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ABSTRACT

To address the lack of research focusing on naturally occurring groups within an organizational context, a study examined the selection process and criteria that individuals use when allowed to self-select members for task groups. Subjects, 248 students enrolled in a basic communication course at a midwestern university, self-selected themselves into 47 groups (three to seven members each) as part of a class assignment. After participating in various acquaintance activities, subjects formed groups by signing their names on the blackboard with others they wanted to join in a group. The students then gave written responses to an open-ended question asking about the selection process and characteristics involved in choosing their fellow group members. Results showed that physical attractiveness was not a central issue when task groups were being formed, and that individuals used active communication processes and relied on communication characteristics or characteristics that could be inferred from interaction in making group member selection. Responses also indicated that subjects looked for characteristics that defined an individual's willingness to work, ability to get along with others, openness to communicate, and similarities of interest and personality. (Three tables listing process and characteristic variable frequencies and percentages, and process and characteristic variable relationships are included, and a summary of process and characteristic variables and 15 references are appended.) (MM)

IS GROUP SELF-SELECTION

AN IMPORTANT ORGANIZATIONAL VARIABLE?

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Introduction

Organizations have committed themselves to group process. Groups in the form of taskforces and committees abound in nearly every organization. When a special project needs commitment from the organization, a group is often formed to deal with new and sensitive issues, long-term projects, and tasks that bridge division lines.

While there has been minimal research focused on naturally occurring groups within an organizational context, there has been an abundance of general group research within many disciplines. Research has evaluated the number of members in a group, the communication networks groups employ, the amount of communication among group members, the phasic development and maturation of groups, how groups should make decisions, and how groups respond to leader initiative, among other topics. Unfortunately, most of this research has been done on experimental groups formed only for the duration of the experiment with little or no lasting relational ties among group members. Doubly unfortunate, little research has focused on the way in which naturally occurring groups are formed. Experimental laboratory research has controlled the formation of groups by size, sex, heterogeneity of values and attitudes, personality types, abilities of members, and so on. To this point, research has not been conducted which examines how people choose other group members when they are allowed the opportunity to self-select themselves into groups.

One literature base addresses individual to group attraction and group entry. The common assumption in this literature,

however, is that the individual is considering membership in an existing group or that the members of an established group are passing judgment on the membership of a potential new member. Seldom are groups studied from the formation stage forward.

Specifically, this project examines the selection process and the criteria individuals use when allowed to self-select members for task groups. The study does not respond to the differences between self-selected groups and randomly assigned groups; the population and design opportunities available do not permit this type of hypothesis testing. What can be descriptively evaluated, however, is the process individuals use to group with others in task work groups. It is reasonable to address this issue as an individuals' ability to form a group with others may play an important part in his/her organizational success.

There is a realistic application, for

> if personality characteristics significantly affect small group decision making success, perhaps greater care should be taken in recruitment, selection, placement, and promotion of employees . . . there is a realistic potential for application in the areas of project management, plural executive management, and ad hoc management committee projects (Yantis & Nixon, 1982, p. 347).

Given the opportunity to interact with others prior to selection, it will be possible to examine how individuals make judgments about who should join them in group projects. Procedures for group member self-selection and for identifying the selection

criteria under which individuals operate will be introduced in this study.

Literature Review

Groups come together for many reasons. Typically, in an organization, a group is developed as a work group or as a problem solving group (Cartwright & Zander, 1968). Groups are often formed because of the belief that a solution will be more efficiently and effectively reached when a task is completed by the pooling and coordination of the behavior and resources of a group of people. While some groups are formed by someone outside the group selecting group members, other groups are formed by agreement of the individuals. Following is an exploration of why and how individuals are attracted to the groups they join.

