

## Small Group Communication Case Study



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In the case study, you are introduced to a small group of six (6) people. Concepts covered include; stages of small group communication, transactional communication model, benefits of small groups, goal setting, roles and responsibilities, benefits of equity within the group, personality types, collaboration, time management, and agenda-setting.







# PART I

# BIOGRAPHIES

## Introduction

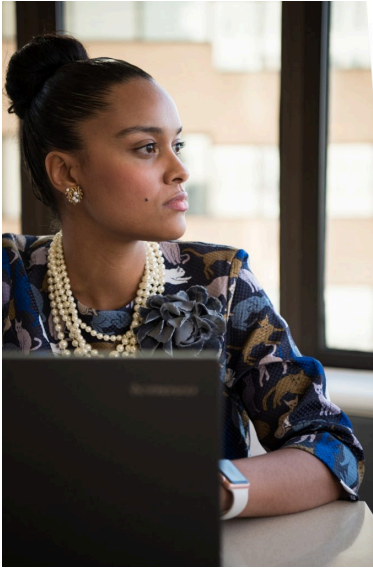
In this case study, you'll read through each small group member's bios and get to know them. Throughout the case study, you'll learn more about their roles within the group and the obstacles they must overcome throughout their project. They are working together as a new group; they have never met each other but they have unique skills that are needed for a city-funded project.

They are community members tasked with proposing a strategy to protect Arizona's sacred land and National Forests through conservation implementation. If their proposal is accepted by the state it will begin implementation later next year. They will be compensated for their time, proposal, and overseeing the project (through a logistics perspective). The group will be compensated \$50,000 (divided by each participant) and \$150,000 if the proposal is accepted. They are allowed to work in addition to completing the project.



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# I. Story I: Sandra



Sandra is a middle-class African American woman from Chicago

## Demographics

- Parents bachelors degrees
- Mother is a nurse
- Father is a financial consultant
- She was educated at Howard University
- GPA 3.78
- Internship with community

organizations that focused on youth programs and advocacy

- Helped raise 3 siblings while parents worked
- Worked while in college as a Starbucks barista
- Bisexual, non-gender conforming
- Independent voter status
- Travels twice a year out of the country
- Has 45K in student loans

## 2. Story 2: Patrick



Patrick is a lower-middle-class European American man.

### Demographics

- Parents high school diplomas
- Mother is a cafeteria worker
- Father is a teacher's assistant
- He was educated at a local Community College and received an AA in business
- GPA 3.25
- Worked while in college to help pay for college expenses and family living expenses
- Lived at home with parents throughout college and lives with girlfriend currently
- Heterosexual
- Travels to CA and Florida for beach vacations
- Has no student loans but high credit card debt

## 3. Story 3: Lourdes



Lourdes is an upper-middle-class Mexican American woman from Los Angeles.

### Demographics

- Grew up in a traditional Mexican family
- Father was an engineer
- Mother was a homemaker
- Only girl, 2 brothers and is the oldest of the two
- Educated through an online college
- Worked while in college and held an internship years 3 and 4 of college

- Lived in own apartment in downtown LA, parents assisted with rent
- Social Media influencer on the side
- Has 30K in student loans and 10K in credit card debt
- Single, heterosexual woman

## 4. Story 4: Lauren



Lauren is a middle-class European American woman from El Paso.

### Demographics

- Grew up middle class but moved often due to her parents' job instability
- Father was a gas station worker
- Mother was a waitress in a busy local restaurant
- Only biological child – parents adopted her cousins 1 boy, 1 girl due to the Department of Child Services involved in a domestic violence case with their biological parents. She was the oldest and often cared for her cousins/adopted siblings
- Dropped out of school but finished high school with a GED – then pursued an AA in accounting. Did not finish college due to her family's financial instability
- Worked throughout high school and college to pay for her cousins and help her parents
- Lives in her parents' house – they are now deceased and she is raising her cousins/adopted brother and sister. They are 14 & 15 years old.

- Has 12K in student loans and growing credit card debt 7K
- Owns parents home, worth 130,000.00 – the mortgage is 985.00 for 10 more years
- In a heterosexual dating relationship (does not live with her boyfriend)



## 5. Story 5: Franklin



Franklin is a working-class Native American man from Maricopa County, Arizona.

