CHAPTER 6

Process and Practice of Intervention

R ecently you notice that your school or workplace cafeteria is offering new foods—foods that you symbolically categorize as *unhealthy*. The change violates your ideological expectancies about how a more nearly perfect life might be achieved. You rename yourself, from *consumer* to *change agent*. How might knowledge of the Rhetoric of Social Intervention (RSI) model guide your actions as an intervener to encourage the food service and institutional administrators to attend to and satisfy your need for more healthful menu choices?

Perhaps you took a course that uses this book on the rhetoric of social intervention because the class was offered at a convenient time or fulfilled a degree plan requirement. Although you find rhetorical criticism interesting, you are majoring in another subspecialty of communication. Still, how might the RSI concepts you have learned be relevant in other communication areas besides rhetorical criticism? Or how might they be relevant to other disciplines in general?

This final chapter examines the proactive and practical use of the RSI model to guide the creation of interventions. We reflect on the process we enact when intervening and responding to others' interventions. We also consider the model's relevance to other communication areas—such as organizational, public relations, and public speaking—and to fields outside communication. Finally, we invite you to join us in considering this book as an attempted intervention.

❖   THE MODEL AS PRACTICAL INTERVENTION

Throughout your life, you will often act as a social intervener or change agent—sometimes to promote social change, sometimes to maintain social continuity. At times people might name you as initiating the intervention; at other times, you might interpret your actions as responding to their interventions. Regardless, your voice is one among many that interact to influence social system dynamics (Brown, 1978). No techniques exist to ensure that your intervention will result in your hoped-for outcomes. However, knowledge of the RSI model can reveal the possibilities for an intervention in a situation, guide the development of the intervention, and enable you to consider the possible side effects of your interventional attempts. In addition, it allows you to reflect on your responses to others' interventional attempts in social systems in which you participate.

We tend to become change agents when experience appears to deviate unpleasantly from the expectancies created by our ideologically generated names for experience (Brown, 1978). For example, what if product sales decline after a company introduces a reengineered soft drink that has been named *the means to ensure the company's growth*? Suppose a cat or dog dies after eating pet food that has been symbolically categorized as *nutritious and life extending*. Such nonfitting experiences prompt interventions to rename experience to compensate for the anomalies that threaten the continuity of ideology.

The RSI model suggests choices that change agents make when enacting interventions. We describe these choices as questions to consider when developing the strategies, tactics, and maneuvers of an intervention. These same questions can also help you recognize others' interventional attempts as you attempt to intervene. We exemplify these questions in a narrative about a college-based intervention.

Increasing Anomaly Awareness

Suppose you complete a doctorate in communication. You enter the field because you name *communication* as a key to achieving the American dream. An understanding of communication leads to more effective relationships, more tolerance for others, and more career opportunities, and, by extension, a more nearly perfect world. Hence, you *profess* communication as the basis for understanding human identity.

You teach at a small commuter college that you categorize as *a good place to work*. The students are interesting and interactive. Your colleagues are friendly and supportive. The administration provides adequate pay and benefits. These experiences form criterial attributes

of the symbolic category *a good place to work*. The college power-sharing system meets your needs.

During the past year, however, you become aware of events that bother you. Program enrollment has been declining, with 30 percent of students transferring after their sophomore year. Also, although you receive good teaching evaluations, students frequently comment "interesting course, but the theory stuff isn't very useful," or "need more hands-on work." Finally, local employer surveys frequently rate your graduates as "excellent" in researching and critical-thinking skills but "needs improvement" in the flexibility and adaptability categories. These events violate the expectancies you associate with the communication program, which you have categorized as providing *excellent preparation for the future*.

You discuss these anomalies with your colleagues. They seem unconcerned. They attribute the enrollment decline to the implementation of higher program standards. They account for the teaching evaluation comments by saying that students will recognize later the value of what they have learned. Finally, they remark that employers always complain because they feel important when they can complain.

Despite your colleagues' explanations, you fear that the trends of enrollment drops and student dissatisfaction with program knowledge might continue. In addition, employers might refuse to hire your students if they name them *inadequately prepared*. If the trend continues, the program could be downsized or discontinued. You would lose your job and ability to achieve the dream. The college would no longer be *a good place to work*.

Identifying Naming Patterns

You become more open to an alternative way of symbolizing experience to explain the anomalies you are encountering. By embracing openness, you begin the process of social intervention. The starting point for enacting a social intervention is an analysis of the social system's current naming patterns. In this instance, you have been observing these system components that influence each other—the communication faculty, the current students, and potential employers. The RSI model suggests asking these types of questions about the system:

- How am I naming experience? How are the system components naming experience?
- What anomaly-featuring communication or anomaly-masking communication, or both, are the components emphasizing?

- What aspects of experience do their current naming patterns background or foreground, or both?
- What ideological expectancies do their naming patterns reflect?

You identify your colleagues' naming pattern as one that categorizes the college's communication program as providing *excellent preparation for the future*. You detect this pattern in their conversations as well as in the program's mission statement and recruitment materials. Thanks to your knowledge of the RSI model, you recognize the unease you have been feeling as related to anomaly-featuring communication—the inability of the current naming pattern to make sense of the declining enrollment, student comments, and employer complaints. These events violate the expectancies generated by the naming pattern *the program provides excellent preparation for the future*.