Attraction to the Group

"The level of a group member's attraction to his or her group appears to contribute to a number of important group outcomes" (Evans & Jarvis, 1986, p. 203). Regular attendance and increased contributions to group discussion are just two outcomes. While many writers believe that group attraction leads to positive outcomes, a few studies indicate that too positive of an attraction can also lead to negative outcomes (Evans & Jarvis, 1986). Group attraction is defined as the interpersonal attraction among group members and individual attraction to the task by group members. Quality of the outcome is not assured, however, just because attraction is high.

In a review of the group attraction literature, Napier and Gershenfeld (1985) note that attraction to a group is complicated, but generally occurs for one of three reasons: a) people like the task or activity of the group; b) people like the other people in the group; and/or c) the group can satisfy needs lying outside the group. Typically, group members do not explicitly express their attraction to the group as standards of group membership. Rather, these standards are expressed as desired outcomes.

> Examples of desired group conditions include attaining pride in the group as a result of its performance on a task, maintaining optimal size of the group, securing members who have talents for the work to be done, encouraging smooth collaboration instead of friction among members, developing effective procedures for the group's work, and fostering useful interactions with agents outside the group (Zander, 1977, p. 13).

An assumption of Zander's (1977) that bridges individual attraction to the group and the interpersonal attraction among group members is that the attractiveness of an individual is determined by the positive value that the member can bring to the group as well as the probability that s/he will continue to contribute these valued interactions in the future.

For groups that have the freedom and flexibility to select their own group members, being attracted to the group is largely a result of the interpersonal attraction among its members. A review of that literature follows.

Interpersonal Attraction

The literature on interpersonal attraction has been largely devoted to personal attraction based on perceptions of physical attractiveness among cross-sex dyads. Another segment of the psychological literature explores personal attraction formed upon first impressions of strangers. This research typically uses the dyad. Some of this literature can be used as a basis for describing the interplay of attraction of different individuals who form a group. Other of this literature stems from the psychological discipline where interpersonal attraction is described as a favorable attitude or "attitudinal positivity" (Huston & Levinger, 1978, p. 115).

The stage theory of interpersonal attraction (Aronoff & Wilson, 1985) explores the notion that when individuals interact with others who display compatible interpersonal behavioral styles, the resulting degree of attraction will be strong. Conversely, when the acquaintanceship interaction leads to incompatibility, then dislike should develop. It is not expected that perfect matches must exist to achieve compatibility, but compatibility will result in "mutual need satisfaction, feelings of equity, and the potential for long-term commitment to another person" (Aronoff & Wilson, 1985, p. 185).

This study does not review the first impression literature in detail, but recognizes that first impressions play a large part in determining who individuals might select as potential group members. Further, it is important to note that what makes for a favorable first impression is important to the design of the study. A favorable first impression can certainly be a

stimulus for further interaction with a potential group member. Typically, the standard first impression experiment isolates information about the stimulus person in order to provide heightened experimental control (Huston & Levinger, 1978). More realistically, reciprocal interaction between two potential group members and/or reciprocal and network interaction among several potential group members may affect first impression formation in a way that is largely unknown.

Some elements of first impression formation important to task group membership selection include: physical appearance, behavior patterns, and impressions of cognitive compatibility (Huston & Levinger, 1978). These types of impressions can be inferred through interaction with others or by observing others' interaction. Questions that can be answered by interacting with others or observing others' behavior include: a) do people behave according to norms of social appropriateness, b) how will people communicate with others (task oriented and unfriendly or emotional and expressive), and c) how much will people disclose about themselves (Huston & Levinger, 1978). Often, the more we think a person is like us, the more attracted we are to him/her (Huston & Levinger, 1978). Interacting with others can give us information about others' values and interests, and how they would react and behave in certain situations. Unfortunately little research has been conducted in cross-sex partnerships that are outside the romantic partner parameter and no research has been uncovered that deals with a composite of cross-sex

relationships that would typically be found in organizational task groups.

