Small-Group Research in Social Psychology: Topics and Trends over Time

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Abstract

Research on small groups has a long history within social psychology. Unfortunately, interest in studying social processes within small groups has diminished over time despite predictions of its resurgence. Moreland, Hogg, and Hains (1994) computed an index of interest in small groups in the major social psychology journals between 1975 and 1993, finding an increase in the mid 1980s and early 1990s. This increase was due largely to the influence of European and social cognition approaches, which do not focus on intragroup processes. We replicated their procedures through 2006 and found that these trends have persisted. Over half of the group-related research published from 1975 to 2006 involved intergroup relations (e.g., social identity, stereotyping), whereas other topic areas (i.e., group composition, structure, performance, conflict, and ecology) that involve intragroup processes were largely ignored. The implications of these trends for the fields of small groups and social psychology are discussed.

Gordon Allport (1954) defined social psychology as 'an attempt to understand and explain how the thought, feeling and behavior of individuals is influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of others' (p. 5). No area of investigation within social psychology captures the essence of Allport's definition better than the study of small groups. Research on small groups differs from many other areas of social psychology in that it examines the behavior of people in actual social interaction. Surprisingly, the examination of social behavior seems conspicuously absent from contemporary articles in the top social psychology journals (Baumeister & Vohs, 2006). Imagine, then, what would happen if the study of small groups were to disappear from social psychology. What would become of the field of psychology that purports to explain the human social experience?

To answer this hypothetical question, consider a popular area of study within social psychology (i.e., ostracism). Ostracism is defined as being ignored or excluded by individuals or groups (see Williams, 2007, for a review of this literature). Common experimental investigations of ostracism examine the effect on a single target person of being ignored by two or

more accomplices of the experimenter, or by imaginary partners in a computerized ball toss game. The results show that being a target of ostracism produces temporary decrements in mood, self-esteem, and perceptions of control, belongingness, and meaningful existence. Although this work provides insight into reactions to ostracism by target individuals, it does not clarify the group dynamics involved in ostracism situations. Missing is an understanding of how ostracism plays out in natural social interactions. For example, when one group member ostracizes another, how do others in the group react? Do they join in, or try to make up for the ostracism by being kinder to the target? If all group members ostracize someone, then how do they decide what form the ostracism should take, how long it should last, and so on? Finally, how does being ostracized change the target person's commitment to the group, along with various group behaviors (e.g., loyalty) associated with such commitment? Answering these and similar questions requires an understanding of small groups.

Ostracism is one of many research areas within social psychology that has been studied primarily as an individual phenomenon (see also Levine & Kaarbo, 2001, on minority influence research), but could benefit from examination as a group dynamic. The field of social psychology is filled with research on attitude change, prejudice, self-concept formation, stereotyping, and emotions, most of which has ignored how these processes operate in small groups. This neglect means that many questions central to the human social experience have not been investigated. As the field of social psychology advances, it will become increasingly important to consider the operation of people's thoughts and feelings in more complex and dynamic social situations. Because of this, the claim by some (Levine & Moreland, 1990; Sanna & Parks, 1997) – that the study of small groups has moved from social psychology to other fields – is troubling.

In this article, we review the topics and trends in social psychological research on small groups. Moreland, Hogg, and Hains (1994) were the first to examine these trends systematically by determining the proportion of pages devoted to group research across the three major social psychology journals from 1975 to 1993. Their analysis revealed an increased interest in group research from the late 1980s onward, due largely to the study of intergroup relations. Interest in social processes within groups (e.g., group composition, conflict in groups, and group performance) declined over time. Using the framework of Moreland et al. (1994) and adding to their data set, we ask whether these publication trends have continued into the 21st century. Finally, we consider the implications of these trends for the study of small groups in particular and for its parent field of social psychology in general.

What Topic Areas Do Small-Group Researchers Investigate?

In their review of the small-group literature in social psychology, Levine and Moreland (1990, 1998, 2006) organized theory and research into five

topic areas: (i) group composition; (ii) group structure; (iii), group performance; (iv) conflict in groups; and (v) the ecology of groups. Moreland et al. (1994) added a sixth topic to this list: intergroup relations. We borrowed this scheme because it is a useful and compelling way of organizing the literature on small groups, and we wanted to be consistent with the work of Moreland et al., which we aimed to extend. For each topic area, we summarize the major subtopics, highlight notable work, and site more complete reviews.

