

Preface

This volume is an independent companion to *Small Group Research: Basic Issues* (Blumberg et al. 2009). Together the two volumes attempt to provide thorough coverage of the small groups literature generally subsequent to our 1994 handbook (see below).

As we said in the introduction to the 2009 volume on basic processes, small group research—studies of friendship, leadership, communication and the like—has grown in its breadth of appeal. Indeed it has come to occupy a substantial place in the literature not only of social psychology and sociology but also of a wide range of other fields and subfields including, among others, international relations, peace studies, business studies, sociology, psychotherapy, social work, and economics.

The number of publications per annum—using consistent search strategies—has also grown apace. For some years we have been engaged in a quest to consolidate and share the gist of the published findings from social psychological and other research concerned with small groups of people. A “small group” is typically one that can engage in “face-to-face social interaction” or its virtual equivalent.

The quest began with Paul Hare’s landmark works: a credited collection (Hare et al. 1955, 1965) and a handbook (Hare 1962, 1976).

Our present team went on to publish a new collection (Blumberg et al. 1983), a handbook taking up where the 1976 volume left off (Hare et al. 1994), and a textbook (Hare et al. 1996).

The 1994 handbook—mainly covering work published between 1977 and 1988—cited approximately 5,000 publications—and we knew of several thousand more in the field that we felt were not worth citing for the given purpose. For a subsequent period of rather longer duration (1989 to early 2005), using the same search strategies, we unearthed around 19,000 publications! Much of the increase has been due to growth in academic and other publications generally and (for the present purpose) in peace psychology and some other areas of the behavioral sciences in particular (cf. Blumberg et al. 2006, Chap. 1). Perhaps oddly, even within the psychological literature, there is surprisingly little overlap between peace-psychology research concerned with conflict resolution (primarily but not exclusively in an international context) and—the core of the present volume—small groups research also concerned with applications such as conflict resolution.

As one might imagine, such a large corpus of research, on which the present volume is mainly based, does not lend itself to any one over-arching explanatory paradigm. Nor have we noticed any brand new high-level theories becoming pervasive in the period covered by this volume. What we *have* found, especially, is a very large number of studies that help to contextualize and fill out the range of applicability, and relative applicability, of different perspectives.

The present book is intended to cover several important areas of applied small group research, particularly emphasizing publications from 1988 to 2005—and, selectively, from the “flood” of largely contextualized literature from 2006 to 2009—that are of relevance to peace, conflict resolution, and related areas. This includes six main topics, as delineated in the following chapter summaries.

Chapter 1, Cooperation, competition and conflict resolution. This covers small groups research that is distinct from, and (as mooted above) only slightly overlapping with, the material—also on conflict resolution—in our peace psychology volume (Blumberg et al. 2006, Chap. 9 by Hare). A section on core work related to cooperation covers background, contact hypothesis, processes, facilitation and outcomes, and cooperation versus competition. The section on conflict covers key and general concepts, individual background, styles of conflict resolution, experimental variables, communication, special procedures, and guidelines and processes. Resource (collective) dilemmas covers key and general studies, paradigms and theories, individual background (real and perceived), group size, framing of issues, and reward structures. A section on negotiation covers key and general findings, individual differences and perceived power differences, framing and communication, strategies, third-party mediation, and theories, models and suggestions.

Chapter 2, Bargaining, coalitions, and games: Classified citations. Categorizes and cites both laboratory and field research. Some prototypical experimental paradigms are as follows: (a) bargaining—laboratory procedures for pairs of participants, emphasizing the distributions of outcomes of a series of offers and counter-offers under a wide variety of circumstances; (b) coalitions—especially the principles whereby parties combine to form winning coalitions and decide on equitable ways of dividing the resultant rewards; and (c) games, especially procedures that elicit cooperation under circumstances (such as that of the Prisoner’s Dilemma Game) in which participants acting in concert will achieve a better overall result than if each tried to maximize his or her own immediate rewards.

Chapter 3, Group dynamics and social cognition. Covers: Physical setting and background variables; social influence; roles (including leadership); relationships; social interaction including group decision making; intergroup relations; and therapy groups. We have tried, at several junctures, to spell out some of the implications for peace and conflict resolution. (Cognition seems to be under-researched as an explicit perspective in this context, but underpins much existing research and practice related to peace and conflict).

Chapter 4, The group and the organization. Covers various aspects of organizations, apart from team performance, which is dealt with in the next chapter. Main topics are: general considerations, networks, groups; theories for small groups and organizations (subsections on functions within functions); typing groups by func-

tional categories; integration and role differentiation; influences between the organization and the small group (goals, norms, and technology); influence of the small group on the organization; self-managing work groups; isolated groups. This chapter—and the next, which deals with teams in organizations—emphasizes the potential applicability to (among others) political organizations and groups of policy-makers, and (for most sections) implications for peacemaking and/or peace-building.

Chapter 5, Team performance. Following (conceptually) the four Parsonian functions, the first parts of this chapter cover empirical research related to: (a) contextual meaning and the values held by team members; (b) integration and interpersonal matters; (c) goal-attainment—effects, on team performance, of motivation, leadership, and the nature of the task; and (d) research on economic and informational resources. This chapter additionally deals with organizational creativity, learning, team training (including methods of assessment)—all of these topics being relevant to (for example) teams of negotiators, problem-solving groups, and others working together in the service of addressing direct and structural violence.

Chapter 6, Intergroup relations. Covers: key and general work; minimal groups; cognitive approaches to the consequences of being in a group, as follows. Ingroup favoritism and bias (includes: Linguistic bias; developmental studies; intergroup differentiation and distinctiveness; optimal distinctiveness theory); social categorization and social identity (includes: individual differences and social identity; social categories, identity and status); multiple category or multiple group membership (includes: perceptions of homogeneity; illusory correlation). Affective consequences: emotion, perceived threat, intergroup anxiety and fear (includes: social category and emotion; threat; intergroup anxiety); behavioral consequences: competition, conflict, aggression; intergroup discontinuity; improving intergroup relations. The contact hypothesis (includes: does contact have generalized consequences? dual identity, overarching categories, reformulated ingroups; contact and attitudes; generating affective ties and the reduction of intergroup anxiety; when does contact work; negative consequences of contact).

Concluding note. Group dynamics research and its applicability to conflict resolution represent one of the mainstream content areas of social psychology. (For an alternative comprehensive work on group processes, see J. M. Levine and Hogg 2010; see also Abrams and Hogg 2008.) For those interested explicitly in aspects of peace studies and conflict resolution, however, listings of several hundred core courses are described by Harris and Shuster (2006)—though courses concerned in various other ways with conflict resolution in diverse organizations are even very much more widely prevalent (including, for example, in business administration programs).

Chapters 1 and 2 were written by Blumberg, Chap. 3 by Blumberg and Hare, Chaps. 4 and 5 by Hare, and Chap. 6 by Kent. The chapters can be read independently and can be used as a source for further reading.



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