Aronoff and Wilson (1985) point out that the field of social psychology has long recognized that situational, task, and group structural characteristics of the group's environment affect group behavior and group outcome. Personal attributes identified by these authors as being significant in interaction are: sex, race, age, height, weight, status, physical attractiveness, and distribution of personality and ability characteristics. While all but the last of these can largely be determined by mere observation, the last--distribution of personality and ability characteristics--can only be derived from interpersonal interaction or from observing the interaction of the target individual with others.

Aronoff and Wilson (1985) expect that different interactional patterns will occur for specific combinations of personality (e.g., groups composed of dominant and submissive members, more and less sociable members, and more and less cognitively complex members). Generally, the combinations of group members can either satisfy or frustrate group members with either of these interaction patterns affecting group process and levels of group functioning. Thus, interaction based upon group members' personalities and behavior styles can affect an individual's satisfaction with self, other group members, and the task; satisfaction with the group in terms of cohesiveness; and satisfaction with the task, generally expressed in terms of both quality and quantity of task work (Aronoff & Wilson, 1985).

Individuals forming a group may also seek other group members who share their same emotional response to the task. "Individuals who experience these emotions (e.g., boredom, tension, frustration, anger, excitement, and joy) seek others who have similar emotions" (Middlemist & Hitt, 1981, p. 190).

Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) research on the balance of costs and reward in interpersonal relationships acknowledge the importance of pre-relationship interaction.

> Initial interactions in a forming relationship are viewed as explorations which sample only a few of the many possibilities. Interaction is continued only if the experienced consequences are found to meet the standards or acceptability that both individuals develop by virtue of their experience with other relationships. (p. 10)

This underlying dyadic principle can be extended to the group formation situation.

Sherif and Sherif (1964) suggest that group members do not randomly assign themselves to group, but are active in the group selection process.

> Individuals do not form groups of their own choosing just to be, mechanically, one of a set, or because of any inherent tendency to conformity, or because they want to regulate their behavior in this or that direction. They come together and interact with strongly felt urges and with desires experienced as their own, whether these be desires to be accepted as a person in one's own right, desire to gain social distinction, sexual urges, wishes for desirable objects and instrumentalities, desires for exciting leisure-

time activities, searches for recognition, or desires to prove themselves. . . . Individuals come together . . . and stay together because they experience some strong motivational basis. . . . (pp. 243-244)

Based upon the literature presented here, several questions emerge regarding group member self-selection. A general research question is the focus for this study.

> Q1: When individuals are allowed to form their own groups, what process criteria are used in selection and which characteristics are the focus of the selection process?

This question has not been satisfactorily answered with respect to task groups.

Research has shown that first impressions, particularly those related to physical attractiveness, play an important initial part in helping individuals make group member selection choices. It is doubtful, however, that given the opportunity for interaction, first impressions based upon physical characteristics play the central role in the selection process in task group situations. Thus, one hypothesis is proposed:

> H1: Interpersonal interaction variables (e.g., communication style) on both the verbal and nonverbal level will play a more significant role than physical characteristics in attracting individuals to each other.

For group member selection, interaction may be a vehicle for expressing and analyzing attraction and compatibility whether the interaction is in the form of direct communication or observed while others communicate. The interaction of the group, once

formed, may very well be dependent upon the interaction that took place as group members self-selected

Prominent organizational and group researchers have called for more sophisticated group research that can have real consequences for groups in organizations. Primary to their concerns are that groups used for research purposes be composed for a real task (not be dispersed to groups according to artificial random assignment techniques), have the capacity to engage in ongoing interaction, and work on a task that has consequences for the group members. Group related research has typically ignored these requirements. The biggest offense is proliferated in studies that use random assignment of individuals to groups thus reinforcing the zero-history and noncontinuity aspects of group research. Without these two critical elements, it is doubtful that participants take as active a part as they might in consequential group interaction.

The unfortunate conclusion is that what is known about group formation has largely been defined around randomly assigned, zero-history groups in which individuals have no intention of continuing interaction with others in the group.