Other power shareholders—students and employers—seem to be advocating a competing template—*the program provides inadequate preparation for the future*. They constitute this name by featuring anomalies in your colleagues' template. They communicate these anomalies in actions and symbolizing activity, such as changing schools, completing course evaluation forms, and completing employer surveys. They appear to be acting as interveners to promote an attention shift.

As you reflect on how your colleagues account for the enrollment drops, student remarks, and employer responses, you recognize their explanations as examples of anomaly-masking communication. They have responded to the anomaly-featuring communication by finding ways to mask attention to the anomalies. Thus, they have been able to maintain the naming pattern *the program provides excellent preparation for the future* and reject the alternative interpretation being proposed. They have been intervening to prevent an attention shift.

You examine the symbolizing activity to understand how the faculty constructs its naming pattern. Your colleagues emphasize behaviors and activities defined as *scholarly* as the criterial attribute of *excellent preparation*. They foreground completing theory and research courses, participating in the undergraduate research symposium, and writing senior theses as aspects of experience that reify the symbolic category *excellent preparation*. In this interpretation of experience, the American dream is achieved by scholarly preparation. But what does this naming pattern background?

To reveal backgrounded experience, you examine the students' and employers' naming patterns. How do they appear symbolically to construct *excellent preparation*? To what aspects of experience do they refer to reify *excellent preparation*? How does that influence their

interpretation of the communication program? How do they make sense of the American dream? In answering these questions, you observe that, for them, *practical* knowledge is a criterial attribute of *excellent preparation*.

You are prompted to intervene because you project that if the students and employers continue their anomaly-featuring communication to promote the name *inadequate preparation* and the faculty continues its anomaly-masking communication to promote the name *excellent preparation*, deviance will amplify. These naming patterns can result in neither group fulfilling the others' needs and goals. Without a rhetorical trend reversal, the system components might become less needs-meeting and might disband. Thus, you begin enacting the role of change agent.

Making Choices

The RSI model suggests questions for interveners to consider when planning an intervention:

- What is the nature of my intervention? Am I promoting change? Impeding change? Both?
- In what way am I trying to reverse or compensate for a rhetorical trend that I interpret to be deviance amplifying?

These questions require you to think about choices. Perhaps the faculty interpretation of experience makes sense to you. You agree that *excellent preparation* means emphasizing scholarly knowledge. You choose to intervene to *maintain* this interpretation. To reverse the deviance-amplifying trend of lower enrollment, you create an intervention that attempts to *change* how students and employers symbolically categorize *excellent preparation*. You intervene to shift the students' and employers' attention *away from* emphasizing practical knowledge and *to* emphasizing scholarly knowledge. What could you do or say to these power shareholders to promote a shift in their interpretations of needs, interdependencies, and experience? What might be the side effects of such an intervention?

Alternatively, you might choose to adopt the alternative naming pattern. Practical skills attainment as a criterial attribute of *excellent preparation* makes sense to you. You attempt to intervene to *change* how your colleagues symbolically categorize *excellent preparation*. You intervene to shift attention *away* from scholarly knowledge and *to* practical knowledge. What could you say or do to promote a shift in your

colleagues' interpretation of needs, interdependencies, and experience? What might be the side effects of such an intervention?

In either case, you intend the renaming to reverse the deviance-amplifying trend. However, these two choices are *either-or* options. One foregrounds scholarly activity and backgrounds practical experience; the other highlights practical skills and downplays scholarly knowledge. What about a third option—one that symbolically categorizes *excellent preparation* as attaining *both* scholarly *and* practical knowledge?

What your colleagues need to do, you decide, is to rename the criterial attributes associated with *excellent preparation*. Rather than focusing on *either* scholarly *or* practical knowledge, you will encourage them to extend the attributes of the symbolic category *excellent preparation* to include practical activity. In this alternative version of experience, the American dream will be achieved through a program that provides excellent preparation by emphasizing *both* scholarly *and* practical achievements. How will you promote this shift?

Again, you make choices about how to enact the combination of scholarly and practical activity. Will you do it through new skills-oriented courses? Internships? Service learning? You decide that one way to reify scholarly and practical activity is to add a student newspaper to the communication program. You select this choice because you worked on a student newspaper as an undergraduate and you name that experience as contributing to your own success. However, you support that choice by finding research and professional sources that emphasize the need and value of student newspaper experience. How might producing a student newspaper incorporate both your colleagues' expectancies of scholarly activity and the students' and employers' expectancies of practical activity associated with *excellent preparation*?

Deciding on Audiences

As you consider the nature of your intervention, you must also identify the social system components with which you are interdependent for the enactment of your intervention. The RSI model leads you to ask this question:

- Who is the primary audience of my intervention?

Although your long-term interventional goal is to shift how current students and future employers name the communication program, your method of achieving that goal (developing a student newspaper)

requires attention to a different system of power shareholders. To identify your primary audience, you must identify the social system components with whom you are interdependent to achieve your goal. Because you want to introduce a student newspaper in a college setting, you examine components within the college, such as students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, board of trustees, and donors. Which of these components, or audiences, seem most able to mediate your future—in this case, the creation of a student newspaper?

Suppose you name your colleagues as your primary audience. You interpret their support as being most critical to achieving your goal of extending the criterial attributes of *excellent preparation* to include practical activity in the form of a student newspaper. That is not to say that you consider the other system components unimportant. You could increase your interdependency with alumni and donors by advocating the need for funds to operate a student newspaper. In addition, other components, such as faculty outside the communication program, administration, and students will become important as the intervention progresses. However, time and resources often temper our selection of audiences. You decide that unless your colleagues interpret a need for a student newspaper to enact practical experience, they will be unlikely to provide the logistical support necessary to ensure the newspaper's future.