Group composition

With increasing diversity in the workplace, issues of group composition are of particular importance. Research in this area is concerned with the number and types of people who belong to a group. A group's composition can influence other characteristics in the group, such as member satisfaction and performance. Likewise, characteristics of a group (e.g., prestige, conflict) can influence individuals to join or leave the group, thereby changing its composition. A recent review by Mannix and Neale (2005) highlighted the many ways that members may differ from one another (e.g., in demographic characteristics, such as race or sex; knowledge or abilities; opinions; and personality characteristics). Thus, one important question in this area concerns the behaviors of people who belong to relatively homogeneous versus heterogeneous groups (Bowers, Pharmer, & Salas, 2000). One understudied process, group socialization, influences a group's composition. Group socialization involves changes over time in the relationships between a group and its members. These changes can lead to the entry of newcomers and the exit of old timers, among other things. Moreland and Levine (1982) were the first to develop a model that both describes and explains socialization processes in groups. For additional reading in this area, Moreland and Levine (1992) provide a good review of small–group composition, and Gruenfeld (1998) offers a collection of chapters on that topic.

Group structure

A group's structure is the internal framework that defines members' relations to one another over time. Work in this area examines group norms, status systems, roles, friendship and communication networks, etc. Group structure arises quickly but changes slowly. One of the earliest studies of small groups demonstrated how quickly norms form in new groups (Sherif, 1936). Likewise, expectation states theory (e.g., Berger & Zelditch, 1998) explains how members of newly formed, task-oriented groups develop differentiated status, or prestige. Members who are believed to be task competent from the start are given opportunities to demonstrate their competence, thereby acquiring a high status position. Member status is

important because those who are highly regarded relative to others are more influential in group discussions and decisions (e.g., Kirchler & Davis, 1986) and occupy a central position within communication networks, sending and receiving more messages than others (Shelly, Troyer, Munroe, & Burger, 1999). Ridgeway (2001) and Mannix, Neale, and Thomas-Hunt (2005) provide excellent overviews of the group status literature. The most classic behavioral coding system, Bales (1950) Interaction Process Analysis, classified member behaviors in terms of task roles (helping the group to complete its work), or social roles (helping members to get along with one another). Likewise, task and social dimensions are included in Cota, Evans, Dion, Kilik, and Longman's (1995) 'primary' component of group cohesion, which characterizes the teamwork and attraction between members. For a comprehensive review of the relation between group cohesion and performance, see Mullen and Cooper (1994).

Group performance

When one thinks about groups, issues of performance often come to mind. This area of scholarship focuses on understanding why and how groups succeed or fail. In order to perform, groups need a goal or task to be accomplished. McGrath (1984) provided an influential typology of group tasks, classifying tasks such as idea generation, problem-solving, decision-making, and contests along dimensions of how cooperative/conflictual and conceptual/behavioral each task is. Much of the group performance literature has examined group decision-making. Davis et al. offered social combination models that predicted, among other things, the likelihood of particular group decisions depending on the distribution of member preferences before discussion (see Stasser, Kerr, & Davis, 1989). Work along this line 'describes' how groups make decisions, whereas other work 'prescribes' optimal decision solutions and how to avoid decision mistakes. Groups can make bad decisions when they engage in 'groupthink' (Janis, 1982), focus on knowledge that is shared by all members (Stasser & Titus, 2003), or shift toward more extreme decision alternatives (Isenberg, 1986). Before making decisions, members must generate ideas or options from which to choose. The work of Paulus et al. on brainstorming suggests that groups often underperform in this regard, relative to their potential (e.g., see Paulus, Dugosh, Dzindolet, Coskun, & Putman, 2002). Because most of the leadership literature is concerned with how leaders influence the performance of their groups, leadership research also fits into this topic area. Encouraging leaders to use styles that fit the group's situation (e.g., Fiedler, 1978) might help groups to succeed. Kerr and Tindale (2004) offer an excellent review of the recent work on group performance and decision-making.