### Demographics

- Grew up working class
- Father worked in construction
- Mother worked in the education system as an administrator's assistant
- Parents left the reservation for their careers and have lived in the city ever since
- As a family, they go back to the reservation 2 times a month in order to connect with their family/cultural heritage
- He has 2 younger siblings – 1 boy, 1 girl
- Completed high school at 16 years old and attended community college until 18 years old. He just graduated college at 20 with a 4.2 GPA in Cultural Studies with an emphasis in literary studies.
- He worked at the university while in college – with the Native American community centers within the school(s). He is well

known in the community.

- 0 student loans or any other debt
- Lives alone in a small apartment, close to his family

## 6. Story 6: Harold



Harold is an upper-middle-class Caucasian male.

### Demographics

- Parents bachelors degrees
- Mother is a stay at home mother
- Father is an oil tycoon, and landowner
- He was educated at Princeton
- GPA 3.25
- Worked for the family business and inherited land in Nebraska, Texas, and California (all land has business investors and makes millions a year)



## PART II

# PART I: THE GROUP HAS FORMED

### Learning Objectives

- Describe roles and responsibilities in small groups
- Outline benefit of maintaining equity within a small group
- Explain the ways that personality types work in task and maintenance roles
- Identify Systems Theory concepts and principles and how this leads to effective collaboration (quiz)
- Construct weekly agendas to engage in time management and role responsibilities



## 7. Early Meetings

### Case Summary

The group has formed. They all met at the kick-off meeting in early January. This meeting was formal and each group member brought their best foot forward. Each member was on time, displayed a deep interest in the project, and committed to a 6-month initial time commitment. Each member understood that they would meet virtually once a week and in-person once a month for six months. In this meeting, they chose a leader based on skills and expertise. They also discussed and agreed upon meeting times, dates, locations (virtual until further notice). Outside of these times, they decided they would email each other and check-in “every other day”. The meeting went well and all of the group members left feeling empowered.



Photo by Julia M Cameron from [Pexels](#)

## *Personality Types*

Learn more about the [personality types](#).

- Story 1: [Sandra](#)
  - INTJ
- Story 2: [Patrick](#)
  - ENTJ
- Story 3: [Lourdes](#)
  - ISTP
- Story 4: [Lauren](#)
  - INFP
- Story 5: [Franklin](#)
  - ESTJ
- Story 6: [Harold](#)
  - INTJ

## *Meeting Details*

The group next met in mid-January. They engaged in brainstorming and reviewed all of the documents for the project. They noticed that their timeline of 6 months was changed to 4 months by the city. They realized that this would require them to work quicker and more efficiently. Two of the group members (Harold and Franklin) have families and extenuating career requirements that will potentially cause an issue with the new time requirements. Each still agreed to the work but some group members were unsettled. They all saved face throughout the meeting and again dedicated themselves to the work.

- They set roles
- They set expectation



- They set meeting times and dates for the next 4 months
- The leader is: Lauren
- The co-leader is: Patrick





PART III

# PART 2: THE PROJECT IS UNDERWAY

## Learning Objectives

- Analyze the importance of gender, race, and class to leadership
- Critique the lack of diverse representation in leadership
- Assess leadership dimensions and skills that contribute to a successful small group



## 8. Midway Meetings

### Focus

In this Case Summary you should analyze.

- Race, class, gender
- Leadership skills
- Importance of a diverse workplace environment and the ability to discuss relevant issues

### Case Summary

The group is well underway with their project. They have submitted their project proposal, met with city officials and venture capitalists, and have successfully piloted their ideas. They are still in the storming stage as they have quite a bit more work to do to take a small-scale project to a larger population. In front of business professionals and executives, this group seems strong and cohesive. However, the group is experiencing high amounts of tension. Their leader, Lauren, delegates the work to the committee members. Each

group member shares equal parts of the labor. Originally, this was agreed upon; however, in the past few months, Franklin began caring for his niece and nephew because his sister passed away. He has kept up with his work but has felt overwhelmed and has missed several meetings. Lauren has not mentioned anything about Franklin's new family situation and seems cold when he attempts to bring it up in discussion.