Selecting a Starting Point

As you determine your audience, you consider the starting point for your intervention. The RSI model suggests that you pose this question:

- With which subsystem will I begin my intervention?

Will you gear your intervention toward increasing your audience's attention to unmet needs, non-needs-meeting interdependencies, or anomalies in its interpretation of experience? Often we appeal to the same need, power, or attention anomaly that is already apparent to us.

You choose *need* as your starting point because the anomalies you have noticed suggest that the communication program is not satisfying students' or employers' needs. You select to focus your intervention on making your colleagues aware of the need to extend the program's preparation to include practical knowledge. You do this by advocating the creation of a student newspaper. You reason that this action will

meet the growth-and-survival need of the communication program. Related to the subsystem question is this consideration:

- What strategies and tactics will I use to promote my intervention?

Strategically, you select to feature anomalies in your audience's accepted way of interpreting need. You seek to shift the faculty's emphasis *away from* the collectivity-stressing need for scholarly activity that contributes to the knowledge base of the communication field as a whole. You attempt to shift the faculty's emphasis *to* the individuality-stressing need for both scholarly and practical experience that contribute to the holistic development of the student. Common to both emphases is the symbolically constituted need for *excellent preparation* as a means to reify the American dream. Only the interpretation of *how* that need is met changes as the emphasis shifts.

Tactically, you plan to create awareness of and attribute to your colleagues the need to revise the communication program to offer both scholarly and practical activities. You advocate the creation of a student newspaper as a way to satisfy the need to include practical knowledge. You encourage your colleagues to open channels of communication with potential power shareholders, such as students, administrators, and others who will be important to establishing a student newspaper.

Because the RSI model emphasizes the dynamics of system intervention, you assume that, at the same time you are intervening, others will also be intervening. For example, some of your colleagues might intervene to attempt to prevent change. They deny the need for practical experience or for a student newspaper. Thus, you must consider how you will respond to others' interventional attempts as you create the rhetorical maneuvers of your intervention.

Creating Rhetorical Maneuvers

As you determine the strategies and tactics of the intervention, your knowledge of the RSI model leads you to pose these questions:

- What rhetorical maneuvers will I employ to enact the intervention?
- How will I reason to promote my naming of experience?

Enacting an intervention requires developing rhetorical maneuvers that communicate the strategies and tactics of the intervention. Think about what you will say or do to reach your intended audience.

In developing messages, keep in mind your overall strategy—in this case, to shift the audience's interpretation of needs. You employ rhetorical maneuvers that feature anomalies in your colleagues' inter-pretation that the program must emphasize only scholarly activity to ensure its growth and survival. At the same time, you use rhetorical maneuvers that mask attention to anomalies in the interpretation of needs that you are promoting.

To create rhetorical maneuvers, you gather materials such as statis-tics, examples, and testimony. These materials highlight experiences that violate expectancies associated with your colleagues' interpretation of needs. You might identify several universities that symbolically cate-gorize *excellent preparation* as including both scholarly and practical knowledge. You show how their enrollment numbers are increasing. You might find examples of programs similar to yours that define *excel-lent preparation* as scholarly knowledge only. You show how their enroll-ment numbers are decreasing. What other aspects of experience might you foreground to feature attention to anomalies in your colleagues' interpretation of needs?

In anticipation of other interveners' messages, you reflect on how to mask anomalies in the interpretation of needs that you are advocat-ing. Suppose your colleagues say that practical activities will *dilute* the program and make it *the same as* a technical school. What if they note that students can volunteer on the college's yearbook to get practical experience? They might point out that creating a student newspaper will draw resources away from other activities and courses, thereby reducing the program's ability to provide *excellent preparation*. How will you respond? How will you show that practical activity is not opposed to scholarly activity and that scholarship can emerge from practical involvement?

Choosing Channels

You also make choices about the channels of communication for conveying your messages to your intended audience. You could write a book on the need for both scholarly and practical activities to enhance *excellent preparation*—but think about the time and cost of that maneu-ver. You could post flyers around the campus that summarize your anomaly-featuring messages—but your colleagues might ignore the flyers because they interpret flyers to be communication intended only for students. You could create a PowerPoint show and invite the faculty to a formal presentation—but you notice that only administrators seem

to give formal presentations on issues. You could march around campus carrying a sign that advocates the need for change—but your colleagues might symbolically categorize you as *weird* and ignore your messages.

In the end, you select to communicate your intervention in two ways: informal discussions with departmental colleagues and a presentation at the department's monthly meeting. You choose these communication channels to convey your message based on your observation of the college system. You notice that the system has an institutionalized or *socially accepted* method for professors to advocate change in program curriculum. Thus, you hope that by following a similar process with the student newspaper proposal, your colleagues will name the proposal as *the same as* changing curriculum and focus on its contributions to students' academic experience.

To change curriculum, a professor first discusses the proposed change with colleagues. If the colleagues seem receptive, then, following institutional policy (power code), the professor presents the proposed change to the department. If the department approves, then the professor's interdependency with three additional power shareholders increases—the division dean, the curriculum committee, and the full faculty. All three must approve the proposal and may require the professor to enact additional interventions.