Conflict in groups

Conflict in groups occurs when members have different opinions, goals, or values. Some of this conflict involves people acting selfishly in ways that meet their own needs, but are harmful to the group. Research on social dilemmas examines this selfishness and explores how it can be handled by a group. A good overview of social dilemma research can be found in Weber, Kopelman, and Messick (2004). Bargaining research focuses on how two members with different goals work out their differences, and coalition research examines what happens when one person tries to overcome another by persuading other group members to become his/her allies. For a review of the bargaining literature, see Bazerman, Mannix, and Thompson (1988). Majority and minority influence research examines how coalitions of different sizes influence one another. Early research in social psychology on opinion disagreement largely focused on the influence of a majority of group members on a lone minority (see Asch, 1955). Later work by Moscovici (1980) suggested that minority members could sometimes influence the larger majority as well (see Martin & Hewstone, 2001, for a review of the majority and minority influence literature). Finally, power is a topic related to conflict in groups. In lieu of managing conflict by bargaining or forming a coalition, members can try to force others to do what they want. A new theory of power by Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson (2003) analyzes (in part) how it is used in small groups.

The ecology of groups

Research on the ecology of groups focuses on the physical, temporal, and social contexts in which groups operate. Unfortunately, little is known about the context outside of a group because most of the work on small groups has focused on internal dynamics – much to the disappointment of Ancona and Bresman (2007) who argue that a balance in understanding the internal and external dynamics of groups is needed. In recent years, group researchers have examined the influence of the technological context on groups. Groups composed of geographically dispersed members are becoming more common, and, consequently, members are using computer-mediated forms of communication more often (Hollingshead, 2001). Driskell, Radtke, and Salas (2003) predict that computer-mediated communication in groups likely leads to reduced interpersonal attraction between members, increased counternormative behavior, and more difficult communication compared with face-to-face groups, although these differences likely attenuate over time (e.g., Hobman, Bordia, Irmer, & Chang, 2002; McGrath & Berdahl, 1998). The temporal context influences groups when time pressure impairs effective performance (Karau & Kelly, 1992) and when members work under original time constraints even after they have been

lifted (Kelly & McGrath, 1985). Theories of group development (e.g., see Wheelan, 1994) describe how groups change as they mature. A group's culture and relations with others outside of the group define its social context. An illustration of how groups manage communication with outsiders is provided by Ancona and Caldwell (1992).

Intergroup relations

The final topic area, intergroup relations, focuses cooperation and competition between groups. This topic area includes direct conflict (arguments, fighting, and discrimination) between groups, as exemplified in Wildschut, Pinter, Vevea, Insko, and Schopler (2003). Intergroup conflict, however, is studied mostly by examining the cognitive processes that occur within the minds of individuals about members of different groups – an approach that relies heavily on social cognition theory and research methods. Conflict between groups can occur when people merely think of themselves as group members (i.e., identify with their groups). According to social identity theory (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), people classify the world into groups to which they belong (ingroups) and groups to which they do not belong (outgroups). One consequence of categorizing people into groups is that people develop shared beliefs, known as stereotypes, about members of particular social groups. Stereotyping can contribute to judgmental biases such as seeing members of outgroups as all alike (Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992). When a set of people is perceived as similar, physically close, and subject to the same outcomes (common fate), it is said to have 'entitativity' – observers believe that those people are actually a group (Campbell, 1958). The more entitativity a group is perceived to have, the more likely perceivers are to apply the group stereotype to individual members of that group (Crawford, Sherman, & Hamilton, 2002). Given the prevalence of intergroup conflict and its harmful effects on everyone involved, many researchers have suggested ways to improve intergroup relations (see Wilder, 1986, for a review).

A Brief History of Social Psychological Research on Groups

Social psychologists have studied groups for a long time now and many important discoveries have been made. An argument can be made that this work began with several remarkable research projects performed just before World War II. These include Sherif's (1936) laboratory experiments on the development of group norms; Newcomb's (1943) survey of college students' socialization experiences; Lewin, Lippitt and White's (1939) field experiments on leadership styles; and Whyte's (1943) case studies of youth gangs. The fact that so many ambitious projects were undertaken, using a wide variety of methodologies, suggests that a lively new research area was emerging.

Although some momentum was lost during the 1940s, interest in small groups grew rapidly after the war and soon dominated social psychology. New theories about groups were proposed, and intriguing research was performed on such topics as leadership, conformity, and conflict within and between groups. This work was often supported by grants from various government agencies, both civilian and military. New methods for studying groups, such as Bales' (1950) Interaction Process Analysis, were developed. These and other factors generated much enthusiasm among social psychologists for small-group research. Everyone seemed to be studying groups, and all the journals seemed to feature such work.

