



Health Communication

Presented by:
The California-Nevada
Public Health Training Center

Funded by Grant #UB6HP20202 from the Health Resources and
Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Learning Objectives

After this tutorial you will be able to...

1. Understand how communication fits into the role of public health.
2. Explain how communication fits into the ecological model of public health and supports public health objectives.
3. Identify key principles of communication theory.
4. Describe factors that affect good communication.

I. DEFINITIONS OF COMMUNICATION

Communication

“How people use messages to generate meanings within and across various contexts, cultures, channels and media”

– U.S. Department of Education

Health Communication

“The study and use of communication strategies to inform and influence individual and community decisions that enhance health.”

– Department of Health & Human Services

Communication Theory

Communication Theory focuses on:

Who says what, through which channels, to whom, with what effect?

– Harold Lasswell

In a Public Health Context:

How do communication processes contribute to, or discourage, behavior change?

Health Communication Topics

- Patient health education
- Public health education
- Breaking bad news
- Risk & crisis communication
- Social support
- Caregiving
- Legal issues
- Health literacy

Ecological Model



<http://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/prevention-chronic-care/resources/clinical-community-relationships-measures-atlas/ccrmfig3-1.gif>

Health Marketing

Creating, communicating, and delivering health information and interventions using computer-centered and science-based strategies to advance the health of diverse populations

– The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

e-Health Interventions

- Internet based health resources
- Tailored print communications
- Telephone delivered communications
- Online support groups
- Interactive games
- Free internet access via libraries, kiosks
- Mobile applications

Using Theory

MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

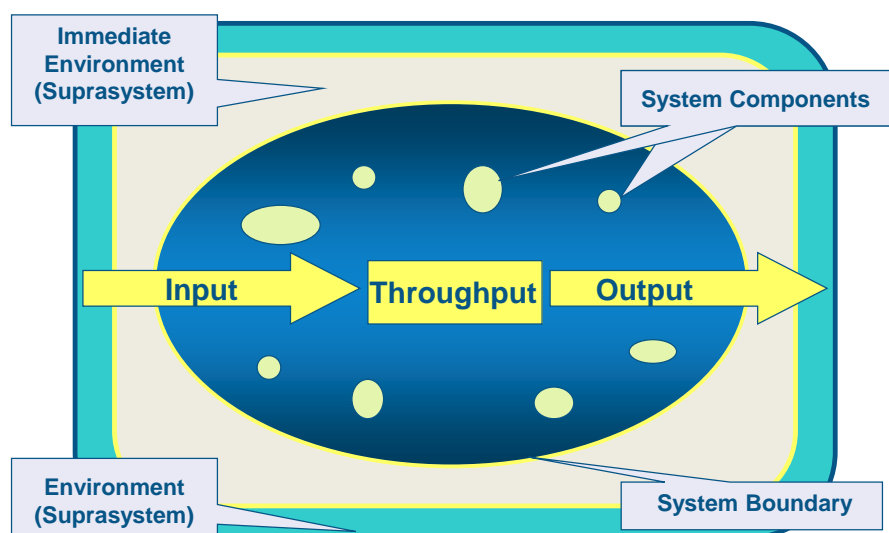
Systems Theory (Ludwig von Bertalanffy)

- Broad approach to communication
- Borrowed from natural sciences
- Systems definition:
 - Entities formed by sets of things that relate to one another to form a unique whole
- Open vs. closed systems
- We can think of organizations as systems

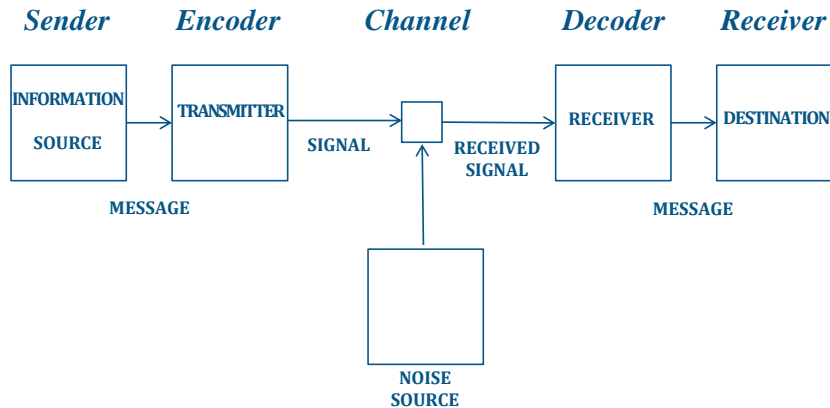
Systems Characterized by:

- Objects
- Attributes
- Internal relationships
- Boundaries
- Environment

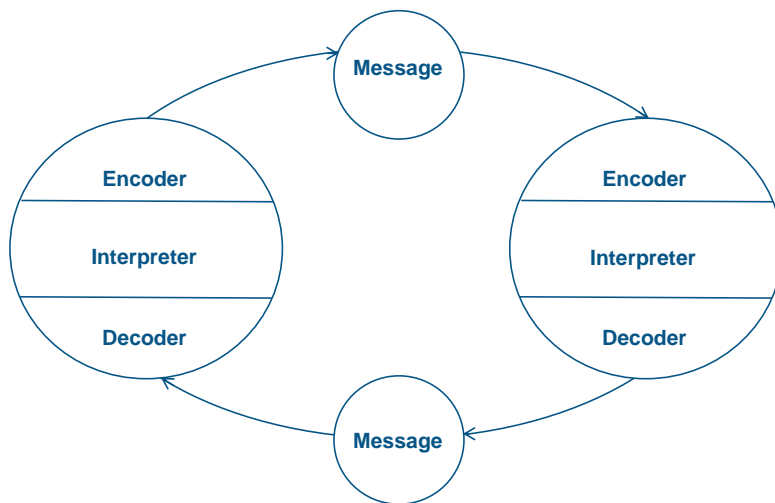
A General System



Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication



Osgood-Schramm Model of Communication



KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE

Grunig's Situational Theory of Publics

- People fall into two general categories:
 - Active publics
 - Passive publics

Passive Publics

- May or may not be aware of topic
- Little interest
- Will not seek out information
- Short, repetitive messages best
- “Indirect route” to persuasion

Active Publics

- Interested in topic
- Will seek out information
- Want to know details
- “Direct route” to persuasion

Keep it simple, keep it concise, keep it clear

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Written Communication

- Use language appropriate to audience
 - Education
 - Interests
 - Culture
 - Context
- Use simple, declarative sentences (around 16 words)
- Avoid jargon

Oral Presentations

- Tell 'em what you're going to tell 'em
- Tell 'em
- Tell 'em what you told 'em

Visual Aids

- Remember the “Three B’s”:
 - **B**ig
 - **B**old
 - **B**rief

Review

- Communication encompasses all aspects of healthcare
- Many concepts of health communication are grounded in systems theory
- Know the audience to decide:
 - Channels
 - Language
 - Approach
- Keep it simple!