1. Describe the Social Exchange Theory.
2. Describe the Relational/ Interactional Theory of human communication.
3. What do you mean by Coordinated Management of Meaning?
4. What is ethnomethodology and how is it relevant in the business environment?

Lecture 21: Answers

1. <u>Social Exchange Theory</u> (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959, in Ross & Anderson, 2002): As the name suggests, the social exchange theory describes how relationships are established and maintained through exchange of messages with other people around us.

   This theory presumes that people communicate by trying to achieve relational *profit* by producing more *Rewards* (Outcomes desired by communicators), than *Costs* (What communicators must forgo in order to achieve goals).

   This theory postulates that relationships between people depend on an expectation of *Reciprocity (*I scratch your back and you scratch mine ☺) and fulfilment of these reciprocal expectations are crucial in maintaining relationships.

   This theory assumes that people evaluate potential relationships for their exchange potential by employing:
   o *Comparison levels*: People compare their rewards and costs to the rewards and costs they have earned/ incurred in similar interactions in the past and the level of satisfaction they experienced as a result of rewards/ costs earned/ incurred in past experiences while connecting with people in similar situations. These levels of satisfaction and comparison are internal and may be unique to individuals or situations.

   o *Comparison level for alternatives*: People compare the rewards and costs of their existing relationship with the rewards they might earn or costs they might incur if the relationship ended, and then make the decision about the perceived value of the rewards and costs in the current relationship.

2. <u>Relational/ Interactional Theory:</u> (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, '67, in Ross & Anderson, '02): The Relational/ Interactional theory proposes the following axioms in the development and maintenance of relationships in and through communication.

   o Axiom 1: "The impossibility of not communicating": We cannot not communicate. When we send out a signal, the significant others in our

environments are bound to respond even if to turn us away and let us know our signals are not welcome or required.

- o Axiom 2: "The content and relationship levels of communication: Our talk reveals not only what we think about our *topics* but our *relation to each other*." The words we choose in different contexts convey the stage of relationship we are at in terms of how comfortable we feel using certain words or discussing certain topics in the company of the significant others in our environments. The way we discuss certain things with certain people and the way we negotiate our roles of what we say is greatly dependent on the stage of relationship we are at, and in turn defines the stage of relationship that is comfortable for the interactants in the situation.

- o Axiom 3: "Our communication is filled with attempts to *punctuate* sequences of events – that is, to identify openings, closings, starts stops, causes and effects". We use different communication strategies to indicate the different parts of our discussions. For example, when we pause, we indicate that we have said what we wanted to say about something at least for the time being, or that we would like the other person to respond, or that we would like to think more about the topic being discussed. If the other interactants in the situation are not satisfied with the way the conversation is going, they may use our pause as a reason to change the topic or change the direction in which the topic is going. In essence, each unit of communication in an interaction is essentially is a stimulus that is capable of eliciting a response from the significant others in the environment. This necessity of nexting is what connects us to others in our environments.

- o Axiom 4: "Messages can be
    - Digital: Based on arbitrary agreements (such as are found in language)": This axiom refers to the interpretations of the words that we use. The digital code refers to the actual meanings of the words we use.

      OR

    - Analogic: The analogic code refers to the connotations of the non verbal signals that accompany and influence the interpretations of the words we use.

The actual and interpreted meanings of the words we use give our interactions meaning and determine our connection with others in our environments. These meanings also help us establish and maintain relationships with others in our environments.

- o Axiom 5: Symmetrical and complementary interaction: Our communication with others can be symmetrical or complementary. Symmetrical interaction indicates that both parties are at the same level in the relationship while complementary interaction indicates a hierarchy in the relationship. These levels of communication have been discussed in a previous lecture.

  Symmetrical and complementary interaction may lead to:

  - *Schismogenesis*: A type of interaction in which the perceived hierarchical distance keeps increasing as a result of the manner in which the messages are exchanged. The interaction that originally began as a result of the perceived hierarchy now feeds into the situation and concretizes this hierarchy. Addressing a superior as 'Sir' or 'Ma'am' in a relatively flatter organization where the norm is to address each other by first name, is a continuous reminder of the power distance between the two interactants, and may serve to increase it.

