



**WESTERN
MICHIGAN**
UNIVERSITY

The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 22
Issue 3 September

Article 15

September 1995

Review of *Small Group Research: A Handbook*. A. Paul Hare, Herbert H. Blumberg, Martin F. Davies and Valerie Kent. Reviewed by Kenneth E. Reid, Western Michigan University.

Kenneth E. Reid
Western Michigan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

Reid, Kenneth E. (1995) "Review of *Small Group Research: A Handbook*. A. Paul Hare, Herbert H. Blumberg, Martin F. Davies and Valerie Kent. Reviewed by Kenneth E. Reid, Western Michigan University.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 22 : Iss. 3 , Article 15.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol22/iss3/15>

This Book Review is brought to you by the Western Michigan University School of Social Work. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



**WESTERN
MICHIGAN**
UNIVERSITY

A. Paul Hare, Herbert H. Blumberg, Martin F. Davies, and M. Valerie Kent. *Small Group Research: A Handbook*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corp., 1994. \$89.50 hardcover \$42.50 papercover.

Research on small-groups is located throughout a diffuse and diverse complexity of sources. For the individual interested in identifying and locating particular research, the task can be daunting. To address this problem, the authors provide a much needed resource by reviewing the small group literature and calling attention to available works. They accomplished this task by examining hundreds of articles, books, journals, and abstracts published between 1975 and 1988. No attempt was made to evaluate the research but rather to locate and catalogue what has been published.

The book is written as a companion piece to Paul Hare's earlier work, *Handbook of Small Group Research*, in which research on small groups was reviewed from its historical origins to the nineteen seventies. The two books in tandem provide students and experienced social scientists an excellent compendium of small group research from its early beginnings to the present.

Differentiating small groups from an aggregate or collection of individuals, small groups are defined by the authors as groups that have from 2 to 30 members and have face-to-face interaction. Characteristically, the group members have a set of shared beliefs, conform to a set of norms, have a specific goal or set of goals, and have acquired or developed resources and skills to be used for the activity.

The book is divided into six parts, each written by one of the author. Part I reviews factors that influence the physical situation of a group, such as physical space, seating arrangements, residential design, etc. Part II considers the influence of others on the individual, and the pressures of conformity. Parts III and IV deal with group structure and group process such as roles, leadership, means of communication and interactional patterns. Part VI addresses group performance characteristics, specifically conformity, conflict, and individual versus group productivity.

There is a brief section reviewing methods applicable to the study of small groups such as research design and experimental

methodology. Of particular value to the researcher is the index and 200 pages of citations referred to in the text by the authors.

The authors are to be applauded for doing what they proposed to do, that is to review the literature on small group research in an efficient and effective manner. The book, by design, is written as a reference work—not as a textbook, for individuals interested in group dynamics and process. Its easy to use and provides the reader uncomplicated access to a vast amount of information.

Researchers doing laboratory studies on small groups will find the comprehensive review of the literature a most enriching banquet with much to fill their scholarly plate. Sadly, practitioners leading groups, i.e., psychologist, social workers, and psychologist will not experience the same satisfaction. Rather, they will be frustrated that so little in the book relates to the helping process. Four pages in the appendix, titled “special types of groups”, address research on counseling-therapy groups, sensitivity training groups, education groups, and family groups.

In fairness to the authors, they make it clear that there was no systematic attempt to examine the research on other types of groups, and what is described as “special type groups” is a sample of the research. While it is hard to find fault with this excellent book, it is hoped that in future editions, the authors will put the same amount of energy into reviewing research on “special types of groups” that they put into reviewing laboratory group research.

Kenneth E. Reid
Western Michigan University