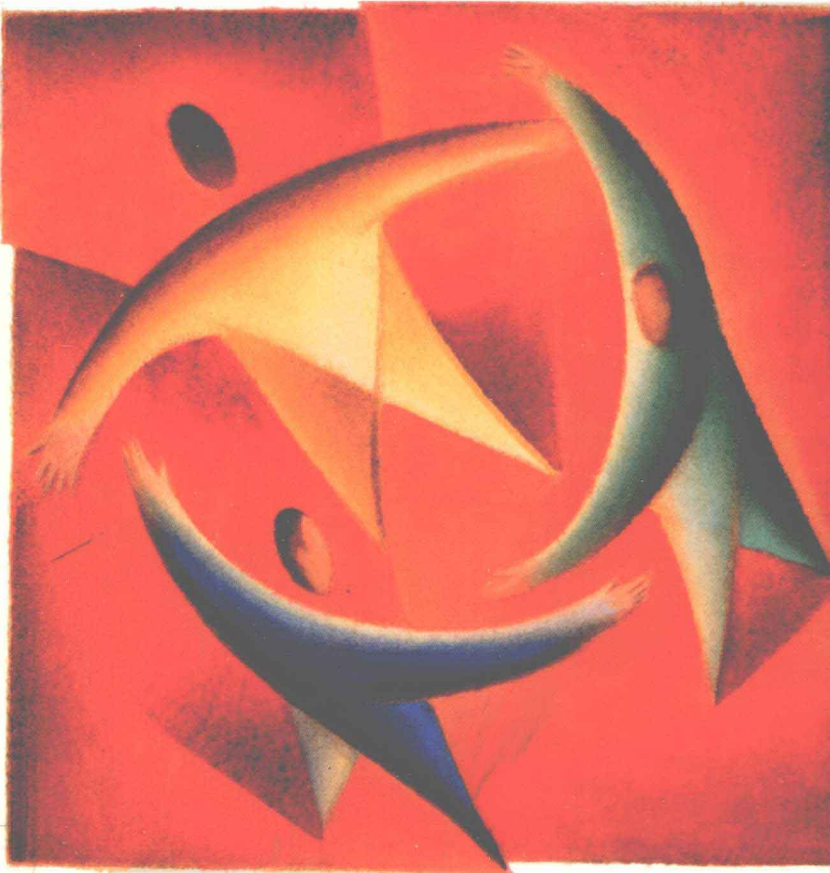


EFFECTIVE GROUP DISCUSSION

THEORY AND
PRACTICE



Tenth Edition

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Gloria J. Galanes
Katherine Adams*

EFFECTIVE GROUP DISCUSSION

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PREFACE

This is the 10th Edition of *Effective Group Discussion* and we welcome the contributions of Katherine Adams, who joins us as co-author. For all of us, small group work is too important to be left to chance or to “conventional wisdom.” Thus, the new edition continues to provide a comprehensive survey and interpretation of the small group research literature accompanied by practical, prescriptive guidance. We believe that small groups provide the initial vehicle by which humans make their contributions to the collective good. Humans have a need to participate, and small groups can serve as vehicles for this participation. People who understand how groups function, and why, can adapt their communicative behavior appropriately to maximize their participation in small groups. Conversely, people who lack this understanding will be frustrated. Even worse, they will be left without the tools of knowledge and skill they need to improve how their small groups function. They don’t know why one group produces joy while another produces frustration, and they certainly cannot assess their own contributions to a group’s success or failure. That is our mission: to help students become more effective small group members and leaders by providing them with the research-based tools—both theoretical understandings and practical suggestions—for effective participation in groups.

Effective Group Discussion is about secondary groups of all kinds: work groups, committees, task forces, self-directed work teams, and other small groups whose objectives include finding solutions to problems, producing goods, and creating policies. Although the text is written for academically prepared beginning students of small group communication, it is likely to be most useful to upper-division students who appreciate the extensive research base underpinning the narrative. It should also serve well as a reference source for advanced communication students, consultants, or people appointed to leadership positions in groups or organizations—in short, for anyone active in small groups. Instructors in academic fields such as communication, social psychology, business communication, a variety of health-related fields, and education will find it an appropriate and teachable textbook for their small group-oriented courses.

Effective Group Discussion is differentiated from our other small group text, *Communicating in Groups*, by the inclusion of more reports of current research, use of a more extensive vocabulary, and greater emphasis on theoretical principles and models. Visual illustrations are incorporated to illustrate and teach rather than to entertain or capture attention. Upper-division students will find their needs for research summaries and theoretical explanations well met.