Sadly, this happy period did not last long. Toward the end of the 1950s, many social psychologists began to lose interest in small groups. Several explanations for this decline have been offered (see McGrath, 1984; Moreland, 1996; Steiner, 1974; 1986; Zander, 1979). McGrath, for example, argued that research findings about groups accumulated more quickly than theoretical insights, creating uncertainty among social psychologists about whether and how to proceed. Moreland argued that initially productive collaborations between scientists and practitioners gradually dissolved, leaving each side less able to analyze groups effectively. Zander argued that research on groups lost its appeal as people learned about that the costs associated with such work often exceeded its rewards. Finally, Steiner (1974) argued that social psychological research reflects societal trends (with a delay of about ten years), and that societal conflict is what generates interest in studying small groups. Research on groups thus became more popular during the 1950s because there was so much conflict during the 1940s, and less popular during the 1960s because there was so little conflict during the 1950s.

All of these explanations are speculative, but some can be tested. Moreland, Hogg, and Hains (1994) tested Steiner's (1974) theory by examining research articles published in three major social psychological journals (*Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, and *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*) from 1975 to 1993. A yearly index of interest in studying small groups was created by dividing the number of journal pages devoted to such work by the total number of journal pages. Scores on that index thus ranged from 0% to 100%, with higher scores indicating greater interest in studying groups. Moreland et al. found a clear temporal pattern in these scores, which fell rapidly during the late 1970s, stabilized at a low level during the early 1980s, and then rose rapidly during the late 1980s and early 1990s. This pattern seemed to challenge Steiner's theory. There was a lot of societal conflict during the 1960s, but little conflict during the late 1970s and early 1980s. According to Steiner, research on small groups *should* have become *more* popular during the late 1970s and *less* popular during the late 1980s and early 1990s. This is the opposite of what actually occurred, indicating that Steiner was wrong.

If Steiner (1974) was wrong, then what produced the increase in group research during the late 1980s and early 1990s? To answer this question, Moreland et al. (1994) performed careful analyses of what kinds of research articles appeared in the journals over the years. They classified each group article as falling into one of the six topic areas reviewed earlier and noted whether each article reflected (a) European theories and research findings, such as those associated with Tajfel's (1982) theory of intergroup relations and Moscovici's (1980) theory of minority influence, or (b) the application of social cognition theories and methods to groups (e.g., Hamilton, 1981). (As we will note later, European and social cognition influences are not independent of one another.) They discovered that the increase in group scholarship was due largely to these two influences. And much of the newer work focused on intergroup relations, rather than on intragroup relations, which was originally the focus of most group research.

Contemporary Trends in Small-Group Research

We wondered whether the trends identified by Moreland et al. (1994) have continued. We decided to extend their analyses by identifying articles on groups that appeared in the same three journals between 1994 and 2006, then coding those articles for the same characteristics that interested Moreland et al. We followed their procedures exactly – the details can thus be found in their paper. The new dataset contained 1877 papers in all covering the years between 1975 and 2006.

Figure 1 displays the relationship between publication year and the overall index of interest in studying groups (described earlier) from 1975 to 2006. The data for each year are averaged across the three journals. Higher scores indicate more interest. The solid line represents the actual scores, and the dotted line represents predicted scores generated by the best fitting statistical model (for details regarding the statistical tests and results, please contact Richard Moreland). Looking at the predicted scores, we saw (naturally) the same pattern for the first 20 years as did Moreland et al. – a decline in interest from 1975 until the early 1980s, followed by a sharp rise. We also found that interest in studying groups continued to rise until just a few years ago, but then began to drop again. Some possible reasons for these trends will be discussed in a moment. Before we do that, however, it is worthwhile to look at the prevalence of topic areas studied in the full database.

