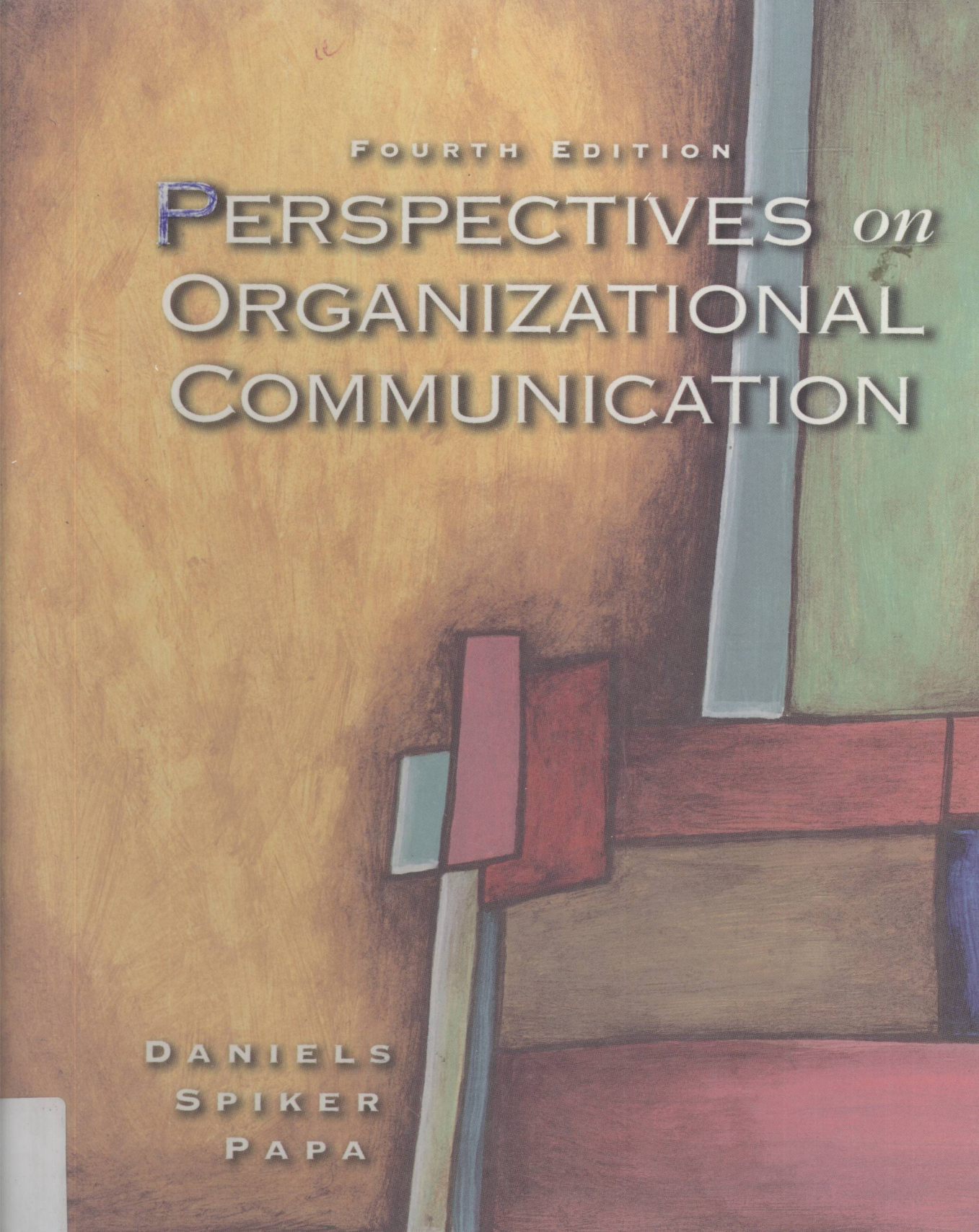
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FOURTH EDITION