Considering Subsystem Side Effects

In this narrative, we have acted as if the interventional goal is to promote a need intervention—*away* from the need to emphasize scholarly activity *to* the need to emphasize both scholarly and practical knowledge to enact *excellent preparation*. However, the RSI model points to asking additional questions:

- What are the potential subsystem side effects of my intervention?
- How will a shift in one subsystem (need, power, or attention) simultaneously lead to shifts in the other subsystems?

In this instance, you consider the side effects for power and attention. If the departmental faculty accepts the interpretation of needs you are advocating and the remaining components of the college system approve the student newspaper, how might power shift within the department? How might interdependencies be revised? Who becomes *more* important in future choosing? Who becomes *less* important in future choosing? In what ways does the need shift challenge the current departmental hierarchy? How might this influence the overall development of the department system?

No doubt, the communication program will become more interdependent with a person who can advise and students who can write and edit newspapers. The program will also become more interdependent with people willing to talk to the student reporters and with advertisers willing to buy ads to support the newspaper. Increased interdependency will be formed with printers or web masters. Faculty with technical skills to facilitate the newspaper's production might need to be hired.

At the same time that you urge your colleagues to rename needs, you also encourage them to reinterpret their experiences. How will the shift *away from* emphasizing only scholarly activity and *to* emphasizing both scholarly and practical activity influence how your colleagues interpret the program as a whole? How will their sense of being shift? How will their ways of knowing change? How will the need intervention alter what they value?

Furthermore, what additional interventions might be needed to attempt to shift the students' and employers' interpretation of *excellent preparation*? How will you encourage those system components to rename the attributes of *excellent preparation* to include both practical and scholarly work, or interpret the student newspaper as practical experience, or both? What if the trend of enrollment drops and employer dissatisfaction continues after reorganizing the department to include a student newspaper?

Alternatively, suppose the audience agrees to maintain its current interpretation of needs and rejects the proposed interpretation. Your colleagues deny the need for preparation that includes both scholarly and practical activity. How might the power shareholders interpret your attempted intervention? How might that influence your interdependencies with them? How will you account for your inability to bring about change? What price might you pay for your attempted intervention? How might you next intervene if you continue to interpret a need for both scholarly and practical activity to ensure the program's growth and survival?

Finally, suppose your colleagues agree that the communication program needs to include practical experience to provide *excellent preparation*, but suppose they intervene to propose alternative ways to satisfy that need, such as creating a literary magazine or a student public relations firm. What if other power shareholders in the college system respond to your attempted intervention by choosing to ensure the institution's growth and survival by eliminating the communication program? These possible side effects remind us that we *intervene*, rather than *control*, when we attempt to bring about social change.

Overall, the RSI model provides a framework to guide the actions of change agents. The model's use does not ensure that the intervention will result in the intended outcome. As you promote your interpretation of experience, others will advocate theirs. Together, you and the other interveners negotiate the choosing of futures.

Thus far, we have examined the questions that the RSI model leads you to ask when acting as an intervener. Now we consider how the RSI model applies in other areas of communication besides rhetoric.

❖ THE MODEL AS RHETORICAL INTERVENTION

The RSI model directs our attention to the rhetorical nature of social interventions. This does not mean, however, that the RSI model is relevant only to rhetorical criticism. The model offers insights into a wide range of communication areas. To demonstrate its applicability across the field of communication, we briefly discuss three areas that might relate to your experience in communication. We examine the RSI model's connections to organizational communication, public relations, and public speaking.

Connecting to Organizational Communication

Organizational communication scholars often emphasize the importance of understanding the change that organizations must undergo to grow and survive (Bergquist, 1993). Organizations must be able to initiate and adapt to apparent changes in their external and internal environments to maintain their goals of providing services or producing products. For example, when airplanes began replacing ships as the main means of overseas travel, the ocean cruise line industry changed and adapted by emphasizing *entertainment* instead of *transportation* to stay in business (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1997).

Through the lens of the RSI model, organizational change occurs because events violate the expectancies generated by the organizational members' naming patterns. Organizational members attempt to compensate for the anomalies by renaming experience or the criterial attributes of experience. Thus, organizations transform as their members promote need, power, and attention shifts (Opt, 2003).

When organizational members conceive of new ways to make old products, develop new products, find new uses for old products, and shift management styles, they engage in attention switching (Opt, 2003). Organizations grow and survive because their members symbolically

recategorize experience. From the perspective of the RSI model, Apple Computer, Inc., came into being when its founders renamed the computer from *industrial product* to *hobbyist toy* and eventually to *home appliance* (Opt).

The RSI model interprets the decline or dissolution of an organization in terms of vicious circles. If an organizational system is unable to compensate for deviance-amplifying naming patterns, then the organization might no longer meet other system components' needs and might go out of business (Opt, 2003). What if the ocean liner industry had continued to name its business as *providing transportation*, despite the anomaly of an increasing number of its customers electing to fly?

Finally, the RSI model suggests that to understand and intervene in organizational change, we should pay attention to the organization's naming patterns (Opt, 2003). We might attempt to anticipate the direction of organizational change by attending to anomaly-masking and anomaly-featuring communication in superiors' and subordinates' conversations. We might identify organizational interveners by watching for needs-advocacy behaviors and challenges to the organization's power code. We could analyze the organization's adaptation to its internal and external audiences by comparing its interpretations of need, interdependencies, and experience to the naming patterns that external publics constitute about the organization.

