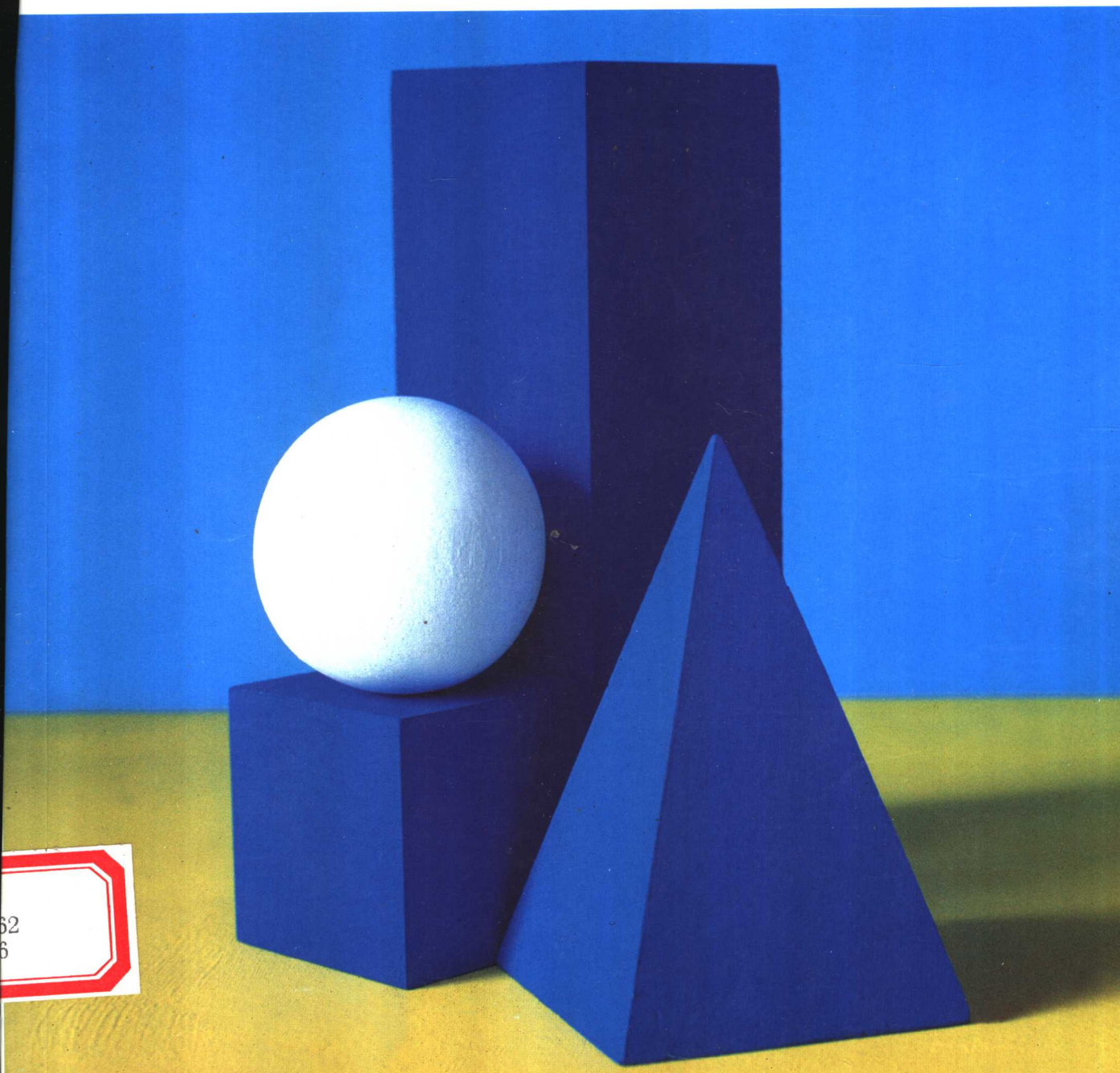
FOURTH EDITION

Communicating in Groups

APPLICATIONS AND SKILLS



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Gloria J. Galanes Katherine Adams John K. Brilhart

Communicating in Groups

Applications and Skills

FOURTH EDITION

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We dedicate this book to our students,
who teach us as much as we teach them.