  - *Confirmation*: Confirmation refers to the acknowledgement of existence of the other interactant. This may be done through non-verbal signals or verbal units of communication. A simple nod of the head when one sees a colleague, or a wave, or a response to a casual greeting ("Hi" or "Good morning" etc.) are all examples of confirmation. Confirmation usually reduces power distance between the interactants.

  - *Disconfirmation*: Disconfirmation happens when one partner communicates as if the other doesn't exist. This technique is used to increase the power distance between interactants.

3. Coordinated Management of Meaning is a process that facilitates the creation and maintenance of meaning, and these coordinated or commonly created meanings help define relationships between people.

4. Ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967, in Ross & Anderson, 2002): Ethnomethodology is based on a commonsense approach to communication and behaviour. It studies how people in everyday life, without realizing they're doing anything remarkable, make practical sense of their complex social experiences and translate that 'common sense' into behaviors. Only by interfering with normal rules and assumptions, do we expose those rules for study. Otherwise they simply blend into our cultural contexts. This theory also proposes that no situation is completely covered by rules for 'communicative interchanges' and that the understanding of these rules is also culturally governed (Mitchell, 1978, in Ross &

Anderson, 2002). One may assume that misunderstandings may occur if the interaction occurs between interactants that perceive the rules shared in the relationship differently.

The blending in suggested above can be very helpful in understanding the preferences of customers and serving them accordingly. Many times well researched theories taught in academic programs apply only partially to real life business process settings. Supplementing academic knowledge with ethnomethodology can help the business person enrich his/ her understanding of the situation to suit a specific business.

1. Describe the dialectical theory of relational communication.
2. Describe Martin Buber's take on philosophical anthropology.
3. What do you understand by the term, 'hermeneutics'?

Lecture 22: Answers

1. <u>Dialectical Theory</u> (Baxter, 1988, 1990; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Cissna Cox & Bochner, 1990; Rawlins, 1992, in Ross & Anderson, 2002): Merriam Webster Dictionary defines the word 'Dialectic' or 'Dialectics' as "...discussion and reasoning by dialogue as a method of intellectual investigation; *specifically*: the Socratic techniques of exposing false beliefs and eliciting truth."

   The dialectical theory proposes that "...relationships result from the interplay of perceived opposite forces or contradictions, and from how relational partners negotiate these ever-changing processes." According to this theory the interactants in any relationship bring with them opposing points of view and the relationship between them is a result of the confrontation of these opposing points of view and the communication episode surrounding this confrontation. According to the Dialectical Theory, "relationships are not linear, but consist of oscillation between contradictory goals or desires." (Gamble & Gamble, 2002). When opposing goals confront each other, dialectical tensions are created. Some examples of these dialectical tensions are:

   o *Connection vs. autonomy*: This is similar to the examples discussed in previous lectures. How connected should we be to the relationship and to the other interactant, and how autonomous or independent should we be of the relationship?

   o *Predictability vs. novelty*: How predictable should the communication in a relationship be and where and how should one introduce novelty?

   o *Openness vs. privacy*: How open should we be with the others in the relationship and where should we draw the line and redefine our own private comfort zone or bubble?

Dealing with all these tensions and discussions about them intra and interpersonally define the relationship and the shape and form it takes.

2. Buber's (1958 & 1965) Philosophical anthropology deals with the relationship human beings develop with others in their environment in and through dialogue. Buber (1958 & 1965) talks about the following types of relationships between two people:

- **I-Thou attitude** is the tendency of a person (an individual with his/her unique traits) to invite and allow dialogue with another unique individual. (Buber, 1958, in Ross & Anderson, 2000)

- **I-It attitude** assumes that others can be treated as objects, as things that can be concisely described, measured, manipulated, and accounted for. (Buber, 1958, in Ross & Anderson, 2000).