It is likely that individuals do react significantly to others' interaction behavior and are capable of selecting themselves into compatible groups. If the task and its outcomes are significant enough for individuals to believe that the work must be completed satisfactorily, it is reasonable to assume that individuals would place great significance on choosing others to join them in such an assignment.

The group formation literature has not satisfactorily researched naturally occurring groups to evidence practical support of their findings. Second, the group formation and interpersonal attraction literature has largely focused on attraction in cross-sex dyadic relationships and not cross-sexed task groups that would be more likely in the work environment. Third, much of the interpersonal attraction literature operationalized attraction as personal liking to a photograph stimulus rather than presenting the stimulus as direct, naturally occurring interaction. Fourth, much of the attitude similarity interpersonal attraction research is based on the dyad and does not consider the totality of the complex group environment. Sunnafrank (1983) reports another major problem of this research: ignorance of normative communication processes in the attraction and acquaintance process.

Rather than look for specific variables, or define attitude similarity or attraction on researcher proposed constructs, this project uses groups that are naturally occurring with consequences that are significant for group members both in terms of task evaluation and continued relationships to discover the key variables in the attraction and selection process.

Methodology

Subjects

Individuals who compose the groups for this study were students enrolled in a basic communication course at a midwestern university. Students taking the course are generally fulfilling a social/behavioral science requirement, and generally, are not communication majors. Students come from varied backgrounds and represent many disciplines and interests. These students generally represent the traditional college ages (18-22), although a few nontraditional age students are interspersed throughout these classes. Females dominate the female to male balance by approximately a two to one ratio.

The course is a multi-section course in small group communication. Each of ten sections generally enrolls between 20 and 30 students. The subject matter for the course is standardized across sections. The course is a combination of theory lectures and experiential learning. The course syllabus clearly defines that group work is part of the class assignment and course grade. The groups that are formed for the purpose of the class assignments are the groups used for data collection. Thus, two hundred and forty-eight students self-selected themselves into 47 groups and participated in the study. Subjects received extra credit toward their overall course grade for their involvement in the research project.

Group Formation Procedure

The groups are formed for the purpose of presenting two audience-participative workshops on group communication topics for the class. As an aid to that task, groups are given class time (13 full class periods distributed throughout the duration of the quarter) to meet in groups and prepare for their workshops.

Subjects were allowed to self-select themselves into groups after planned activities which are provided to generate interaction among the students. An interaction period of five class hours, planned as part of the course, allowed students to become acquainted and familiar with one another before choosing group members. Acquaintance activities are conducted during the first week of class not only to help students familiarize themselves with one another but also to become accustomed to working in task oriented groups. Typical introductory and familiarization activities include small group and individual introduction exercises, group production tasks, group problem solving tasks, and exercises in which personal values, attitudes, and interests are expressed.

Typical of these activities was the "Baroness" activity. Students were given the story of the baroness which describes the lonely plight of a medieval baroness and the sad consequence of her loneliness. Students were asked to decide as a group who should be blamed for the baroness' demise. There is no clear answer to this question. No student is selected or identified as group leader by the instructor, thus the students are on their

own for organizing their interaction. Beyond beginning to identify who possible workgroup leaders are and the styles with which they operate, students also share value systems and personal information as they try to come to some consensus. For each activity like the one above, students were divided into small workgroups of five to seven members by some systematic means (random assignment, proximity, all those born on Monday, etc.) to enhance the opportunity for each student to interact with every other student.

Before and after activities, instructors explain the importance of and the students' responsibility in selecting group members. The class period in which the actual workgroups are formed, five lists are put on the blackboard. Students are given an activity that involves every student to enhance interaction. When that activity is concluded, students are asked to sign their names on the blackboard with others they want to join in a group. Students are allowed to erase their own names, but not the names of others. At this point in the class, students realize the consequence of the group work that needs to be accomplished and are aware that group member selection is their responsibility.