People can be motivated to be good not by telling them that hell is a place where they will burn, but by telling them it is an unending committee meeting. On judgment day, the Lord will divide people by telling those on His right hand to enter His kingdom and those on His left to break into small groups.

Rev. Robert Kennedy

This quote expresses precisely how many people feel about participating in groups. But being able to work effectively in small groups is quickly becoming an essential skill for the 21st century. As we finalize this revision, Gloria has just finished reading Daniel Goleman's *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 1998) which confirms the importance of being an effective team member. The research Goleman cites suggests that up to *two-thirds* of an individual's success at work depends on that person's people skills, including the ability to listen, to manage conflicts respectfully and productively, to be a trusted team member, to capitalize on diversity, and to demonstrate principled leadership. In fact, many of the chapters in *Communicating in Groups* are devoted to human relations skills deemed essential in today's organizational life.

There are a number of changes in this fourth edition. The most major change, as is apparent from the cover, is the addition of coauthor Katherine Adams. Jack Brilhart, who collaborated on the first three editions with Gloria, has turned his attention to a different kind of writing. Jack is presently working on a novel based on some of his experiences as a college student and traveling preacher in the south during the 50s. His judgment and expertise remain available to us, but he is no longer involved in the actual writing. Kathy, who has worked on two other texts, was an advisee of B. Aubrey Fisher, who happens to have been a hero of Gloria's. Kathy and Gloria share similar perceptions of small groups and both really enjoy working with undergraduates. Their collaboration—via e-mail, telephone, fax, and snail mail—was an easy and productive one (thank heaven for new technologies!).

One of the things we most wanted to do in this edition was to emphasize the practical orientation of the text. We hope to take students from a conceptual understanding of information to application of that information. In addition, we believe that learning to be an effective small group member or leader is not a matter of personality but a matter of *behavior*. We want readers to be able to make wise choices about their behavior in group. *That* is what this book is about—introducing students to concepts essential to understanding small groups and suggesting tools they can actually use to make groups they belong to as rewarding and productive as possible.

This highly *practical* orientation most clearly differentiates *Communicating in Groups* from Jack's and Gloria's other small group text, *Effective Group Discussion*. That text is designed to meet the academic needs of undergraduate students, most of whom are communication majors who are interested not only in practical applications but also in the summaries of research by small group communication scholars.

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Communicating in Groups has the same research *foundation* as *Effective Group Discussion,* but we report the research in much less detail, with more synthesis and distillation of the findings, fewer footnotes, and less evaluation of competing theories. This allows readers to focus on what is usually most important to them—practical applications of the research.

We think *Communicating in Groups* is an appropriate textbook for freshman-level small group courses in departments of communication. We recommend it for small group courses in community colleges and technical institutes, and for practical small group courses in departments of business, education, engineering, health sciences, political science, psychology, sociology and social sciences, and urban affairs. In addition, we think the book is a helpful guide to *nonstudent* practitioners. Whether readers belong to task forces at work, chair committees at their church or synagogue, or serve on school boards, they need to know how to operate effectively as a small group participant or leader.

We searched for ways to make *Communicating in Groups* more practical and user-friendly for a variety of readers. As a result, we've added several pedagogical features that have been well received by our reviewers. First, the introductory story that began each chapter in previous editions has been changed to a case illustrating the main theme of the chapter. The case includes questions that can serve as the basis for class discussion or for a written assignment. The cases, some of which may be familiar, represent a variety of situations, including several drawn from our own personal experiences. Second, each chapter now includes three or four Apply Now features that illustrate key concepts. As with the introductory cases, these can be used to spark class discussion or serve as the basis for written assignments. Third, we have replaced the review questions at the end of each chapter with exercises that are designed to give students additional opportunities to explore key concepts. Finally, we have replaced each narrative chapter summary with a list of six to eight main points emphasized in the chapter. Each of these changes is intended to help students identify the most important ideas contained in each chapter and to give them ample opportunities to explore practical application of the information.