PERSPECTIVES *on* ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

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To my parents, Harlin and Doris Daniels, to my wife, Deborah, and to my daughters, Shannon, Erica, Lindsey, and Lauren. —TDD

To the memory of my father, Bill Spiker, to the indomitable spirit of my mother, Imogene Spiker, and to my wife, Evelyn. —BKS

To Wendy, Andrew, and Samantha. —MJP

PREFACE

In the preface to the first edition of *Perspectives on Organizational Communication,* we admitted that we probably had fallen short of our goal "to present an artful mosaic which would somehow include every subtle nuance of this phenomenon" (1987, p. xii). Even so, we were confident that we had produced a sound survey text for the study of organizational communication. Our confidence was affirmed by wide acceptance of that first edition and the even broader adoption of the two editions that followed it. We are thankful that those who have adopted the book also are constructive critics who have offered us many ideas that we have incorporated as improvements in the subsequent editions.

The first two editions of this text were addressed primarily to the need to adequately survey and understand theoretical pluralism in the field. When we produced the third edition, we began to shift our focus to problems and paradoxes of organizational communication and the changing features of organizational life that have been revealed through the application of pluralistic perspectives. We noted in the third edition that organizations were becoming more racially and culturally diverse, yet African Americans, especially males, generally continue to be left out of the organizational equation. Feminization of organizations was occurring at a quickened pace, focusing attention on issues in organizational life that are of particular importance to women. A virtual revolution in information technologies was reshaping communication practices in ways that we would not have imagined only a few years ago. Finally, American economic organizations were undergoing great change in an effort to respond to global competition. All of these trends are continuing as we approach the turn of the century, so much of the fourth edition of the book provides a substantially expanded treatment of their implications for organizational communication.

This new edition includes a great deal of new material. We have added to our coverage of many topics, including theories of organization, communication structure, technology, diversity and cultural change, power, conflict, leadership, and strategic communication. In order to accommodate all of the new material, quite a bit of older material has been deleted, most notably chapters 2, 11, 12, and 13 from the third edition.

Two very obvious changes will provide you with some clues to many of the other changes that we have incorporated in the fourth edition. First, Michael Papa of Ohio University has joined us as an author on the work. The changes that you will see in the chapters on organizational culture, diversity and change, power, and conflict reflect the new thinking that Professor Papa has brought to the project. He

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also is responsible for the content of the chapter on new millennium thinking in organization theory. Second, you will see from the table of contents that we have gone to a fourteen-chapter volume. Some chapters are entirely new. Others are the product of expanded treatment of topics that were combined and addressed with more brevity in previous editions. Since we essentially have eliminated four older chapters, the net effect is that much of the fourth edition is new material. All of the third edition chapters that have been carried over to the new edition are updated with new ideas, research, examples, and editorial improvements.

It is difficult to summarize simply all of the substantive changes that have occurred, but the most important ones are reflected in the addition of new chapters. In previous editions, a single chapter was devoted to theories of organization and organizational effectiveness. The fourth edition includes three. Classical, scientific, human relations, and human resource development theories are covered in a chapter on prescriptions for control. Systems theory has been combined with equivocality reduction theory and the new theory of evolutionary psychology in a chapter on theories that are literally or metaphorically grounded in biology. And new ideas and research on workplace democratization, self-managed teams, and worker-owned cooperatives are presented in a chapter on new millennium thinking—an appropriate subject as we approach the turn of the century.

We deleted an old chapter on the concept and basic theories of communication, but material on information and meaning from that chapter is combined with our original material on communication functions. Material on communication structure has been expanded into a chapter of its own, primarily through additional coverage of network perspectives on structure.

The old chapter on dyadic communication that featured an extensive and tedious review of research in superior-subordinate communication has been fundamentally revised into a chapter on leadership and leader-member relations, with more attention to leader-member exchange theory and the addition of motivation theory (brought back by popular demand from users who were troubled by the absence of motivational theory in the third edition).