Buber (1958 & 1965) feels that the above are accomplished through the following types of dialogue:

- *Genuine dialogue*: Genuine dialogue refers to the dialogue conducted with a genuine intention of "establishing a living mutual relation" between the interactants. In this kind of dialogue, mutual connection between the interactants is the only goal, and the communication rules and roles of the interactants are negotiated through feedback to reach a mutually suitable, comfortable communicative position. Genuine dialogue is a very effective tool in enhancing congeniality in the workplace. Genuine dialogue treats the 'other' as a human being and manifests itself in the 'I-Thou' type of interaction. It helps reduce power distance between interactants and facilitates the exchange of affection or genuine warmth between the interactants.

- *Technical dialogue*: Technical dialogue refers to dialogue that seems to be genuine dialogue, but is "…actually designed only to achieve a specified end through objective communication." In this type of dialogue, the personal goals of one or all of the interactants are paramount, and there is not much negotiation of roles of the interactants. Technical dialogue is what happens when teams are at work, especially when they are on tight schedules, trying to get things done. This helps reduce wastage of time, and achieve goals. In modern day parlance, technical dialogue is also a favored form of professionalism where one is expected to compartmentalize what one feels and what really needs to be done to achieve goals.

- *Monologue*: Monologue, as the term suggests, refers to one sided communication. The person engaging in a monologue usually does not expect a response. Instructions are a form of monologue, where the people receiving instructions or direction are just expected to follow what is being said without questioning. Monologue manifests itself in the 'I-It' type of communication where the 'other' is expected

to be a machine or an inanimate object that is supposed to follow what is being said without analyzing or thinking about it. Monologues are very effective tools for increasing power distance and maintaining discipline.

All the above have a place in forming various types of relationships in the workplace.

3. Hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1982, in Ross & Anderson, 2000): Hermeneutics is the study of development of interpretations as a result of "people's encounters with written and oral 'texts'." What we read and hear is interpreted by us through our own filters. These interpretations and meanings may be:

- *Reproductive*: "…listener's (or summarizer's) *recreation* of meaning of the spoken (or written) word." Reproductive meanings are attempts at the exact recreation of what has been read or said.

- *Productive*: Productive meanings deal with meanings that emerge as a result of continuous analysis of what has been written and said. These meanings may or may not be congruent with reproductive meanings.

Gadamer (1982, in Ross & Anderson, 2002) believes that these meanings are influenced by *Linguisticality* or the characteristics of the language being used. Gadamer (1982, in Ross & Anderson, 2002) believes that the language we use shapes the way we think. Language in some ways limits what we think about or how we think about things because there are only so many words that can describe only so many concepts (Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis). But there may be so many concepts and ideas and feelings that we perceive that we may not be able to describe in the language we use or the language the other people we interact with understand. This results in the interdependence of communicators with the language they use. The issues that remain unexplained may create misunderstandings between the interactants and may shape their relationships with each other. The interdependence between communicators and the language(s) they use and understand, in turn, influences how they perceive and contribute to the relationships they establish and maintain with others in their environments.

Lecture 23: Questions

1. What does Irving Goffman propose through the Dramaturgical Theory of human interaction?
2. What is the significance of the Dramaturgical Theory in the workplace.
3. Describe the Dramatistic Pentad.
4. Explain the symbolic convergence theory

Lecture 23: Answers

1. The dramaturgical theory rests on the assumption that any communication we engage in with another person is usually scripted or practiced or 'made up'. It is 'rarely spontaneous'. Practiced enough, the scripted communication episode starts seeming real and the person designing the message is unable to differentiate between what is real and what is scripted. According to this theory, in interaction, "…social actors try to coordinate their behaviors convincingly, in order to give audiences the impression that reality is present within the boundaries of the interaction."

2. Goffman's Dramaturgical theory can be applied to impression management especially in the workplace. (Goffman, 1959, '64, '81, in Ross & Anderson 2000). Impression management refers to the accomplishment of interpersonal goals through our dramatic presentation of ourselves to others. According to this theory, people engage manage how others perceive them (impression management) through:

    Role enactment: Role enactment refers to a mix of pretense and spontaneity based on expectations of self and others.