Patrick is easy to get along with during the meetings; however, he is often late – he works nights at his job and sometimes oversleeps.

When he is in the meeting, he is pleasant, on task, and productive. Lourdes is exceptional, she works well with others and submits all of her work on time. Lourdes and Franklin have a special bond since he took in his niece and nephew and they text each other most days – they talk about his new family situation and she provides emotional encouragement. She has decided that she would take on some of Franklin's work as a favor until he is ready to complete his tasks at capacity. In meetings, though, Lourdes does quite a bit of multitasking, and this leads her to forget things or misinterpret the goals of the group. There is some tension when she asks a question that has already been answered or interrupts someone when she has a “great idea”.

Harold is upset because he is not the leader, but thinks that Lauren is doing an adequate job. He is preoccupied with his elderly parents and is worried about them passing away in the near future. If they do, he worries that he won't be able to complete his tasks. He does what is asked of him, is cooperative in meetings, he is just not overly friendly.

There are issues within the group; yet, they are still able to overcome these issues and work collaboratively. They are working through the middle part of the presentation/implementation – this is a crucial time for the group and predicting their success.

Lastly, the country is going through a pandemic and a surge of social movements across the nation. This is deeply impacting several of the committee members but the leader does not want to discuss the issues because she feels it's inappropriate to talk about

personal or racial issues. The group that was once strong has now realized there are tensions that are hard to overcome.



Photo by cottonbro from [Pexels](#)





PART IV

# PART 3: THE GROUP IS PERFORMING

## Learning Objectives

- Compare various personality styles in relation to conflict
- Explain the types of conflict and factors affecting conflict
- Critique your conflict approach and alternative conflict strategies
- Illustrate the collaborative view of conflict, conflict management, and conflict approaches
- Identify in-group vs out-group discrimination through hidden agendas



## 9. Final Meetings

### Case Summary

The group is now in the performing stage. They have worked through their primary and secondary tensions and have gone through most of Tuckman's development model. They get along relatively well and have continued to stay focused on the common goal. The group struggles with direct communication at times and this causes frustration among the group members. Additionally, the leader of the group, Lauren, doesn't listen to the needs of others (from a verbal and nonverbal perspective) and makes final decisions that the group has not agreed upon. Each decision has worked out to be successful; however, this has still put a wedge between the group members.



Photo by Brooke Cagle on [Unsplash](#)

Trust is not as high as it once was even though tensions are low. The group remains meeting virtually due to the pandemic.

In the past month, Harold has been preoccupied with his parent's death and he has made several meetings uncomfortable (he takes important calls during the meeting and asks the group to wait for him until the phone call is complete). He talks over the leader and questions her decision-making. Harold and Sandra stopped talking to each other during the start of the pandemic (March timeframe) because Harold overheard Sandra talking about the #BlackLivesMatter movement and how important it is to our country and their communities. She was talking with Franklin and Lauren, both of the members were providing positive nonverbal feedback and verbally agreed with Sandra. Harold did not agree with the conversation and felt alienated by their side conversation. Sandra did not know Harold overheard the conversation; she would have included him if she knew he was in close proximity. Harold refused to talk to Sandra on a 1:1 basis after that.



Photo by Thomas Allsop on [Unsplash](#)

Lourdes and Franklin became close and started to date each other – Lourdes took on more than half of Franklin's work to support him during a difficult time. The group was unaware of this until the month before the final presentation because Franklin mentioned

that Lourdes had “all of his work” on her computer. They decided to share the details of their involvement/task roles and that Lourdes did most of Franklin’s work. The group did not believe this was “right”; however, this late in the project, they “let it go”. Franklin was able to catch up on the nuances of the project through reading Lourdes’ work and present his part. Patrick carried out his tasks but lost motivation to socially engage with the group. In the end, he seemed bored and uninterested in the work, it showed in the presentation.



Photo by [airfocus](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Lastly, Lauren led the group through their performing stage; she felt confident in their work and knew that the group worked well under the circumstances (life changes, COVID-19, social uprising, and virtual meetings).