Computer-based technologies for mediating communication seem to change more quickly than we can keep up with them on the revision schedule for this book, but we have added current research on the uses and effects of these technologies and a new section on organizational uses of the Internet and World Wide Web.

Significant expansions also have occurred with the third edition chapter on culture and diversity and the chapter on power and conflict to the point that each has been divided into two, so there are four chapters in the fourth edition where only two appeared in the third. The coverage of organizational culture was broadened to include the critical perspective along with traditional and interpretive perspectives and a discussion of narrativity as an approach to the study of organizational culture. Implications of diversity for communication and culture now occupy an entire chapter because of new material on affirmative action issues and feminizing of organizations. The new chapter on power was required because of additional material on critiques and reconceptualizations of power drawn from feminist and critical theories. The coverage of conflict in a new chapter now includes additional techniques of conflict resolution and discussion of a competence-based theory of interpersonal conflict.

Finally, we have refurbished the old chapter on public communication into a chapter on strategic communication. In one sense this change gives some old material a refreshingly new look, but it also provides a point of view for understanding the forces that shape these communicative efforts, especially in the case of crisis communication, which gets expanded coverage in this edition.

As in the third edition, we have included several case studies, but we have made one major change in their presentation. In the past, each chapter was accompanied by a case. In this edition, cases are located at the end of each of the book's four major parts. We have done this because the cases for each part cut across many different topics presented within the part, so a given case might be applicatible to two or more chapters in a part. The questions included with each case suggest the concepts to which we think the case is best applied. Most of the cases in the text, that is, those with no bylines, were written by Tom Daniels or by some of Barry Spiker's former colleagues at Anderson Consulting Company in Chicago. The remaining cases were written by Michael Smilowitz of the University of North Carolina–Charlotte, and by Hylton Villett, a talented graduate student from Namibia in Southern Africa. As always, our cases are based on actual incidents or an amalgam of two or more real incidents, but the cases have been written with fictitious names, settings, and other elements in order to protect the identities of the persons and the organizations involved in these incidents.

We also have added one more learning tool to this edition. In addition to the reference list for each chapter, each chapter is accompanied by a list of relevant additional materials to which we do not refer in the chapter. In the spirit of the times, some of the additional materials for each chapter are to be found at homepage addresses on the World Wide Web. At the time of manuscript submittal, all listed Web sites were functional. Given the rather protean nature of the Web, some addresses may be obsolete by the time that you are using this book. We are simply trying to acquaint students with the tremendous potential of the Internet and World Wide Web as information resources.

Organization of the Text

The fourth edition of the book is, like its predecessors, organized in four parts, but the parts, like much of the book, have changed. The old scheme of Foundations, Themes, Contexts, and Applications has been replaced by Foundations; Communication, Relationships, and Media; Dynamics of Organizational Culture; and Communication and Executive Strategy. Part 1, which includes the first four chapters, provides some basic *foundations* for understanding the ideas and forces that have shaped the field of organizational communication. In chapter 1, we define organizational communication and discuss some of the history as well as the present status of the field. We give special attention to several different perspectives that influence the study of organizational communication, namely, traditionalism, interpretivism, critical theory, and feminist theory. In chapter 2, we review theories of organization and organizational effectiveness that developed from the early twentieth century through the 1970s, namely classical, scientific, human relations, transitional theories, human resource development, and variations on human resource development. Generally we classify these theories as

prescriptions for organizational control. They are followed by the third chapter on organization theories that are rooted literally or metaphorically on principles of biology. These theories include systems theory, equivocality reduction theory, and the emerging theory of evolutionary psychology. Chapter 4 has some of the most current thinking that is occurring in organization theory as we approach the turn of the century, so we have labeled it New Millennium Thinking. It includes discussions of workplace democratization, self-managed work teams, worker owned cooperatives, feminist organizational concepts, and other new ideas.

