

## Looking Out Looking In Ch. 1

SWK246, Department of Social Work

Alliance University

Bethany Mullins

“Martin Buber’s I and Thou” (pg. 14)

Think of your most important relationship:

**1. To what degree can they be described as “i-thou” or “i-it”?**

My relationship with my mom is a wild mix of them both and it has changed throughout the years. When I was a child, it seemed to be more of an “i-it” relationship. I was a child who required things of her for sustaining life and she had expectations of me in return in terms of behavior and contributions to our family. Now as I am older we have become more like friends and she is a consult and mentor in my life rather than a hard authority, which makes it more of an “i-thou” relationship than it was growing up. It is completely unique and the dynamic changes day to day. We are our own individual people who choose to be in relationship with one another while retaining respect for the ways we differ.

**2. How satisfied are you with this level of relating?**

I am extremely satisfied with the blend of “i-it” and “i-thou” that we have today. She is a voice of reason and a support as am also I to her, but we are also more independent and respect one another’s individuality and ability to make their own decisions.

**3. What obligation do you have to treat others in an “i-thou” manner?**

I think the piece in an “i-thou” relationship that should be extended to virtually every relationship is the understanding of individuality. Leaving space for the other person to

be their own person and not solely looking at them as a means of transaction. In this, we are more conscious of another person's opinions, characteristics, and needs. This is how we avoid becoming apathetic to others and encourages us to see each individual's value as a human.

“How personal are your Facebook relationships?” (pg. 15)

If you're a Facebook user, scroll through your list of friends on that site. Consider how personal (or impersonal) your relationships are with those people:

**1. Which factors noted in this section (unique, irreplaceable, interdependent, disclosing, and intrinsically rewarding) affect your appraisals?**

For the most part they are impersonal. Facebook is the place I keep up with the people I don't have much intimacy with. For instance, the people I grew up with but no longer talk to. Or the distant family members I see every 3 years. They are the people I want to know how they are doing and they wish to know about the broad aspects of my life, but when it comes down to it, they don't know much of any intimate details of my life. I would still say many of them are irreplaceable. They are linked to aspects of my life such as high school, or my childhood town which I would never want to change. They are defining aspects of those parts of my life, so for that they are irreplaceable. However, when it comes to disclosure, there is very little of this. I do not share intimate personal details on social media and even for the ones who do share a lot on Facebook, it is not in a direct line of communication. Instead they are speaking to a crowd of 200+ people which even if the information is rather personal, it is not intimate or an indicator of a close relationship between two specific individuals.

- 2. What percentage of your communication with these people occurs exclusively on Facebook? Through other mediated channels (phone, text, email)? Face to face? How does this ratio affect your friendships?**

Aside from my immediate and close family, the majority of this communication is through Facebook. I do not see most of those people on a regular basis and probably have only about 10% of their phone numbers. This is a factor that contributes to the distant nature of these relationships. Since there is no direct communication between any of us, there is not much of a close relationship.

“Artificial [un]intelligence and communication [in]competence” (pg. 23)

Check your understanding by answering the following questions, either here or online...

- 1. Can you think of times when people have used “urban dictionary language” in settings where it wasn’t appropriate?**

I can think of examples but not specific personal experiences. If a Gen z was going to speak at a conference of Boomers and Gen X’s and they began to use “urban dictionary language”, it would not be appropriate. The terms used by this Gen Z may sound familiar to the older generations but the definitions of popular terminology changes so rapidly and this could cause miscommunication or misinterpretation.

- 2. On the other hand, can you think of times when people have used overly formal language in a situation that called for something more casual?**

I have observed this in many social group settings where people are meeting for the first time. For instance, I go to a young adult’s group at a church in Brooklyn and all the attenders are between the ages of 18 and 29. During the social time, where new people

are connecting with long time attenders, I have overheard many conversations where the first person seems to be interviewing the other and the second appears to be focusing on making a good first impression, as though they are also at an interview. In this situation, the people are not forming a genuine connection and it is unlikely that a lasting friendship/relationship will form. There is no vulnerability, intimacy, or transparency in these situations which are key to building deep relationships.

**3. What kinds of guidelines should you follow when it comes to appropriate language use?**

The ultimate guideline is “there is a time and place for everything”. You must know your environment, your crowd, and the occasion. All these aspects influence the scope of appropriate language that would be considered acceptable in various social situations.

“Check your competence” (pg. 26)

Check your competence as a communicator by answering the following questions, either here or online.

**1. Choose a person with whom you have an important relationship.**

My best friend Serena.

**2. In cooperation with this person, identify several contexts in which you communicate. For example, you might choose different situations such as “handling conflicts,” “lending support to friends,” or “expressing feelings.”**

On the most basic level, we communicate about plans; considering what works for each person and what compromises must be made to execute the plans. We also communicate about life. A huge basis to our friendship connection is sharing and supporting one

another in life. We share what is bothering us, what we have accomplished, what is making us happy, and what might be making us stressed.

**3. For each situation, have your friend rate your competence by answering the following questions:**

- a. Do you have a wide repertoire of response styles in this situation, or do you always respond in the same way?**

She says I am pretty predictable because we communicate so frequently, she is able to assume the type of response I may have. She says I am straightforward in my communication styles.

- b. Are you able to choose the most effective way of behaving for the situation at hand?**

Serena says I generally pick the best way to respond and act appropriately to the setting.

- c. Are you skillful at performing behaviors? (Note that knowing how you want to behave isn't the same as being able to behave that way.)**

She says yes. The communication usually is executed in the way we hope it is.

- d. Do you communicate in a way that leaves others satisfied?**

Yes. She says generally we are both very satisfied with the outcome of a situation where communication skills are utilized.

**4. After reviewing your partner's answers, identify the situations in which your communication is most competent.**

Our communication is most competent when either of us are seeking advice. We both feel like it is a safe space to share our struggles in an honest and raw way. Both of us are

also able to offer genuine advice, even if it may not be what the other person wishes to hear, and we are both able to accept whatever is communicated to us.

**5. Choose a situation in which you would like to communicate more competently, and with the help of your partner:**

**a. Determine whether your repertoire of behaviors needs to be expanded.**

When it comes to solely listening, I could use some work. When someone I care about comes to me with a situation that is causing them pain or stress, I want to help them to resolve it, but I need to be able to identify when that is maybe not what Serena is looking for but instead just listen to empathize and support rather than fix.

**b. Identify the ways in which you need to communicate more skillfully.**

I need to communicate the times I mess up better. I don't like to blatantly admit when I have made a mistake and particularly one that has affected someone else so when discussing and communicating about life with Serena, I need to get better at being comfortable with admitting my mess ups.

**c. Develop ways to monitor your behavior in the key situation to get feedback on your effectiveness.**

In situations where I am unsure if she is looking for a solution or just someone to empathize, I will ask her which she needs in that moment instead of just guessing or assuming I know. She has also agreed to make sure she remains non-judgmental whenever I confess a mistake or wrongdoing to her.