Linking to Public Relations

Like organizational communication researchers, public relations scholars emphasize the importance of understanding organizational change processes so that organizations can proactively, rather than reactively, respond to their environments (Opt, 2008). As public relations theorist Derina Holtzhausen (2000) comments, "Practitioners' ability to deal with changes in society will enable those who work in institutions to contribute to their organizations' survival and effectiveness" (p. 110). The RSI model provides practitioners with a framework for comprehending and interpreting the organizational change needed for growth and survival.

Public relations professionals often monitor the environment in search of events that might influence the public's interpretation of the organization. The RSI model directs practitioners to pay attention to how the organization names itself and its publics, and how the publics, in turn, name themselves and the organization (Opt, 2008). These professionals would compare the organization's and the public's communication patterns in terms of what they foreground and background in

experience. They would reflect on how similarities and differences in the patterns might shape the relationship between the organization and its publics.

For example, a pet food public relations professional monitoring the media might notice an increase in articles that foreground attention to the deaths of cats and dogs after the animals had consumed certain pet foods. To account for the anomaly, some consumers rename the pet foods *unsafe*. This shift in interpretation, from *safe* to *unsafe*, constituted in the symbolizing activity, suggests to the professional that con-sumers' interdependency with the organization is about to change—from one based on *exchange* to one organized by *threat*.

Thus, public relations practitioners can look through the lens of the RSI model to anticipate changes in the interdependency between an organization and its publics. In addition, the RSI model suggests a way for practitioners to envision side effects that might occur as a result of rhetorical renaming (Opt, 2008). For example, what potential systemic side effects might result from an interpretive shift from *safe pet food* to *unsafe pet food*?

In their role as change agents, public relations practitioners often attempt interventions to create, maintain, and change the relationship between an organization and its publics. The RSI model indicates that professionals should develop interventions by analyzing the public's current ways of naming needs, interdependencies, and experience. The RSI model provides practitioners with a framework for constructing interventional strategies, tactics, and maneuvers and considering the side effects of the attempted change (Opt, 2008).

Relating to Speech Communication

Like organizational and public relations scholars, speech commu-nication scholars also emphasize understanding change, but often from the point of view of the speaker as change agent. For example, speech textbook authors Steven Beebe and Susan Beebe (2006) note that speaking with competence and confidence is empowering. "To be empowered is to have the resources, information, and attitudes that allow you to take action to achieve a desired goal" (p. 2). In achieving a desired goal, the speaker seeks change, which suggests a connection to the RSI model.

In the RSI model's interpretation of experience, public speakers are *interveners* (Gring, 2006). They attempt to influence interdependencies with audiences so that the speakers' needs might be met and desired goals achieved. Speakers attempt to shift or maintain how their audiences

symbolically categorize experience. Think about speeches you have given, perhaps in a class or an organizational setting. Can you identify the shifts in need, power, or attention that you tried to promote or impede in those speech-making events?

Through the lens of the RSI model, all public speaking events are *interventions*. Giving a speech is not a static experience—rather, it is an intervention into an ongoing dialogue negotiating the symbolic categorization of experience. More specifically, a speech enacts the rhetorical maneuvers that promote the strategies and tactics of an intervention. For example, an HIV/AIDS speech given to college administrators tactically attributes and advocates the need for an HIV testing center on campus and promotes the strategy of stressing group need.

In addition, the RSI model allows a speaker to develop the speech around the intervention-constructing questions posed earlier in this chapter. As part of an audience analysis, the speaker examines the system components' naming patterns and compares them to his or her own. How does the audience talk about the topic? How does it symbolically categorize its needs, interdependencies, and experience? What anomaly-masking and anomaly-featuring communication is occurring? How have the audience's naming patterns changed over time? By addressing such questions, the speaker gains clues as to how to intervene and which type of intervention to emphasize—need, power, or attention.

Finally, the RSI model enables the speaker as intervener to consider the side effects of the attempted intervention. Traditionally, speech communication scholars discuss ethics—the need to be truthful, fair, and accurate, and to consider sources and values—based on the assumption that speeches can influence audiences (Beebe & Beebe, 2006). The RSI model also directs speakers to attend to the potential subsystem side effects of their rhetorical interventions. For example, if you as a speaker attempt a needs intervention, how might that influence the system's interpretation of its interdependencies and experience?

As we discussed the RSI model's connection to organizational communication, public relations, and speech communication, perhaps you also thought of RSI model links to other subspecialties of communication. Maybe you see relationships between the RSI model and communication areas such as family, health, intercultural, interpersonal, mass media, political, risk, crisis, and small group. In addition, perhaps you considered how the RSI model could be used to organize and make sense of the historical development of communication theory. These connections offer opportunities for you to explore as you grow in your role of RSI scholar.

Connecting to Other Fields

As you learn about the RSI model, maybe you notice ties between the RSI model and disciplines in addition to communication—such as psychology, marketing, economics, sociology, and history. As your thinking about the model develops, you might act as an innovator in these other fields by introducing the RSI model as an alternative framework for interpreting experience examined in these disciplines.

You might also find that the RSI model has applicability in fields that are attempting to make sense of human experience using a **holographic** metaphor. Although we have referred to the RSI subsystems as holographic, the model itself is a holographic approach to understanding human symbolizing activity. It assumes that all experiences, like the swirls on holographic film, are dynamically interconnected. We create the appearance of separateness in and give order to experience when we symbolically categorize. The RSI model, though, directs our attention to the holistic nature of experience by emphasizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of our communication patterns. Like the light that shines through the holographic film patterns reveals the apple, the RSI model enables us to reveal our symbolic patterns that divide and unite experience.