Part 2 includes five chapters on the concept of communication, organizational communication relationships, and media. In chapter 5, we discuss organizational communication concepts and functions, primarily from the traditional perspective. Chapter 6 is devoted to the subject of organizational communication structure, including formal and informal systems and network characteristics. Chapter 7 covers communication in group relationships with attention to groups as organizational units and group decision-making, problem-solving, and task performance. Chapter 8, on leader-member relations, includes theories of leadership and leader behavior, leader-member exchange, motivation, and other important topics in superior-subordinate communication. The final chapter in the unit focuses on computer-mediated communication and information technology in organizations.

The third part of the book consists of chapters on organizational culture and the important factors in the dynamics of organizational culture. Chapter 10 presents the cultural perspective of organizational communication themes, with special attention to interpretive and critical-interpretive uses of this perspective. In chapter 11, we address the challenges and opportunities of cultural diversity and their implications for cultural change and cultural control. Chapter 12 covers the concept of power in organizations, with particular attention to critical and feminist perspectives on power. This part is completed with chapter 13 on the subject of conflict and its management.

The final part consists of one chapter on communication and executive strategy. This chapter is concerned with strategic communication addressed to major audiences or constituencies at a macro level.

Special Features

The book includes topic outlines and summaries for each chapter. Key terms are displayed in bold face type at or near points where they are first defined or used in a meaningful way. Activities, discussion questions, and complete references are included at the end of each chapter.

Instructor's Manual

The instructor's manual, prepared by Michael Smilowitz of the University of North Carolina–Charlotte in collaboration with Tom Daniels and Michael Papa, is a very useful tool for both experienced and new instructors. It includes a statement of learning objectives, a very detailed full-content outline, and multiple-choice test items for each chapter in the book.

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Tom D. Daniels (Ph.D., Ohio University, 1979) is Professor of Interpersonal Communication and Assistant to the Provost at Ohio University. He also served as an assistant professor of communication at the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay and at the University of New Mexico. He has held line management positions in both private and public-sector organizations and is an experienced trainer and consultant. He has authored and coauthored articles and book chapters on various topics in organizational communication, communication theory, philosophy of social science, and research methods. Daniels is past secretary of the organizational communication division in the Speech Communication Association, past chair of the organizational communication division in the Central States Communication Association, a member of the organizational communication division of the International Communication Association, and has served as an editorial board member for *The Quarterly Journal of Speech, Communication Education*, and *Communication Quarterly.* When Tom is not writing, teaching, or administering, he vacations with his children or paddles his kayak on West Virginia whitewater.

Barry K. Spiker (Ph.D., Ohio University, 1979) is vice president for business development with Rath and Strong. Before assuming this position, he held positions with Price-Waterhouse, Mercer Management, Andersen Consulting Co., and Honeywell, Inc. He also was an assistant professor in the Department of Communication at the University of New Mexico and corporate chief of staff for a privately held, midwestern manufacturing corporation. He has authored and coauthored articles and book chapters on topics in organizational communication, technological advancement and integration, and social science research methods. He is a member of the organizational communication divisions of the International Communication Association and the Academy of Management, a member of the American Society for Training and Development, a member of the Organization Development Network, and an associate editor for *Management Communication Quarterly.* When Barry is not traveling for Rath and Strong, he travels for himself, often to exotic locations. Barry flies airplanes and cooks gourmet meals.

Michael J. Papa (Ph.D., Temple University, 1986) is Associate Professor of Interpersonal Communication at Ohio University. Prior to joining Ohio University, he served on the faculty at University of North Carolina–Greensboro where he also directed the Institute for Communication Research. He has published numerous research studies on problems in organizational communication, especially in the areas of conflict management, technology, and economic development programs. He serves on the editorial board of *Communication Education*

and as a reviewer for several other professional journals. He is an experienced consultant to educational and industrial organizations and is a member of the organizational communication division of the International Commmunication Association. Michael's hobbies include hiking and skiing.

