This annotated bibliography includes sources of information that are primarily concerned with problem solving, decision making, and processes of social influence in small groups, and secondarily deal with other aspects of communication and interaction in groups, such as conflict management and negotiation. The 57 entries, all dating from 1980 forward (many contain references to earlier, important items), are organized into five groups: (1) bibliographic sources; (2) textbooks; (3) collections; (4) methodological and theoretical inquiries; and (5) critiques of research. (SR)
SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION

An Annotated Bibliography

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The following bibliography includes sources of information that are primarily concerned with problem solving, decision making, and processes of social influence in small groups. However, many of the entries deal with other aspects of communication and interaction in groups, such as conflict management and negotiation. In addition, some entries are not focused on groups as such. They have been included because the information they contain has implications for understanding the functioning of groups. Finally, all entries date from 1980 forward. References to earlier, important items are sufficiently well represented in the sources included.

Listings have been organized with a view toward minimizing the frustrations often experienced when one delves into a considerable body of material related to groups for the first time.

Bibliographic Sources


Textbooks

Takes a systems approach to the study of communication in groups. Blends theory and practice. Considers both formal and informal contexts of communication in groups.

Applied emphasis on preparation for and participation in small group discussions. Accents the influence of group culture on communication. Can stand alone or be used as a companion volume for a more theoretically oriented work.


Emphasizes problem-solving and decision-making discussion. Reviews principles and practices. Incorporates a series of case studies as a vehicle for illustrating principles and providing practice opportunities.

Takes an unconventional approach to the study of decision making by viewing decisions as evolving through group interaction rather than as products of group effort. Focuses on factors influencing communication as it shapes and modifies evolving decisions. Strong theoretical orientation.

Covers principles and practices involved in group discussion, but accents the influence of organizational variables on the process. Considers group process in both formal and informal organizational contexts.

Concerned primarily with decision making groups and the personal, social, and contextual factors contributing to their successes and failures. Has separate chapters on mixed-motive interaction and crisis decision making.

Overviews factors affecting the performance of decision-making groups in organizational settings and derives concrete suggestions for enhancing their effectiveness.

Presents a broad overview of different aspects of group process and the social contexts in which it occurs. Very heavy emphasis on exercises as a means of illustrating the principles introduced.

Approaches participation in groups non-prescriptively by focusing on factors that affect group performance rather than suggestions for participating. Attempts to provide readers with a basis for making their own choices concerning how to involve themselves in group discussions.  

Concentrates on identifying factors that influence the communicative behavior of people in groups and how such behavior, in turn, affects the choices they make. Draws suggestions for functioning in groups from theories and research reviewed in each chapter.  

Establishes the relationship between interpersonal relationships and small group behavior throughout. Concerned more with interaction in informal than in formal contexts. A very useful reference for anyone interested in interpersonal communication, organizational behavior, small group processes, and conflict management.  

Advanced textbook for upper level undergraduate and beginning graduate students. Although somewhat dated, remains one of the best and most comprehensive introductions to research on small groups. Strongly accents interaction in groups. Extracts defensible hypotheses supported by the research reviewed.  

Explores characteristics of groups and factors influencing participant behavior in the first half. Develops practical suggestions for participation in second half. Examines suggestions within the framework of the Standard Agenda and the requirements it imposes on groups.  

Collections  
43 (most previously published or revised) essays dealing with different factors affecting decisional processes. Introduces a considerable range of theory bearing on choice-making in different social contexts. Explores psychological and social variables as well as some of the methodological issues involved in the study of decisional processes.  

Small groups and social interaction (Vols. 1-2). New York: Wiley. Originally intended as a revised edition of Hare, Borgatta and Bales's Small groups: Studies in social interaction. Includes numerous original essays especially written for the volumes. Volume 1 focuses on physical, personal, and social factors affecting interaction in groups. Volume 2 explores complex group processes, including decision making, cooperation and conflict, personal growth, and social action and change as well as different theoretical perspectives on group process.