Over the past few decades, scientists, scholars, and philosophers in fields such as physics, chemistry, neuroscience, biology, psychology, anthropology, medicine, and organizational design have been negotiating the merits of a holographic metaphor for making sense of human experience (Banner, 1994; Bekenstein, 2003; Bohm, 2002; Johnston, 2006; Pribram, 1971; Susskind & Lindesay, 2005; Talbot, 1992; Wagner, 2001; Wilbur, 1982). Physicist David Bohm, an advocate of the holographic template, believes that "our almost universal tendency to fragment the world and ignore the dynamics interconnectedness of all things is responsible for many of our problems, not only in science but in our lives and society" (quoted in Talbot, p. 49). Such thinking enables us to start wars and bury toxic wastes without reflecting on the long-term impacts of our individual actions on the whole system (Talbot). Thus, as you develop in your role as an RSI scholar, you might act as an intervener to contribute to our understanding of a holographic template. You might also contemplate the side effects for a social system that symbolically recategorizes the universe as a hologram.

We, the authors, hope that one side effect of our intervention is that you increase your reflectivity about the communication processes that underlie every aspect of our lives. By way of closing, we mention a few other ways we hope this book intervenes in your naming patterns.

❖   THE BOOK AS INTERVENTION

If we, the authors, restricted ourselves to philosopher Thomas Kuhn's (1996) model of scientific change, we would name ourselves as *cumulators*. Kuhn views *cumulators* as power shareholders whose task in the academic social system is to choose the concepts and models to be passed down to the next generation of scholars. Cumulators compile these ideas into forms such as books and articles. In this book, we have summarized and compiled RSI model concepts from the original articles to pass on to you. However, in the process of being cumulators, we, the authors, are also interveners. Let's contemplate how we have attempted to intervene in your symbolic reality through writing this book.

Promoting an Attention Intervention

Consider how we, the authors, attempted to promote or impede a shift in your interpretation of experience. How did you name the communication process prior to reading this book? How do you name it now?

Perhaps you foregrounded marketplace forces, technological advancements, or psychological attitudes as the drivers of social change. You rhetorically backgrounded the role of communication in prompting and forestalling social change, treating it as something added, a tool of occasional use in shaping the world. Maybe now you name *communication*—more specifically, the human ability to transform experience into symbols—as the *catalyst of social change*. When individuals, organizations, societies, and cultures experience change, we ascribe the generator of that change to shifts in how they symbolically construct interpretations of needs, interdependencies, and experience. To promote this attention shift to the interpretation that communication drives social change, we attempted to shift your ways of knowing, valuing, and being.

The book highlighted the rhetorical nature of our knowledge of the world—that much of what we call *reality* has been symbolically constructed. It emphasized valuing the understanding of alternative interpretations of experience and the process by which we rhetorically construct those interpretations. Finally, it directed attention to the symbolic nature of our being—we are the naming beings.

Rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke (1966) ties together knowing, valuing, and being when he poses these questions related to defining human beings as symbol-using creatures:

[C]an we bring ourselves to realize . . . just how overwhelmingly much of what we mean by "reality" has been built up for us

through nothing but our symbol systems? Take away our books, and what little do we know about history, biography, even something so "down to earth" as the relative position of seas and continents? What is our "reality" for today (beyond the paper-thin line of our particular lives) but all this clutter of symbols about the past combined with whatever things we know mainly through maps, magazines, newspapers, and the like about the present? . . . And however important to us is this tiny sliver of reality each has experience firsthand, the whole overall "picture" is but a construct of our symbol systems. (p. 5)

Finally, what power-related and need-related attention shifts might have occurred? Perhaps prior to reading this book you named yourself as *independent*. Now you name yourself as *interdependent*. Perhaps you interpreted all of your needs as *real*. Now you interpret many of them as *symbolic constructions*.

Encouraging a Power Intervention

In what way has this book attempted to promote a power shift? Perhaps you purchased this book because a professor assigned it for a class. You followed a power code that says that you obtain the books that the professor requires. Maybe you read the chapters because of a power code that says you complete the assignments required by the professor. By agreeing to buy and read this book, you entered a power-sharing system that includes us, the authors.

The book promotes an interpretation of experience that we, the authors, believe compensates for anomalies in currently held naming patterns about social change. We are interdependent with others, such as you, to read, ratify, and advocate this proposed interpretation. By presenting our interpretation of experience, we offer a choice—an alternative way to name experience and for the social system to develop.

Perhaps your professor previously cooperated with other authors by purchasing their books. If your professor names this book as one that offers an interpretation that seems to make more sense of experience, then the professor reduces interdependency with other authors and increases interdependency with us. In this exchange-based relationship, we, the authors, provide a communication-based view of change that might enable your professor to better do his or her job. In turn, your professor agrees to adopt the new book and distribute this view of change.

Although you might have followed a power code in acquiring this book, you have power code expectancies related to book authors. You

probably expect academic book authors to offer information that pre-
pares you to participate more fully in society by being a more informed
citizen. You might expect the authors to provide knowledge that
enhances and expands your life and career opportunities. You might
expect them to use a writing style that is understandable, and so forth.

You become a power holder when you give feedback on the profes-
sor's choice of books. If you and other students agree that the authors
have violated power code expectancies, you can advocate change. The
professor might discontinue using this book and become interdepen-
dent with other authors or become a competitor by writing his or her
own book about social change. What you learn from books is part of
your future choosing, just as your evaluation and recommendation
of books are part of future choosing for authors.