What do social psychologists study when they do research on groups? The answer can be found in Figure 2. There is a clear imbalance. More than half (57%) of the papers focused on intergroup relations, which included work on social identity (14%), conflict between groups (17%), and stereotyping (26%). Two topic areas that interested many researchers were (a) group performance (14%), which included leadership (3%),
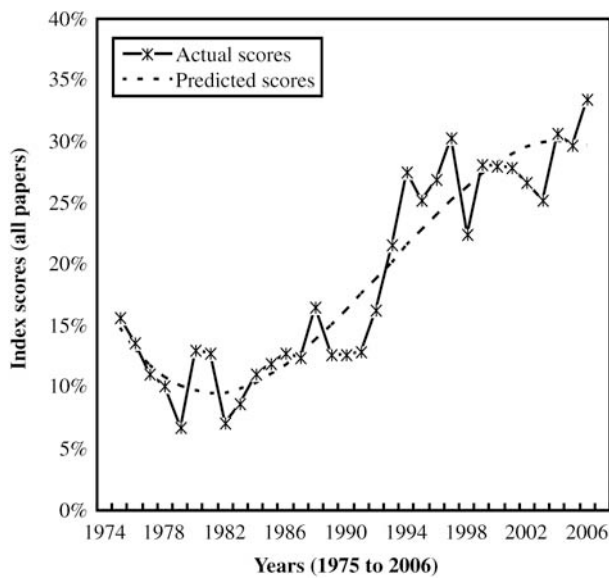
Figure 1   Actual and predicted levels of interest in groups from 1975 to 2006.
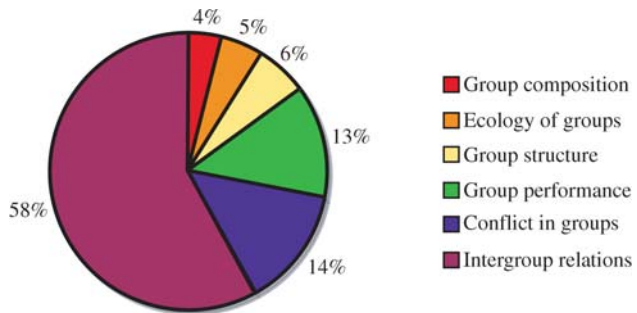

Figure 2   Percentage of group research articles from 1975 to 2006 as a function of topic area of study.

productivity (4%), and group decision making (7%), and (b) conflict in groups (13%), which included social dilemmas (3%), negotiation (3%), majority/minority influence (6%), and power (1%). The other major topic areas, namely group structure (6%), group composition (5%), and the ecology of groups (5%) were studied much less often, which seems a shame, given that each one is interesting and potentially important (Levine & Moreland, 1998). Intergroup relations are clearly worth studying, but there is much more to learn about groups than how they relate to other groups. It seems to us that social psychologists cannot hope to reach a complete

understanding of groups when so much of their research focuses on just one aspect of group behavior.

Let us return now to the changes over time in the index scores that Figure 1 revealed. What could have caused them? Moreland et al. (1994) focused on the rise in scores from the early 1980s on, a trend that they attributed to both the effect of European work on groups and work involving social cognition. We took the same approach. There was certainly clear evidence of European and social cognition influences on the papers in our dataset – 34% of the papers showed some European influence (e.g., social identity theory), and 59% of the papers showed an influence of social cognition (e.g., stereotyping, entitativity). These influences tended to co-occur. Papers that were not influenced by European work were just as likely as not (51% vs. 49%) to show an influence of social cognition. Papers that *were* influenced by European work, however, were much more likely than not (76% vs. 24%) to show an influence of social cognition. This made it difficult, although not impossible, to distinguish the influence of each factor on the index scores.

To investigate that issue, we assessed the relationship between publication year and index scores for the following: (i) all papers in the data set; (ii) all papers *except* those with a European influence; (iii) all papers *except* for those with a social cognition influence; and (iv) all papers without either European *or* social cognition influences. Figure 3 displays the best fitting
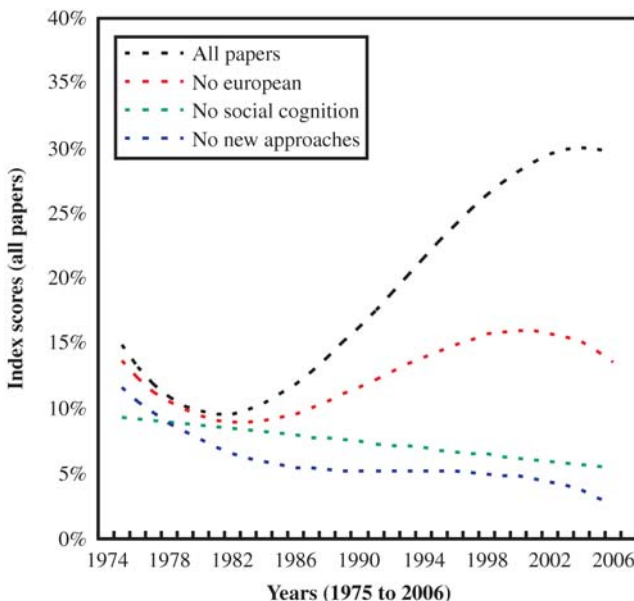