Although we have made these changes, we have retained features we believe enhanced the readability and usefulness of the text. For instance, we continue to include numerous actual examples throughout the book—drawn from education, business, health care, the nonprofit sector, and religious institutions—to clarify the theoretical points we present. These examples are not meant to limit you but to remind you of your *own* examples and experiences. The major points of the chapters are summarized in figures and tables provided in the text to enhance understanding and retention. We have tried to make our points visually as well as verbally. Consistent with our attempt to present information in as many varied ways as possible, we continue to use an icon in the margin to identify those concepts in the text that are illustrated in the videotape accompanying this and our other text. We hope to *show* students the concepts we describe. Finally, we continue to use an informal writing style that comes close to the kind of speech you are likely to hear in many small groups. For example, we refer to ourselves—Gloria and Kathy—throughout the book. We think of you, our readers, as individuals with whom we are on a first-name basis and we encourage you to think of us in the same way—just as if we were all members of the same small group.

The hardest thing we had to do to was deciding what to cut to make room for our new pedagogical enhancements. There were also additional theoretical concepts we wanted to include. At the same time, we wanted to keep the book as short as possible and affordable for students. Accomplishing all these goals was challenging; it meant that some conceptual information had to be eliminated to make room for other things we wanted to include. In all cases, we tried to identify what the most essential concepts were, to remove redundant information, to streamline explanations, and to eliminate information that reviewers have told us they are less likely to use. Thus, although this edition continues to use general systems theory as its structural framework, it is organized very differently from previous editions and contains information not included in previous editions.

The organization of this fourth edition follows suggestions made by reviewers and previous users of the text, and our own experiences teaching small group communication courses to undergraduates. In particular, we have tried to accommodate teachers whose students form task groups early in a semester and thus need information about problem solving and leadership earlier than we presented them in previous editions. For example, we introduce leadership concepts early in the text and have combined our previous two leadership chapters into a streamlined chapter that focuses on applying leadership concepts. We introduce problem solving earlier, too, and have incorporated information about group techniques (e.g., focus groups, RISK technique) in the appropriate sections of the problem-solving chapter rather than keeping them in a separate chapter, as before. We have integrated other information from the previous "Group Techniques" chapter, such as information about Group Decision Support Systems, into other chapters as appropriate. For instance, we describe brainstorming in our new chapter about enhancing group creativity and critical thinking. Many students who enroll in a small group communication course either have already had a basic course in communication or do not need the level of detail we formerly provided about the communication process or about verbal and nonverbal communication. We have streamlined and condensed both those chapters.

We still believe that critical thinking is at the heart of effective problem solving, but in this edition we explicitly recognize the importance of creative thinking as well. Therefore, we have included a single chapter that balances discussion of both creative and critical thinking in small groups. We are excited about our new chapter that celebrates group member diversity. We have noticed in our own groups that many people have trouble working with others whose work and learning styles are different from theirs. Our chapter on diversity extends beyond typical presentations of cultural, gender, and ethnic diversity to address differences in motivation, personality, and learning style, which we see as major, but typical, problems for groups. We also have observed that many groups must make formal presentations of their work in public settings such as forums or symposia. In addition, many small group courses include a significant component on public presentations. To help those teachers and students, we have included a chapter on oral presentations to help group members make the most effective presentations possible of their work. Finally, at the suggestion of many teachers, we have placed much of the previous information about techniques for observing groups into an appendix, which allows those teachers who do use that information to continue to have access to it.