Finally, how has your role in social hierarchy shifted now that you
can enact the roles of *RSI critic* and *social intervener*? With what groups,
courses, and theorists might you now seek increased interdependency
as a result of your renaming? With what groups, courses, and theorists
might you be less interdependent if you adopt the alternative names
for yourself?

Prompting a Need Intervention

In what ways have your interpretation of needs shifted? If you are
using this book in a course, perhaps you initially focused on your indi-
vidual need to get through the material to pass the course. You needed
to do well on examinations and papers, so you needed to learn about
the RSI model to meet that need. Perhaps you advocated that need by
asking the professor questions about exam designs and paper require-
ments. How have we tried to encourage you to rename your needs
from the individual need of simply passing this class to the social
need of learning more about a communication-driven interpretation of
social change?

Think about how we linked an understanding of social change to
American dream attributes such as the *need for success*. If you compre-
hend and can critique social change, you can more effectively partici-
pate in the social system as critic and intervener. Such knowledge
might enable you to enhance the social good and fulfill the need to
accomplish a more nearly perfect life for all. We have advocated the
RSI model as a way for you to meet this need to understand and ana-
lyze social change.

Finally, consider how some of your other needs might have shifted
after reading this book. Maybe now you support a need to make others

aware of the symbolic nature of social change. You might interpret a need to pay attention to people's dialogue and discussions to glimpse the rhetorical processes of social intervention. Perhaps you become an advocate of the RSI model by writing papers and theses based on the model. You also might see a need to reinterpret or expand the model. Of course, after reading this book, you might interpret the model to be non-needs-meeting, return the book to the bookstore, and advocate an alternative approach.

Overall, this book has been an attempt to intervene in your interpretations of social change, interdependencies, and needs. It attempts to nudge you in the direction of naming social change as rhetorically driven and of defining naming as the essence of being human. However, we recognize that, as interveners, we do not control the intervention's outcome. We simply present one choice among many for understanding human experience. We are interdependent with you in choosing the future.

❖   CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has considered how the RSI model offers a framework for constructing social interventions. Using the narrative of a college-setting intervention, we highlighted some of the questions that the RSI model suggests that interveners consider when organizing interventions:

- How am I naming experience? How are the system components naming experience?
  - What anomaly-featuring or anomaly-masking communication, or both, are the components emphasizing?
  - What aspects of experience do their current naming patterns background or foreground, or both?
  - What ideological expectancies do their naming patterns reflect?
- What is the nature of my intervention? Am I promoting change? Impeding change? Both?
- In what way am I trying to reverse or compensate for a rhetorical trend that I interpret to be deviance amplifying?
- Who is the primary audience of my intervention?
- With which subsystem will I begin?
- What strategies and tactics will I use to promote my intervention?
- What rhetorical maneuvers will I employ to enact the intervention?

- How will I reason to promote my naming of experience?
  - What messages or symbolizing activity will I create to communicate the intervention?
  - What channels of communication will I use to communicate the intervention?
- What are the potential subsystem side effects of my intervention? How will a shift in one subsystem (need, power, or attention) simultaneously lead to shifts in the other subsystems?

Overall, the RSI model can guide intervention development. It can also provide a framework for reflecting on others' attempts to intervene in systems in which you participate.

Next, we examined the RSI model's connections to communication subspecialties and other disciplines. The RSI model offers a rhetorical way to understand and interpret the organizational change that is necessary to an organization's growth and survival. It provides a methodology to enable public relations professionals to anticipate shifts in the *organization/public's* relationship and create interventions to attempt to shape those shifts. The RSI model also suggests a way to reinterpret public speaking events by naming speakers as *interveners*, speeches as *rhetorical maneuvers* that promote interventions, and ethics as *reflection* on the side effects of interventions. In addition, the model potentially links to disciplines advocating the hologram as a metaphor for making sense of experience, both as a holographic approach and as a method to explore that interpretive shift.

Finally, the chapter concluded with thoughts about this book as a social intervention. We reflected on how we, the authors, have attempted to promote need, power, and attention shifts in your interpretations of experience. We have sought to expand how you name your role in the social system—from *participant* to *critic* to *intervener*. We have foregrounded communication as the driver of social change. We have advocated the interpretation that understanding social change from a rhetorical perspective will enable us to build a more nearly perfect world and enact the American dream.

How will we, the authors, evaluate the response to and side effects of our intervention? We will pay attention to the social system around us. We will review symbolizing activity such as letters to the editor, magazine articles, and news broadcasts for shifts in how people talk about social change. We will examine scholarly journal articles for the types of communication models being used to

interpret social change. We will listen to daily conversations for evidence of new or redefined words, such as *anomaly-masking* and *anomaly-featuring*, prompted by the RSI model. We will search for social hierarchy changes, such as newly created positions with titles like *intervention specialist*.

In sharing our interpretation of the rhetoric of social intervention, we have contributed to the ongoing human dialogue to construe a world of ordered experience. Now it is your turn.

❖ REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are the similarities and differences in using the RSI model as a method of criticism versus a method of intervention?

2. How does your attention shift when renaming yourself from *critic* to *change agent*? What are the implications for needs and power?

3. What types of choices must you make when acting as an intervener?

4. When intervening, are there times when interveners may be pushed or forced to do something that they did not want to do? Are there times when the power code prevails over what seems to be the free will or choice of the intervener?

