and voice mail. They demand immediate feedback and see work as a means to an end. This generation does not measure success in the same way as previous generations nor does it believe in working 50-plus hours per week. Millennials view technology as a mechanism to connect to others, such as in chat rooms or via interactive gaming.

Millennials are usually on the receiving end of comments refuting their ability to work well with others and to function in situations requiring them to follow rules and to adapt. However, qualities associated with gaming can be harnessed to be of benefit to criminal justice agencies because gamers “think differently, are global, are tough, and are self-educating.”<sup>52</sup> In other words, Millennials are not afraid of trial and error and believe that constant change is a natural part of life. Because of their involvement with gaming, this generation is familiar with cultures and cultural differences. Millennials have also learned that if they wish to be successful, they must keep trying. If they do not win this round or level of the game, then they just need to try again. Of course, gaming also allows Millennials to be the expert or the superstar, something they relish because of their “me-centered” approach to life. On the bright side, though, gamers believe that anything is possible. So Millennials embrace opportunities to learn because they believe an answer is always available somewhere.

### Leaders in Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice

Since one of the issues discussed previously focused on how the culture of an organization can dictate the actions of its employees, we must address ways in which leaders in law enforcement/criminal justice can ensure that their agencies are highly successful in managing the multigenerational workforce. Principles for successfully managing generations may include the following:

- Initiate conversations within your department about generations. These discussions can help reduce the occurrences of stereotyping as you are asking people to bring those thoughts and beliefs out into the open. When these issues are brought out, they become less personalized, so they are easier to talk about. You also help department members develop respect for other generations through these conversations.
- Offer generational and diversity training to boost understanding and respect and to prompt discussion among the ranks. Similar to what can happen in the conversations you might initiate within your department, training sessions give participants the opportunity to discuss issues in a nonthreatening environment.
- Commit to age diversity in your agency by including representatives from all generations to serve on hiring boards and/or committees. Choose members with varying backgrounds and perspectives.
- Know what motivates members of each generation so you can keep them engaged. Ask your people about their needs. Most often, people project their own needs and preferences onto others. If you really want to know what someone’s needs and preferences are, you should ask.
- Gear benefits and/or options toward the needs of different generations. Generation X and the Millennials favor work–life balance, but the majority of workers ages 45 and older also prefer flexibility in the workplace. Also, when possible, offer benefits that match an employee’s stage of life.



- Establish rewards and recognitions to reflect each group's preferences and priorities.
- Include officers from different generations on policy development, strategic planning, and other organizational committees.
- Establish and offer two-way mentoring programs: (1) younger employees help older ones adapt to new technologies, social media, and other areas of interest; (2) senior employees teach younger employees about the mission of the department.
- Personalize your style. Be flexible. Learn about the preferences of members of your department, and attempt to creatively meet those expectations.
- Build on strengths. Encourage members of mixed-generation teams to build on their own strengths, to be who they are and not try to blend in with the rest of the team.<sup>53</sup>

Once you have established a culture of acceptance and intergenerational opportunity, you still must plan for the future needs of your department and/or agency. You need to be forward-looking and recognize that change is always on the horizon. You should answer four strategic questions for your department:

1. What current departmental human resource practices support generational differences?
2. What will your department's generational composition be in 5 years?
3. How are the generations represented in your community or the community you serve?
4. What will your community or the community you serve look like in 5 years?<sup>54</sup>

Answers to these questions will ensure that your department or agency will continue to effectively manage generational differences for today and into the future.

### **Suggestions for Bridging the Communication Generation Gap With External Groups**

Much of what has been presented in the preceding text has focused on identifying and defining the generations, including the characteristics associated with those generations. In addition, suggestions were presented to help criminal justice professionals address barriers to communication between and among generations and for leaders of law enforcement and criminal justice to build a supportive culture for intergenerational communication. This portion of the chapter presents tips for bridging the communication generation gap, both internally and externally. Communicating across generations should include the following actions:

- Match formality to the culture
- Use multiple communication channels
- Individualize your approach
- Understand value difference
- Be aware of motivating factors
- Ask—do not assume

- Be willing to learn
- Be willing to teach
- Acknowledge the differences
- Do not take it personally<sup>55</sup>

Criminal justice and law enforcement training stresses effective communication, and knowing your audience (the generation of the individual or individuals as well) will help in that process. Law enforcement officers know that they must create a trust relationship with the general public. To do so, they must overcome their own biases and those of their community by working to learn about their community members and to acknowledge that differences exist.