During the socialization activities and group formation process, the instructors of the courses were asked to not engage in any interaction or intervention that suggested any particular group of students be together. The subjects were told that after group member selection, the instructor would not impose other individuals (latecomers to the course) upon already formed groups. Latecomers had the right to petition groups for membership. All groups were instructed that they also had the right to deny

membership to anyone seeking it and that the group retained the right to reject a member from the group upon reasonable and verifiable justification of member inactivity.

There was no attempt to control for age, sex, background, personality variables, or communication characteristics other than what the subjects imposed upon themselves as their own selection criteria. The groups were composed of no less than three and no more than seven members.

Variable Definitions

Group members were asked to provide a written response to the statement:

> Now that you have selected others to form a group to work on the workshop presentations, please indicate in a paragraph or so below what process you used or what characteristics you considered when choosing your fellow group members.

This procedure was used to identify the process and/or the criteria the subjects employed in selecting their other group members. The paragraphs were written immediately after subjects had selected group members and before the groups interacted in the course task context. Twenty percent of the written responses were content analyzed by the researcher and a second evaluator to determine content categories for both the processes used in the selection activity (how did they select others to join them) and the criteria employed by the subjects (what specifically were they look for/avoiding in groups members). After these categories were finalized, the researcher and two evaluators read

each written description and independently coded each to identify the processes employed and characteristics sought. A process or characteristic was considered properly coded if two of the three coders agreed on the coding classification. Using this criterion, the average coder reliabilities for the process variables were .873 and .872 for the characteristic variables. Overall, 19 process categories resulted from 354 responses and 43 characteristic variables resulted from 620 responses. The 19 process and 43 characteristic variables, and the accompanying frequencies and percentages are listed in the appendix.

Results

Q1: When individuals are allowed to form their own groups, what process criteria are used in selection and which characteristics are the focus of the selection process?

Of the 19 process variables identified, three accounted for 66.95% of the 354 responses. Each of the other responses accounted for less than five percent of the total. The three most frequent responses and their accompanying frequencies and percentages are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Process Variables Frequencies and Percentages

Process Variable	Frequency	% of Responses
I chose others based on their characteristics.	136	38.418
I met or talked to someone in in class through the social activities.	69	19.492
I began with friends/ acquaintances known before this class.	32	9.040
Total of these three responses	237	66.950

Of the 43 characteristics identified, nine accounted for 60.163% of 620 responses. These nine responses and the percentages are shown in Table 2. None of the remaining characteristic categories accounted for more than 5% of the total.

TABLE 2

Characteristic Variables Frequencies and Percentages

Characteristic Variable	Frequency	% of Responses
Commitment/determination/ willing to work/ not fool around	57	9.194
Like me/similar personality/ similar interests	56	9.032
Open/outgoing/self-disclosing	50	8.065
Friendly/nice/considerate	41	6.613
Reliable/dependable/ responsible for share of work	35	5.645
No characteristics cited	35	5.645
Get along well with others/ work well with others/ cooperative/easy to work with/agreeable	33	5.323
Grade goals	33	5.323
Sense of humor/ fun to work with	33	5.320
Total of these nine responses	373	60.163

Both types of variables were transformed into binary codes in order that phi-coefficient correlations could be calculated for each pair of process variables, each pair of characteristic variables, and each pair of process and characteristic variables. None of the three most frequently identified process variables were significantly associated with other process variables. Only one set of the characteristic variables

(friendly/nice/considerate and open/outgoing/self-disclosing) was significantly correlated (r_{ϕ} = .220, p. = .0001). One process variable (I chose others based on their characteristics) was significantly correlated with eight of the nine most frequently identified characteristic variables. Table 3 shows these associations and numerical correlations.