5. When acting as an intervener, what might be your ethical responsibilities for any unintended side effects of your intervention?

6. Think of a field outside of communication. In what ways might the RSI model be used to provide insight into that field?

7. How does knowledge of the rhetorical patterns of social intervention enable you to participate more fully within a social system?

8. How might the RSI model, a *holographic approach*, be used to understand some disciplines' shifts to interpreting the universe as a hologram?

9. Is this textbook an *ethical intervention*? Which power code conventions does it follow and violate? How would you deem its effectiveness at promoting need, power, and attention interventions?

❖ CHAPTER EXERCISES

1. Using the chapter's example of the college need intervention, redesign the intervention from the starting point of power or attention.

2. Reflect on a speech or presentation that you have given recently. Analyze that event through the lens of the RSI model.

3. Visit the Web site American Rhetoric (http://americanrhetoric .com). Choose two speeches on a related topic (e.g., race relations, global warming, homeland security). Compare and contrast the interventional strategies, tactics, and maneuvers of the two speeches.

4. Suppose you work for a company that wants to boost sales for its new line of all-natural, organic yogurts. How might your knowledge of the RSI model assist you in developing and implementing a marketing campaign to increase sales?

5. Select an organization that has been in the news recently. Find newspaper and magazine articles that have been published about the organization during the past six months. Analyze the articles for anomaly-featuring or anomaly-masking communication, or both. What trends do you notice? If you were a public relations professional for that organization, how would you advise it to respond to the trends in light of your knowledge of the RSI model?

6. Divide the class into need, power, and attention groups. Each group should analyze the strategies, tactics, and maneuvers of this book's attempted intervention into the group's assigned subsystem. Group members should discuss how they individually have responded to the attempted intervention. Share the group's findings with the class.

❖ SERVICE LEARNING EXERCISE

Propose an intervention for the not-for-profit organization for which you have been working. Respond to the questions in this chapter. Explain the purpose and nature of the intervention; its audience; the strategies, tactics, and maneuvers to enact the intervention; and possible side effects from the intervention. Present an oral and a written version of the proposal to the organization.

Under the Lens: Interpreting Scholarship

Review the following narrative that rhetorical scholar Lee Snyder shares with his students. Consider these questions as you read: What is the nature and purpose of his intervention? What are the strategies, tactics, and rhetorical maneuvers of his intervention? What side effects might result from his attempted intervention? What kind of alternative intervention might you construct to accomplish similar goals?

There is a great ship, chartered by philosopher Sir Francis Bacon, and still in operation, traveling continually around the world. The ship contains many spacious rooms, each filled with great men and women of the world who have lived in all times from ancient days to the present.

Some of these people are scientists. Others are philosophers. Some are farmers. Others are business entrepreneurs. Some are professors. And among the men and women are some students.

These people are remarkable—you would recognize some of them—and their faces seem to radiate a light of understanding. Also remarkable is that, although these people often disagree in their discussions, they do not discriminate against others. Wherever in the world the ship docks, new passengers are welcomed based only on their merits. Race and sex are irrelevant, and young students are treated with the same dignity as the old sages.

Often, a new person tries to board the ship. This person presents to the porter a paper, a book, or a speech. After the porter examines the work carefully and approves it, the person is welcomed aboard and given all rights of the ship. The new passenger immediately notices that the air is rich and exhilarating here.

Sometimes a wealthy person tries to buy passage, or a famous person asks for special admission, but he or she is always rejected. The ship has only one door through which passengers can enter, and it is barred to everyone except those who qualify for admission.

Sometimes people on shore laugh at the "unrealistic" people on the ship. "It's a wonder they are able to tie their shoes without a manual," they say. But these critics fail to understand that all of their political ideas, their education, most of their entertainment, their art, their good health, and even much of their food come from those who have learned at the feet of these passengers.

Now, the gangplank is extended, and you enter. A few of you may want to stay all your lives; most will visit and enjoy the company just for a while. All of you will remember the experience throughout your lives.

One student was able to enter the ship because he decoded the meaning expressed by a dollar bill. Another was able to explain the power of Norman Rockwell's paintings of the Four Freedoms. Another student was admitted

because she had mastered an E. E. Cummings poem. Still another had unique insight into the meaning communicated by the way a black woman's hair is styled. Perhaps a few of you have dropped in before.

This ship really exists. It is called *Scholarship*. In your work on social intervention, you have been earning the credentials to visit it. But you must demonstrate that you can think like a scholar—that is the only way to get aboard.

First, have the attitude of the learner. Question everything, especially what all people know, even what *you* know. But that is not enough. You must also not be content with questions; you must *want* to know.

Second, pay your dues. Master what those who entered the ship before you have learned. All geniuses onboard built on what came before. Show respect to your predecessors, even if you have discovered they were wrong.

Third, acknowledge your debt. Give credit to those from whom you have learned and borrowed. Failure to do this means expulsion from the ship. A scholar who plagiarizes is instantly cast overboard, and his or her career is finished. No school will hire a thief as a teacher, and no journal will publish anything written by a plagiarist, even if the plagiarism happened only once.

Fourth, learn a method of inquiry, such as the RSI model. The method of inquiry will serve as a lens through which you can understand and interpret the world.

Fifth, by using your method, discover something fresh and take a position on it. Argue for your position.

Sixth, communicate your position clearly. This requires learning the customs of your discipline, such as the appropriate writing style, and working at the writing process.

In this way, you earn the right to take passage with the rest of us. Welcome aboard!