Cathcart, R. S., & Samovar, L. A. (Eds.). (1988). Small group communication: A reader (5th ed.). Dubuque, IA: William C. Brown. A blend of original and reprinted essays dealing with the nature of groups, group environments, decision making, communication in groups, leadership, and evaluation. Over 50 per cent of the essays are new to this edition. Readings tend to be brief and focus on practical matters.


behavior. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. Includes 14 original essays exploring cognitive factors involved in judgmental and decisional acts. Although not directly related to decision making in groups, the material covered is relevant to the behavior of individuals in groups and can be useful in understanding how various aspects of group performance may be affected.

**Methodological and Theoretical Inquiries**


Introduces the concept of "appropriateness" as a characteristic of
decisions that is applicable to all types of choice situations and holds
that the concept is integrative.

Hare, A. P. (1982). *Creativity in small groups*. Beverly Hills, CA:
Sage.
Develops a category system consisting of adaptation, goal attainment,
integration, and pattern maintenance with which to analyze the interaction
of problem-solving groups. Draws on author's own research for illustrations.

University of Georgia Press.
Not directly concerned with the small group; however, the explorations
of the nature, causes, and functions of conflict and the principles
of management extracted have clear implications for the study of group
behavior.

Hirokawa, R. Y. (1988). Group communication research: Considerations for
the use of interaction analysis. In C. H. Tardy (Ed.), *A handbook for
the study of human communication* (pp. 229-246). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
Companion piece to the essay in Tardy by Gouran cited above. Focuses
on the nature of interaction analysis and the methodological considera-
tions involved.

Good review of cognitive factors affecting inferences individuals draw
from various sorts of data. More useful to students of group process,
however, in respect to the material concerning problem-solving techniques.

Kohn, A. (1986). *No contest: The case against competition*. Boston:
Houghton Mifflin.
An extensive examination of research on cooperation and competition and
careful consideration of the implications for human performance in task
and social situations.

Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
Detailed discussions of various species of group tasks and the social
and psychological factors affecting group members' performance of each
type. Tasks include intellective, decision-making, conflict resolution,
mixed-motive or bargaining, competitive, and creative. Considers different
aspects of interpersonal relations and their effect on group performance.

319-332.
Uses the metaphor of the drama as a way of analyzing the behavior of
group members in sensitivity and therapy groups.

Neustadt, R. E., & May, E. R. (1986). *Thinking in time: The uses of
Interesting and insightful analysis of the ways in which historical
information can be utilized in making decisions. Cases cited suggest
important principles of group process in many instances.

Poole, M. S., Seibold, D. R., & McPhee (1985). Group decision-making as a structurational process. Quarterly Journal of Speech, 71, 74-102. Advances a theory of decision development based on the work of Anthony Giddens that has been at the base of much of the research on small groups done in Speech Communication during the 1980s.


Critiques of Research


Bormann, E. G. (1980). The paradox and promise of small group research revisited. Central States Speech Journal, 31, 214-220. Questions the appropriateness of the model of the physical sciences for answering questions about communication in small groups. Suggests other potentially more fruitful approaches to inquiry, including fantasy theme analysis.
Reviews and assesses advances in research on decision making in groups that has occurred in light of critiques made in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Finds considerable attention to criticisms, especially those focusing on the need for more attention to communication variables and stronger theoretical foundations.

Extends ideas in the WSCA paper above and identifies two major foci of post-1970 research on communication in groups. Summarizes the main trends in process-oriented and product-oriented research.

Questions the extent to which communication influences decision making in groups and points to the inadequacies in research design that have prevented scholars from resolving the issue. Suggests the requirements that must be satisfied to dispose of the matter.

Expresses concern about the lack of theoretical underpinnings for research on communication/outcome relationships. Illustrates the problem by reviewing inconsistent research findings.

Identifies procedural requisites as a critical factors differentiating effective and ineffective problem-solving groups. Reports a study testing the hypothesized relationship.

Questions the focus of past research on decision making and problem solving in groups and suggests a need for broader examination of the needs to which communication in groups is addressed.