TABLE 3

Process and Characteristic Variable Relationships

Characteristic Variable Associated with the Process Variable "I chose others based on their characteristics"	Correlation
Commitment/determination/willing to work/ not fool around	r_{ϕ} = .331
Friendly/nice/considerate	r_{ϕ} = .215
Get along well with others/work well with others/cooperative/easy to work with/ agreeable	r_{ϕ} = .253
Grade goals	r_{ϕ} = .272
Like me/similar personality/similar interests	r_{ϕ} = .229
Open/outgoing/self-disclosing	r_{ϕ} = .334
Reliable/dependable/responsible for share of work	r_{ϕ} = .289
Sense of humor/fun to work with	r_{ϕ} = .307
	p. = .0001

The three most frequently mentioned process variables are active in the sense that they show that the individual is searching for others or is seeking information about others.

These variables also imply that subjects did not rely heavily on chance meetings, but were aware of their task to select themselves into their own work groups. The most frequently cited characteristic variables represent communicative, attributed, and informational variables. Four (friendly/nice/considerate, get along well with others/work well with others/cooperative/easy to work with/agreeable, open/outgoing/self-disclosing, and sense of humor/fun to work with) were judged as communicative (evidenced through direct communication) variables by the coders. Three characteristics (commitment/determination/willing to work/not fool around, like me/similar personality/similar interests, and reliable/dependable/responsible for share of work) were judged as attributes that could be inferred to the person from communicating with a person or from watching a person interact with others. The grade goal characteristic was judged to be an informational characteristic.

Research question one sought to determine what criteria individuals used when selecting group members. The open ended responses suggest that individuals can identify both the processes they employ and the characteristics they seek in others.

Similarly, these results provide support for the first hypothesis:

> H1: Interpersonal interaction variables (e.g., communication style) on both the verbal and nonverbal level will play a more significant role than physical characteristics in attracting individuals to each other.

This hypothesis was tested by evaluating the frequencies of the coded characteristic variables. Physical appearance variables were not among those variables most frequently mentioned (x^2 = 555.562, df = 1, p. = <.001). In fact, the physical appearance characteristic accounted for less than 1% of all characteristics identified. Subjects more frequently identified communicative variables (33.6%) and attributes that could be inferred though communication (45.4%). Information variables and other physical variables (e.g., people I don't know) accounted for 13.4% of the responses.

Summary of Results

Data for research question one (what criteria do individuals use when selecting group members) provides significant direction in determining why people select others to join them in task groups. Several process and characteristic variables were discovered to be more frequently mentioned than others. More importantly, hypothesis one was descriptively confirmed. Of all the characteristics uncovered in the open ended question, no physical appearance variable played a significant role in the determination and selection of group members. Rather, individuals used active communication processes and relied on communication characteristics or characteristics that could be inferred from interaction in making group member selection.

Discussion

Typically, groups used in experimentation and variable manipulation studies are zero-history groups which have little or

no opportunity for continuing relationships. These types of groups are usually structured through random assignment or matched assignment and the participants have little motivation for, or input to, the direction of the group task. The premise from which this project started was: "what can these types of groups <u>really</u> tell us about group process?" This is a particularly essential question to research in the organizational communication area of study.

Prominent group researchers have called for research that better "fits" group task work in the real world. Research using intact groups is promising; however, in most cases the group task used in experimental conditions is not endogenous to the group. This project used classroom groups whose members selected one another to complete two group tasks. The task had outcome consequence for the subjects in terms of a shared group grade, and, maybe more importantly, the task also had process consequence for the subjects. It is easy to degrade the importance of classroom task groups; however, these groups interacted for 10 weeks. Beyond the group task, each individual group member wrote two data based papers about their experiences in the groups. In this context, the group became a "home" and provided a group identity for individual group members. Instructors of the course sections attest to the "groupness" in which these groups were immersed.

Piper, Jones, Lacroix, Marrache, and Richardsen (1984) explored pregroup interaction and group bonding. Like the present study, these researchers used a familiarization activity to

allow subjects to introduce themselves to one another. "The task clearly had a specific effect on the perception of personal compatibility. Sharing personal information in several areas created a sense of similarity, familiarity, and potential friendship" (Piper et al., 1984, p. 60). The present project expanded the familiarization period to five class periods of socialization activities. During this time subjects were told that they would be selecting themselves into groups, the nature of the group task, and the resulting group consequence. The activities during this period were intended to enhance the selection process making individuals feel more responsible for group member selection and the subsequent group process and outcome.