Figure 3   Predicted levels of interest in groups from 1975 to 2006 as influenced by European and social cognition approaches.

statistical model predicting index scores from publication year for each of the four combinations of topic areas. The top curve in Figure 3 is the same curve shown in Figure 1. The next curve down represents an analysis of index scores that were recomputed so that pages associated with papers that showed a European influence were removed. In effect, these new scores reflected how much interest there would have been in studying groups if that influence had not occurred. Note that early on, this curve is similar to the original curve, but it begins to diverge in the early 1980s, dropping to lower levels of interest. This is consistent with the claim that interest in studying groups began to rise in the early 1980s because (at least in part) interesting European work on groups began to appear.

Another aspect of this curve worth noting is that like the original curve, it shows a drop in interest over the past few years. The reason for that drop is unclear, but it might be due to the arrival in the late 1990s of some new journals (e.g., *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice, Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*) devoted entirely to research on groups. Articles that could have been sent to the mainstream journals may have been sent to these journals instead. Such articles thus would not appear in our database, producing an apparent 'weakening' of interest in groups. It is worth noting, however, that work published in specialty journals does not have the same degree of impact on the field of social psychology as work published in the field's mainstream journals.

For the next curve in Figure 3, index scores were again recomputed, but this time so that pages associated with papers that showed an influence of social cognition were removed. This curve, actually a line, runs close to the original curve early on, but then it too begins to diverge in the early 1980s, dropping to much lower levels of interest. This is consistent with the claim that interest in studying groups began to rise in the early 1980s because (at least in part) interesting work on groups that featured theories and methods from social cognition began to appear. Note too that the line drops much lower than the second curve, suggesting that the influence of social cognition on small-group research was stronger than the European influence. Finally, note that this line reveals no recent drop of interest in studying groups.

The last curve in Figure 3 represents the relationship between publication year and index scores when papers with either European or social cognition influences were removed. Note that this curve is also similar to the original curve early on, but begins to diverge in the early 1980s, when it flattens out at a low level of interest, far lower than that represented by the original curve. This suggests that without European and social cognition influences, interest in studying small groups would have been stagnant for many years. Also note that this curve, like the original one, shows a drop (albeit less dramatic) in interest levels over the last few years.

In sum, the trends identified by Moreland et al. (1994) have continued. The number of pages in the major social psychology journals related to

small groups rose dramatically from the mid–1980s through the 1990s, but not because scholars were studying intragroup processes. Rather, journals became dominated by work examining how individual thought is influenced by one's own and others' group memberships. This work, most of which focuses on intergroup relations, is heavily influenced by both European (e.g., social identity) and social cognition (e.g., stereotyping) approaches. There has been a steady decline of work on intragroup relations, with the numbers reaching a three-decade low in 2006.

Consequences of Small-Group Research Trends

We return to Allport's (1954) definition of social psychology as 'an attempt to understand and explain how the thought, feeling and behavior of individuals is influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of others' (p. 5). The declining interest in intragroup processes among social psychologists reflects a field that has become more about the (hypothetical) thoughts and feelings of individuals who merely imagine the presence of others rather than the observed behavior of individuals in the actual presence of others. Without work examining human interaction in small groups, much of the 'social' has been lost from social psychology. Baumeister and Vohs (2006) casually noted that there is little study of actual behavior these days within social psychology, joking that it comes in the form of 'ratings and more ratings. Occasionally making a hypothetical choice. Reading and taking a test. And, crossing out the letter e' (p. 3). Our analysis suggests one possible contributor to this problem: the study of behavior within groups has become less popular.

Seeing the decline of interest in intragroup processes and the rise of interest in social cognition in the 1980s and early 1990s, group researchers began framing their own work as the true social cognition approach. In their edited book, Resnick, Levine, and Teasley (1991) presented work from various fields that showed human thought as inherently influenced by interactions with others – a process they called 'socially shared cognition'. Others argued that cognition could be conceived at the group level with members acquiring, storing, retrieving, transmitting, and learning information together (Hinsz, Tindale, & Vollrath, 1997; Larson & Christensen, 1993). Group discussion then becomes the conduit for information processing by members. Unfortunately, these attempts to reverse the trends were unsuccessful. Social cognition, rather than socially shared cognition, has continued to dominate social psychology.