For some generations of law enforcement officers (Millennials, in particular), interpersonal communication skills—active listening, problem solving, critical thinking, persuasion, and conflict management—are not fully developed. These skills, together with technical training, form the two prongs of all police work. Therefore, criminal justice agencies and law enforcement leaders need to ensure that the officers are fully vetted before being released into the community. Poor communication skills can lead to an increase in and ongoing poor community relations despite the technical skills available to that department and the officers.<sup>56</sup>

With available technology, law enforcement officers now have multiple ways to reach their community members and the general public—everything from departmental webpages to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. Knowing the generational makeup of your community can help you decide which of these communication channels would be most effective in building and maintaining relationships. Many departments and agencies now use Facebook as a means for pushing information out to the general public, as well as a mechanism for community members to share complaints or information about suspects and to gather evidence to help solve cold cases or hate crimes. In any event, the use of social media sites is a way of connecting with members of your community and the general public to involve them in creating safe and crime-free communities.

Law enforcement officers are also aware of the importance of listening—active listening (covered in more detail in Chapter 2). This aspect of communication is often overlooked in favor of speaking, as talking is the most expedient way to question suspects, witnesses, or victims. However, the general public or the law enforcement officer's specific community can benefit from an officer who actually listens to what people say and how they say it. Chapter 3 in this book will delve into nonverbal communication and help you see how important your body language and your vocalics are in a face-to-face conversation or meeting and how nonverbal communication plays a major role in active listening.

Regardless of whether you are communicating with colleagues, the general public, or a witness, suspect, or victim of a crime, you have the responsibility of providing those individuals with your undivided attention and speaking with them from their own perspective—not yours, that of a law enforcement officer. Whether you have generational differences, cultural differences, or perceptual differences, you must practice empathy in all of your communications with others.

The remainder of this book will apply the principles from Chapter 1 to situations that might occur in the criminal justice profession. A sound knowledge base in relation to the concepts presented here will allow students, trainees, and law enforcement officials to become better communicators and, thus, better criminal justice professionals.

## SUMMARY

In this chapter, we examined the process and cycle of communication. Communication is a process that involves at least two people, the sender and the receiver, who exchange information through a system of shared symbols or language. The sender encodes the message and sends it through an appropriate channel or medium to the receiver, who then decodes the message and provides feedback to the sender. This process continues until the sender and receiver have completed their communication. Barriers to communication exist in such areas as bypassing, listening, cultural differences, experiences, physical differences, and psychological problems.

Individuals have different styles of communication: blaming, directing, persuading, and problem solving. The old style in law enforcement would be most comfortable with the blaming and directing dimensions, but with the advent of community policing, persuading and problem solving are rising to the forefront.

Communication is either verbal or nonverbal. The verbal components of communication were identified as both the oral and written word. Verbal obfuscation and the use of jargon/slang or legalese were identified as problem areas in verbal communication. Nonverbal communication comprises a variety of aspects: the body (kinesics), the voice (paralanguage), objects (proxemics), gender, and gestures and touch (**haptics**).

Communication also flows through formal or informal channels. Formal communication follows the chain of command in an organization and may flow upward, downward, or horizontally. Informal communication in organizations takes place through the unofficial communication channel called the “grapevine.”

Barriers to communication are either experiential, listening, bypassing, cultural, psychological, or physical. Understanding that these obstacles are present in the communication process is important, but developing methods for removing these

barriers is paramount to the success of any communication. Experiential, cultural, and bypassing barriers can be removed or reduced if you attempt to practice empathy in your communication process. Looking at the situation from another’s perspective will allow you to provide answers to questions that might arise and to address the particular needs of the other party. Practicing active listening skills will help you to be able to hear and process more information. Active listening is a difficult task that requires practice. Learn to paraphrase what has been said, to link new information to existing information, and to question the speaker so that you can be sure you have received the correct communication.

Generational differences play major roles both in the workplace and within the general public. Interactions with people must be handled with diplomacy, and understanding the perspective of others is vital to ensuring that communication is effective. Whether you are a member of the Baby Boomer Generation, Generation X, the Millennials, or Generation Z, your goal is to make sure that whomever you communicate with understands your message the way it was intended.