The subjects' responses to the open ended question regarding their selection process indicated that subjects used active and communicative processes in approaching and asking others to join them in the group task. The open ended responses also indicated that the subjects looked for characteristics that defined an individual's (a) willingness to work, (b) ability to get along in a group situation, (c) openness to communicate, and d) similarities in terms of interest and personality. These characteristics suggest that the process of selecting others is conscious and deliberate. Previous attraction research by McCroskey, Hamilton, and Weiner (1974) on the effect of interaction behavior on source credibility, homophily, and interpersonal attraction suggests that interaction behavior does have an effect on interpersonal attraction and that the way people interact in a small group situation is complex with respect to attraction. In their study, they used a standardized

attraction form composed of physical, task, and social factors with randomly assigned student groups who had previous exposure to one another in the classroom situation.

The study described in this paper is different than most attitude similarity research. In those types of studies, similarity on specific researcher designated constructs is measured. Here, subjects were not given any restrictions to what they reported or suggestions on what to report. In a naturally occurring context, they looked for similarity/dissimilarity and attraction on their own terms and from their own definitions.

Newcomb (1961) analyzes the acquaintance process as a matter of balance/imbalance between attraction to others and attraction to object. Three of the characteristics found could be labeled as implying attitude toward the object. In this study, the object would be the workshop to be presented by the group. An example of attitude toward object would be "grade goals". Twenty-eight of the characteristics could be labeled as implying an attitude toward others (i.e., energetic; enthusiastic). Ten characteristics imply that information about others was obtained (e.g., class rank). Certainly, attitudes about a person can be derived from receiving that type of information. Newcomb's categories of attraction to object and other and the information category provide another method for analyzing the characteristics subjects say they used in selecting other members for their task group. These coding categories are also presented in the characteristic list in the appendix.

Another way to classify the subjects' responses can be found in Shaw (1981). He defines attraction as consisting of the primary variables of attitude similarity, value congruence, personality characteristics, proximity, contact, interaction, physical attractiveness, and perceived ability of others. Each of these variables surfaced in the present study.

It is disappointing that the processes and characteristics noted by the subjects did not result in stronger relationships. However, the processes and characteristics identified do appear to be legitimate concerns when subjects are allowed to self-select themselves into task groups and should be used in future research studies of this type.

Conclusions and Implications

This study recognizes the important role communication plays in attracting individuals to one another and in allowing individuals to make choices about who should join them in task groups. The results of this study suggest that physical attractiveness is not a central issue when task groups are being formed and when attractiveness is not selected as an issue of interest by the researcher.

With respect to organizational use of self-selected task groups, two recommendations can be made. First, since some individuals do appear to attend to the selection process better than others, it may be profitable for an organization to assess that skill when considering individuals for positions that require the management of grouping people. Those individuals who are active and interested in the process may be able to:

1) place themselves in more compatible groups; 2) help develop this skill in others; or 3) group people more effectively even when they will not participate directly in the group. Second, some types of organizations may be able to more productively use the self-selection grouping technique than other organizations. Those organizations that have work groups whose tasks cross division or department boundaries may especially profit from allowing and encouraging pre-group interaction.

Newcomb (1961) acknowledges the importance of pre-group interaction:

> Participants, however familiar with one another they may already be, acquire information about each other, assess one another's attitudes, and either reinforce existing states of orientation toward each other and toward the commonworld, or change them, or develop new ones. (p. 259)

Thus, Newcomb implies that the acquaintance process is never ending if participants find themselves in a new situation. Even if organizational members are personally aware of one another, they need to acquaint themselves to one another with respect to the particular project that brings them together.