Tom and Barry have worked together on research studies and consulting projects in organizational communication since 1976. Tom and Michael have been colleagues since 1989. Among the three of them, they have over fifty years of management, consulting, and teaching experience. They have tried to incorporate as much of that experience as possible in this text.

Tom D. Daniels, Athens, Ohio
Barry K. Spiker, Santa Fe, New Mexico
Michael J. Papa, Athens, Ohio

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PART ONE
FOUNDATIONS

CHAPTER 1

AN ORIENTATION TO ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Outline

Studying Organizational Communication
- Understanding Organizations
- Awareness of Skills
- Career Opportunities

Development of the Field
- Relationship to Other Fields
- Perspectives on Organizational Communication
  - The Traditional Perspective
  - The Interpretive Perspective
  - The Critical Perspective
  - Feminism

Status of the Field
- Influence of the Perspectives
- New Developments and Emerging Perspectives

Organizational life is a major feature of human experience. We are not only social creatures but also organizational creatures. We work in, play in, cope with, and depend on many types of organizations. They include business, industrial, governmental, educational, professional, religious, social, and political organizations.

If you stop to think about it for a moment, you probably will realize that you have been involved with organizations in one form or another for most of your life. As a child, you may have been in youth organizations such as the Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts. As an adult, you may belong to service or social organizations, and you almost certainly will earn your living within some kind of work organization. Even as a student, you participate in the complex organizational dynamics of your college or university. You must deal with your institution's policies, procedures, expectations, customs, and habits. You may even be caught up in its internal conflicts, territorial rivalries, and power struggles.

Basically, human beings **organize** in order to get things done. When we organize, we define and arrange positions or roles in complex relationships. We engage in concerted action with one another by coordinating these roles in order to accomplish some purpose. Organizations, then, are elaborate and complicated forms of human endeavor.

We often talk about organizations as if they are separate from the people who comprise them. A young engineer speaks of "going to work for IBM," or a news report advises us that "Chrysler has announced a recall," as if IBM and Chrysler are actual places or beings. This is not especially surprising because many organizations do seem to exist apart from individual members. People come and go,

but the organization remains. Even so, the image of the organization as an independent object is misleading. It implies that the organization is like the shell of the notorious little jumping bean—a container in which some mysterious activity (in this case, human behavior) is occurring. We need to remember that an organization is not merely a container for behavior. Rather, an organization literally *is* human behavior.

An organization is constituted by interaction among the people who comprise it. In other words, an organization really is defined by its members' joint actions. Since the basis for joint action is communication, the process of human communication is the central feature of an organization. As Daniel Katz and Robert Kahn, two prominent organizational psychologists, observed, "Communication . . . is the very essence of a social system or organization" (1978, p. 428).

This book is about the communication processes that characterize human organizations, processes referred to collectively as **organizational communication.** We have tried to present our discussion of organizational communication from a comprehensive, contemporary point of view that will provide you with a sound foundation of concepts for understanding and discussing this subject. No one book or course is going to cover everything that you could or should learn about organizational communication. This book is no exception. It is intended only as an introduction to the field of study.

We think that this book will be more useful to you if you understand something about the background for the book and for the course in which it is being used. In order to provide that background, we need to answer three basic questions:

1. Why is the study of organizational communication useful to you?
2. How did this field of study develop?
3. What is the status of the field today?

The answers to these three questions provide background for this book and for the course in which it is being used. A good understanding of the field depends on some familiarity with this background.

Studying Organizational Communication

You may have wondered from time to time just why you should enroll in a particular course or of what relevance and importance the course is going to be to you. In the case of organizational communication, we see at least three reasons for studying this topic:

1. You can improve your understanding of organizations and of your own experiences as an organization member.
2. You can develop awareness of the kinds of communication skills that are important in organizations.
3. The course may start you down the path to a career as a communication professional in an organization or as an academic scholar in the field.

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