THEMES

Systems theory is the theoretical foundation on which *Effective Group Discussion* is based. We believe it provides the most useful, elegant framework for incorporating all the information we know about small groups. We have included all the other major theories that bear on small group discussion, such as structuration, symbolic convergence, and so forth, but systems theory helps us organize what we present in the text. It gives students an accessible handle for assembling the elements.

We think systems theory provides another advantage as well—it reminds our students of the interdependent relationships among all the components of small groups. Our students often come to us wanting *the* answer for why *this* group outperformed expectations or why *that* group bombed. Part of what we try to do is help students understand the complexity of human behaviors and the multiple causes for most outcomes, including in small groups. Systems theory helps us convey that complexity to our students without overwhelming them.

We also believe strongly in the *practicality* of what we present in *Effective Group Discussion*. For this reason in the 10th edition we have incorporated chapter-opening case studies into every chapter, with ongoing discussion of them and questions designed to get the students to think about how the information they have learned in the chapter can be applied to actual situations they might encounter. The information on which the opening case studies are based comes from actual experiences—our own and others’—and illustrates to the student the pragmatic value of understanding how small groups work.

CHAPTER FORMAT, PLAN OF THE TEXT, AND NEW FEATURES

Previous users of *Effective Group Discussion* will recognize that familiar chapter elements have been retained, with two new ones added. As before, each chapter begins with a Central Message, a concise focal point stating the purpose of the chapter. This is followed by the Study Objectives, which delineate the major points to be covered, and the Key Terms, which our students tell us they appreciate. Key Terms are defined in the text and also in the Glossary at the end of the book.

Previous users of *Effective Group Discussion* will be pleased with two new features: the case studies and new “Consider This” boxes. Each chapter begins with an intriguing opening case that illustrates a major point of the chapter. These case studies have been drawn from real-life events and are designed to emphasize the usefulness of the information presented in the chapter. Then, throughout the chapter, “Consider This” boxes ask the students to apply a concept just explicated in the chapter. This feature is designed to help students think about a concept by asking them to apply it. This not only helps students learn the material but also encourages them to understand how the information is useful in everyday small group situations.

The chapter Summaries have been made more concise and put into a numbered format to make them more helpful to the student. Each Summary reflects the chapter's opening Study Objectives with summaries of the chapter's key points. The concise summaries are designed not to repeat information in the chapter but to highlight the main points for purposes of aiding retention and recall. The Exercises remain, providing additional ways for students to apply or experiment with the chapter's concepts. The Bibliographies and Notes at the ends of chapters provide students with extensive leads for additional reading or research.

The chapters are designed generally to move the discussion from systems inputs to throughput processes to outcomes. Part 1 presents an overview of small group theory. Chapter 1 introduces the importance and types of small groups in our lives, and Chapter 2 introduces the organizing framework of systems theory. Part 2, "The Foundations of Communicating in Groups," presents a theoretical description of the communication process, thereby providing a foundation for understanding the centrality of communication in a group's throughput processes. Chapter 3 explains the communication process, Chapter 4 concentrates on verbal and nonverbal signals, and Chapter 5 describes the effects of culture and cultural differences on communication in small groups.

Part 3 focuses on the development of the group as an entity. Chapter 6 discusses the members. Chapters 7 and 8 deal with how members develop from a collection of individuals into a group, with Chapter 7 focusing on structuration and the development of roles and norms, and Chapter 8 on networks, status relationships, cohesiveness, avoiding groupthink, teambuilding, and SYMLOG. Chapter 9 presents theoretical perspectives about leadership, while Chapter 10 offers guidelines for designated small group leaders.

Part 4 links throughput processes with outputs as it presents information about effective problem solving. It begins with an overview of problem solving in Chapter 11, moves to a discussion of decision making in chapter 12, and concludes in Chapter 13 with information about how properly managed conflict can enhance these important small group processes. Part 5 contains techniques and tools for evaluating and improving small groups. Chapter 14 presents specific discussion techniques that maximize small group effectiveness. Techniques and tools for observing, analyzing, and evaluating small group communication are presented in Chapter 15.

As with previous editions, the new 10th Edition was written so the chapters may be used selectively and in an order other than the one presented in the text. After Chapters 1 and 2, the chapters may be presented in any order without loss of comprehension, according to the instructor's preference. Some teachers want to address leadership or problem solving early in the course. Others want their students to know how to observe and evaluate interaction in groups so that the theoretical explanations can be applied to specific real-life examples. Still others may choose to omit some chapters or sections. These and other changes in the order of chapters should not interfere with student understanding of the concepts.