APPENDIX

SUMMARY OF PROCESS AND CHARACTERISTIC VARIABLES

Processes

		Frequency	%
01	Chose others based on characteristics	136	38.4
02	No plan/format	15	4.2
03	Began with friends/ acquaintances known before this class	32	9.0
04	Paired with another and then expanded search	7	1.9
05	Picked those I was standing or sitting near	17	4.8
06	Asked questions/listened for additional information	13	3.7
07	Picked individuals that were in my last activity group	3	.8
08	Drawn together/attracted to each other	1	.3
09	Drifted/just happened to be there	4	1.1
10	Eliminated by others/last group to form/fell into left over group	9	2.5
11	Asked to be a member of a group	7	1.9
12	Watched others to make comparisons	11	3.1
13	Met or talked to someone in class through social activities	69	19.5
14	Switched groups	2	.5
15	Wanted to avoid some in class/eliminated those I didn't want to work with	6	1.7

16	Tried to see how people would be in workshop situation	1	.2
17	Subgroups joined together	8	2.2
18	Wrote my name on board	10	2.8
19	Used my first impressions	3	.8

Characteristics

		Frequency	%	Code 1	Code 2
01	achievement oriented/ motivated	6	.9	attribute	other
02	attend regularly	9	1.4	physical	info
03	attitudes	2	.3	attribute	other
04	bright/intelligent	16	2.6	attribute	other
05	class rank	2	.3	information	info
06	commitment/determination/ willing to work/not fool around	57	9.2	attribute	other
07	compatible	12	1.9	attribute	other
08	different majors	0			
09	down to earth	3	.5	attribute	other
10	easy to talk to/ communicates well	30	4.9	communicate	other
11	energetic/enthusiastic	13	2.1	attribute	other
12	experienced	3	.4	information	other
13	flexible	3	.4	attribute	other
14	friendly/nice/ considerate	41	6.6	communicate	other
15	gets along well with others/work well with/ cooperative/easy to work with/agreeable	33	5.3	communicate	other
16	good listeners	3	.4	communicate	other

17	good personalities	9	1.4	attribute	other
18	grade goals	33	5.3	information	object
19	interesting	6	.9	attribute	other
20	leadership qualities/ decision making abilities	11	1.7	communicate	other
21	like me/similar personality/ similar interests	56	9.0	attribute	other
22	lives close to where I do	5	.8	information	info
23	looks/appearance	6	.9	physical	info
24	lots of ideas/creative	16	2.6	attribute	other
25	not dominant	8	1.3	communicate	other
26	open/outgoing/ self-disclosing	50	8.1	communicate	other
27	open minded/can accept others' opinions/ independent	6	.9	attribute	other
28	opposite personality	3	.4	attribute	other
29	people I don't know	1	.2	physical	info
30	reasons for choosing class/interest in class	4	.6	information	info
31	relaxed/comfortable	21	3.4	attribute	other
32	reliable/dependable/ responsible for share of work	35	5.6	attribute	other
33	sense of humor/ fun to work with	33	5.3	communicate	other
34	similar majors	3	.4	information	info
35	study and work habits	4	.6	attribute	other
36	time schedules	16	2.6	information	info
37	wanted to present workshop on certain day	2	.3	information	object
38	no characteristics cited	35	5.6		

39	sincere	1	.2	attribute	other
40	group doing extra credit	1	.2	information	object
41	group with variety	6	.9	attribute	info
42	mixed sex group	6	.9	information	info
43	get along and work well together	10	1.6	attribute	other

Code 1 (researcher assigned)

Attribute = a characteristic that can be inferred from communicating with others or from watching a person interact with others

communicate = characteristic known though direct communication with another person; part of the person's communication skills

information = characteristics of demographic information

physical = characteristics known by a person's presence

Code 2 (researcher assigned from Newcomb's definitions)

info = information about another that can lead to the development of an attitude toward other

object = attitude toward object

other = attitude toward other group members

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