Part One provides basic information students need to understand how groups function. Chapter 1 introduces some of the basic terms encountered throughout the book, shows how to classify groups according to their major purpose, and introduces the concept of ethical behavior of group members. In Chapter 1, students will learn to identify the types of problems for which groups are best suited. Chapter 2 presents general systems theory as a framework for understanding the complexity of group communication. We view the group as an open living system that receives inputs from the environment, transforms them via throughput processes, and produces outputs. We provide specific illustrations of these concepts throughout the rest of the book.

Part Two provides the foundation for understanding communication in groups. Chapter 3, which may present review material for some readers, discusses basic communication theory. Students will learn what communication is, what constitutes effective listening, and how people interpret what they see and hear. Chapter 4 discusses the specifics of verbal and nonverbal communication. Students will also learn how to create messages that are clear and helpful, and how to evaluate nonverbal messages in a group. Chapter 5 presents problem solving and specific techniques to enhance various elements of the problem-solving process. Students are introduced to the Procedural Model of Problem Solving as a helpful guideline to follow. Chapter 6 discusses the creative and critical thinking skills necessary for effective group problem solving. Creative and critical thinking are at the heart of the group problem-solving process. The chapters discuss how to enhance group creativity and how to gather information, evaluate it, and check for errors in reasoning.

Part Three focuses on the group's throughput processes. Chapter 7 explains how a group develops into a team from an initial collection of individuals. Leadership concepts are explained as is the development of group member roles, norms, information about how to change ineffective norms, and how each group creates its own climate. Chapter 8 celebrates group diversity, which is a group strength but also presents challenges for members who must manage the diversity productively. Students will learn about member differences in motivation, learning style, personality, culture, gender, and ethnicity. The chapter also offers SYMLOG as a technique for discussing and capitalizing on member diversity. Chapter 9 explains why group conflicts occur and how they can be managed so that the group benefits instead of suffers. Without some conflict, it is possible that the group has fallen into *groupthink,* a state that prevents a group from using critical thinking skills. We explain how to help prevent this. Chapter 10 provides a comprehensive picture of what group leaders are expected to do and also gives suggestions for applying leadership principles effectively and ethically.

Part Four presents information about oral presentations, the culmination of much group effort. In Chapter 11, students will learn about the types of oral presentations, how to prepare effective presentations, and criteria for evaluating presentations. This chapter was written exclusively for this text by Dr. Hal Bochin, a colleague of Kathy's and a recognized public address scholar. Finally, the appendix presents information about a number of techniques a member or outside observer can use to gather information about a problem-solving group and help it improve its performance.

The *Instructor's Manual* contains additional suggested exercises and learning activities for each of the chapters, including suggestions for using the two videotape ancillaries available for this text, along with other video materials. One videotape presents four lengthy group meetings, each designed to illustrate a general group concept (e.g., leadership, conflict management). These segments make excellent video case studies. The second videotape presents short segments, most two or three minutes long, that illustrate a variety of group concepts. These segments are designed to help students visualize what these concepts look and sound like. We have been using video case studies in our classes for several years and have been pleased with the way students have responded. We think teachers who are looking for updated and vivid ways of teaching small group concepts will particularly appreciate this section.

We have designed this book to be of practical use to you. The suggestions and information we have provided are backed by scholarly research, but we have chosen to emphasize the practical application, not the academic research. We hope that reading this book will give you all the tools you need to become a more productive group member and an effective leader when you next have the opportunity.

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Gloria J. Galanes
Katherine Adams
John K. Brilhart

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PART

One

Orientation to Small Group Systems

Part One introduces you to the study of small groups. In Chapter 1 we define many of the terms you will need in your study of small groups. We discuss the types of small groups you are likely to experience, and we explain the participant-observer perspective used throughout the book. Chapter 2 presents you with a framework, general systems theory, to help organize the many concepts important to understanding how groups function.

CHAPTER

1 Small Groups as the Heart of Society

Chapter Outline

Groups in Your Life

Groups versus Individuals as Problem Solvers

Groups, Small Groups, and Small Group Theory

Classifying Groups by Their Major Purpose

Being a Valuable Group Member

Being an Ethical Group Member

The Participant-Observer Perspective

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