REVISED CONTENT

With every new edition of *Effective Group Discussion*, the problem of what to include becomes more challenging. In making changes, we have relied heavily on the advice of our reviewers, instructors who use the text, and our own experiences in teaching from the text. We have tried diligently to keep the text manageable and affordable for students.

We know also that, in recent years, most students using *Effective Group Discussion* are likely to have completed at least one basic communication course before enrolling in a small group course. As with the previous edition, we continue to take this into account by streamlining our discussion of basic communication processes. The overview we provide will serve as a review for students with previous communication courses, but students without such a background should still receive enough detail to make sense of the communication process in small groups.

Of the helpful changes we have made in this 10th Edition, the addition of the chapter-opening cases is perhaps the most visible and exciting. The cases are based on actual small group experiences, either our own or from the contemporary popular press. We selected stories that students should find interesting and that intrigued us. For example, we've included cases describing the development of cohesiveness in the 1999 World Champion U.S. Women's Soccer Team, the decision-making process used by teams of burglars when they decide what houses to hit, and the conflict-management process used by Common Ground, the organization that promotes small group discussion to foster understanding between pro-choice and pro-life individuals. These stories captivated us; we think they will intrigue students and spark their interest in the chapter material.

We have enhanced our discussion of group culture by presenting information about culture early, in Chapters 1 and 2, before developing it more fully in Chapter 5. We have shortened considerably the church board dialogue in Chapter 2, in response to user comments. Now, we present shorter bits of dialogue designed to illustrate specific concepts. In Chapter 3, we present contemporary examples of how important using good interpersonal communication is in maintaining healthy relationships. We continue to emphasize the importance of intercultural communication concepts to small groups by keeping the intercultural information in Chapter 5 rather than distributing it throughout the text, and we have emphasized ethical communication principles in diversity issues.

We have added information about the Myers-Briggs personality types in Chapter 6. In our experience, students have more trouble managing personality differences than ethnic or gender differences, and we believe this information provides students with tools to begin to appreciate and capitalize on differences rather than dreading them. We have taken the discussion of groupthink out of Chapter 13, the chapter on conflict, and incorporated it

into Chapter 8 in the section on cohesiveness, where it seems to fit better conceptually. In Chapter 14, we have added more information about technology, particularly Group Support Systems, which are becoming both more common and more affordable.

Throughout the text, we have updated the research and incorporated the most current information available about the topics covered. We believe you will find especially helpful the new “Consider This” boxes dispersed throughout each chapter that ask students to apply concepts or think about them in more depth. As in previous editions, we have continued to strengthen the communicative focus of the text by emphasizing what members *say* and *do* in small groups and by asking students to consider what effect this communication behavior has on various group processes. We have increased our emphasis on diversity by providing more examples throughout the text to emphasize this highly significant issue.

SUPPLEMENTS

We continue to revamp our *Instructor's Manual* to reflect the new directions we are taking in our own classes. The *Instructor's Manual* is extensive and contains many ideas for activities, assignments, exercises, video resources, and now, Internet resources that help clarify or expand on concepts included in the text. There are also two videotapes created specifically for this and our other text. *Communication in Small Groups: Short Takes* illustrates a variety of small group concepts in short (two- to three-minute) segments. Concepts that are illustrated on the videotape are marked with an icon of a videocassette in the margin of the text; the tape's *User's Guide* is designed to help both instructors and students focus their viewing. *Communicating Effectively in Small Groups*, our original videotape, presents four longer group scenarios and is especially useful as the basis for written case study assignments. The *Instructor's Manual* also suggests other videotapes and films that clarify concepts discussed in the text, along with “writing to learn” and many other kinds of activities.

We gratefully appreciate your use of *Effective Group Discussion*. We welcome your written reactions to its content and composition. You can send such comments to us via McGraw-Hill Company to the Department of Communication and Mass Media, Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri, or the Department of Communication, California State University, Fresno, California.

May all your groups be enjoyable and satisfying!

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We appreciate the contributions made to this book by numerous persons; we can name only a few. First, we acknowledge our debt to instructors and writers Freed Bales, Ernest Bormann, Elton S. Carter, B. Aubrey Fisher, Larry Frey, Kenneth Hance, Randy Hirokawa, Sidney J. Parnes, J. Donald Phillips, M. Scott Poole, Marvin Shaw, and Victor Wall.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF SMALL GROUPS

PART

1



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The two chapters in Part 1 provide introductory information to focus your study of small groups. Chapter 1 introduces important terms and concepts used throughout the text, and Chapter 2 presents systems theory as a framework for studying and understanding small groups.