Members of different generations choose to communicate in various ways. The Baby Boomer Generation prefers face to face, but Millennials prefer e-mail or text messages. Leaders in the criminal justice and law enforcement communities must create opportunities within their departments and agencies for training and meetings to discuss generational differences. The success of a department or agency rests solely on the members of that department or agency and their ability to interact with one another and with the public. Interpersonal communication skills are one requirement for success in law enforcement. Without these skills, law enforcement officers are at a disadvantage that technical skills alone cannot overcome.

## KEY TERMS

Agreement in principle 7	Formal communication 12	Millennial Generation 17
Baby Boomers 17	Gender 11	Noise 5
Blaming 7	Generation X 17	Nonverbal communication 10
Bypassing 4	Generation Z 18	Paralanguage 11
Communication 3	Gestures 12	Persuading 7
Communication channel 4	Greatest Generation 17	Problem solving 7
Community policing 6	Haptics 28	Proxemics 11
Decoding 4	Horizontal 12	Receiver 4
Directing 7	Informal communication 12	Sender 4
Downward 12	Jargon or slang 9	Silent Generation 17
Encoding 4	Kinesics 10	Stereotyping 22
Experiential barriers to communication 15	KISS 9	Upward 12
Feedback 4	Legalese 10	Verbal communication 9
	Message 4	

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What role does communication play in the criminal justice process?
2. Describe the process and cycle of communication.
3. Why is it important for criminal justice professionals to be aware of the various communication styles?
4. Why are the formal and informal channels of communication so important to the criminal justice professional? Give examples of the formal and informal communication channels in a criminal justice agency.
5. List and discuss barriers to communication.
6. Observe a police officer directing traffic at an intersection. Where applicable, discuss the nonverbal components you observe occurring between the officer and the motorists.
7. Using the same scenario, discuss the officer's reaction to inattentive motorists or defiant motorists who ignore his or her direction.
8. Discuss the appropriateness of an officer using neighborhood slang or jargon in a conversation with the public.

## ETHICAL ISSUE EXERCISES

1. Should criminal justice professionals be allowed to express their personal feelings even if they conflict with their professional position?
2. Should personal bias be reflected in the way in which a criminal justice professional addresses other individuals?
3. Should criminal justice professionals be permitted to join or hold membership in organizations that have an expressed or implied racial or sexist creed?
4. Should police officers be allowed to express their displeasure or disgust through (a) the use of nonverbal signals or (b) the use of profanity? Explain.

- 5. Should criminal justice professionals use their knowledge of nonverbal behaviors to determine if their colleagues are being deceptive?
- 6. Should criminal justice professionals with advanced education use words or phrases that are unclear or confusing in their discussions with their colleagues or subordinates?

**SELF-ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNICATION STYLE<sup>57</sup>**

Indicate the degree to which you do the following:		Very Little	Little	Some	Great	Very Great
1.	Make judgments early in the conversation.					
2.	Share my feelings with others.					
3.	Talk about the issues.					
4.	Have analyzed others' motives.					
5.	Talk about the person.					
6.	Use clear and precise language.					
7.	Decide on the action before the conversation.					
8.	Encourage the other person to discuss feelings.					
9.	Am open for new information.					
10.	Ask questions that seek agreement with me.					
11.	Talk the majority of the time.					
12.	Ask questions that get others to describe events.					
13.	Talk half the time or less.					
14.	Allow others to defend their position to me.					

## SCORING SHEET

Item No.	SCORE
1.	_____
2.	_____
3.	_____
4.	_____
5.	_____
6.	_____
7.	_____
8.	_____
9.	_____
10.	_____
11.	_____
12.	_____
13.	_____
14.	_____
<b>TOTALS</b>	_____

Total Column 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Total Column 2 \_\_\_\_\_

## Interpretation of Scores:

Very Little = 1 point

Little = 2 points

Some = 3 points

Great = 4 points

Very Great = 5 points

Source: From O'Connell, S. W. *The Manager as Communicator*. 1986, Rowman & Littlefield, originally published in 1979 by Harper & Row Publishers, Inc. Reprinted with permission.