Research trends within social psychology have shaped psychology departments and those of other fields. As senior group scholars have retired within psychology departments, they have been replaced by young scholars who do not study group processes. Fewer undergraduate and graduate courses are offered on group processes, and the amount of material on groups in the leading social psychology textbooks seems to be shrinking.

What social psychology has lost, other fields have gained. Since the mid-1990s, many young scholars trained in social psychology with research interests in small groups have taken academic jobs in other fields, such as communication and organizational behavior/management. As a result, the study of groups in the field of communication seems to be gaining strength, or at the very least, holding its own (see Bonito, Wittenbaum, & Hirokawa, forthcoming), despite worries in the early 1990s that group communication was not a thriving research area (Frey, 1994). Since then, the National Communication Association has established a division for group communication that organizes its own conference sessions; gives awards to members for best papers, articles, and books; and provides a sense of community for those who study groups. Likewise, the study of groups is alive and well in fields with organizational interests, particularly organizational behavior and management (Sanna & Parks, 1997). One consequence of small-group scholarship moving elsewhere is an increasing fragmentation of the field, requiring a new organization to unite group scholars from everywhere.

Field fragmentation and decline of interest in intragroup processes among social psychologists inspired the creation of a new professional organization devoted solely to the study of groups (Wittenbaum, Keyton, & Weingart, 2006). In July of 2006, the Interdisciplinary Network for Group Research (INGRoup) held its first conference in Pittsburgh, PA (visit www.ingroup.info for more information). The purpose of INGRoup is to unite group scholars across fields and nations, helping to make the study of groups a thriving research area. The inaugural conference attracted over 150 participants from at least eight different disciplines and countries – numbers closely matched by the second conference, held in July of 2007 at Michigan State University. The enthusiastic reception to INGRoup is evidence that the study of groups will continue to flourish at the crossroads of many fields. This cross-field fertilization is likely to benefit group research by stimulating new ideas, reducing redundancy, and enhancing validity through methodological variation (De Dreu & Levine, 2006).

Moreland and Levine (forthcoming) warn, however, that if group scholars associate solely with each other, then their visibility will diminish within their respective home fields. For this and other reasons, it will remain important for group scholars to continue to publish in outlets and attend conferences that reach a broader audience, such as those in general and social psychology. Staying connected with group research will also benefit the field of social psychology. Small-group researchers possess methodological skills that are useful within social psychology, such as behavioral observation and the analysis of interdependent data representing several levels of response (individual, group, organization). Moreover, the effects produced in small-group research are the largest (and arguably, some of the most important) of any topic area within social psychology (Richard,

Bond, & Stokes-Zoota, 2003). Group scholars have, additionally, contributed to the field some of its most important concepts (e.g., norms, social identity) and theories (e.g., Zimbardo's, 1969, theory of deindividuation). As the field of social psychology advances, theories will need to incorporate more complex social dynamics to explain the thoughts, emotions, and motives of individuals. The loss of group researchers from the field means that it will become harder to do so without reinventing the wheel. We agree with the call of Baumeister and Vohs (2006), who called for social psychologists to put the study of actual behavior back into the field. Staying connected with small-group research is one way to do that.

Short Biographies

Gwen M. Wittenbaum reflects the growing interdisciplinary nature of small-group research. Having received a Ph.D. in Psychology from Miami University in 1996, she has worked since then as a faculty member (now an Associate Professor) in the Department of Communication at Michigan State University and served 1 year as a Visiting Associate Professor of Organization Behavior and Theory in the Tepper School of Business at Carnegie Mellon University. Her research interests and publications have focused on cognitive and communication processes in decision-making groups, group coordination, and, most recently, ostracism. She serves on a diverse set of editorial boards, such as *Communication Monographs*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, and *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*. Along with Joann Keyton and Laurie Weingart, she created the INGRoup and accompanying annual conference that brings together group researchers from various nations and disciplines.

Richard L. Moreland is interested in all aspects of small groups, but his research has focused on group socialization (the passage of individuals through groups), transactive memory, the role of reflexivity in group performance, and entitativity. He has authored or co-authored dozens of articles and chapters about small groups (many of them with his long-time colleague, John Levine), and recently published (with Levine) an edited book of readings on small groups. He has been an Associate Editor for several journals where papers on small groups often appear (e.g., *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *Management Science*, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*) and has served as a Consulting Editor for many more such journals. He is a Professor of Psychology and Management at the University of Pittsburgh, where he has been a faculty member since graduating from the University of Michigan in 1978 with a Ph.D. in Psychology.

Endnotes

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