    Facework: Facework refers to the process involved in the maintenance of an 'appropriate' public image or impression.

    Goffman's Dramaturgical position finds a lot of utility in modern day impression management on the individual level in terms of professional reputation of individuals and on the organizational level in terms of the reputation of the organization. We portray ourselves not as we are but as we 'should' be so that the world around us can give what we want from it.

3. The Dramatistic Pentad explains the parameters that influence how we identify or fail to identify with each other in social situations. These parameters are:

    a. **Act:** Behaviors: What is accomplished? (What happened?)
    b. **Agent:** Person performing dramatically (Who initiated the action?)

c. **Scene:** Situation in which the action occurs (Where and when?)
d. **Agency:** Means used by agent to accomplish communicative goals (How did it happen?)
e. **Purpose:** Motivating reason behind the rhetoric (Why did it develop as it did?)

4. *Symbolic Convergence Theory* (Bormann, 1972, 1983, 1989, in Ross & Anderson 2000). This theory focuses on the communicative processes by which human beings converge their individual fantasies, dreams, and meanings into shared symbol systems. This theory describes how people communicating together develop shared stories that give meaning to individual experiences so that those experiences 'converge' into something larger and more coherent than isolated feelings, thoughts, or explanations. According to this theory, people dramatize their interpretations of individual meanings in terms of group symbols. These group symbols may be dramatized in the following ways:

   a. Dramatization of the message
   b. Collaborative creation of a fantasy theme
   c. Collaborative creation of a fantasy type
   d. Chaining
   e. Scripting

1. What are the differences between:
    a. Collective and Individual socialization
    b. Serial and disjunctive socialization
    c. Investiture and divestiture socialization

2. Describe the strategies newcomers use to obtain information from their co-workers when they join an organization.

3. Why is it necessary for newcomers to become acquainted with co-workers?

Lecture 24: Answers

1. The differences may be described as follows:

    a. *Collective socialization* involves putting a group of recruits through a common set of experiences together. For example, a set of trainees joining a new organization are put through training programs and outbound programs together.

       Individual socialization occurs when recruits are brought into the organization in relative isolation from one another and put through a unique set of experiences. For example, experts or senior consultants or faculty at Universities are hired one at a time and the experiences they go through are tailored to their individual needs.

    b. If an organization uses *serial socialization*, it uses an experienced organizational member, who occupies a similar role to the one the newcomer will occupy, to help 'groom' the newcomer.

       When the organization uses *disjunctive socialization processes*, no role models are available or are provided for the newcomer and the newcomer is left alone to discover the ins and outs of the position.

    c. The *investiture socialization* technique accepts the unique characteristics that the new recruit brings to the organization – 'we like you the way you are'.

       Divestiture socialization, however, inducts the new recruit on the basis of the unique abilities s/he posses and then retrains the new recruit to fit in with the organization by changing the individual skill sets possessed by the new recruit – 'We love you, you are perfect, now change'.

2. New members use certain strategies to obtain information from their co-workers. Miller and Jablin (1991, in Myers, Seibold & Park, 2011) describe some of these strategies as follows:

- *Overt*: Overt strategies refer to directly asking question

- *Indirect*: Indirect strategies involve questions that may not necessarily be directly connected to the information sought by new members, but the responses to which give these members an idea of the information they seek.

- *Third party*: Third party strategies refer to seeking of information from a source that may not be directly connected to the information new members seek.

- *Testing limits*: Sometimes, interactants lead conversations towards a point and create situations where the people who have critical information are forced to respond. This usually happens when new members are trying to find out whether they have broken a norm but they do not want to ask directly. This serves two purposes. Firstly, the new members know what their limits are, and secondly, if the older and senior members do not point out these limits to the newcomers, it gives a chance to the newcomers to re-define the boundaries of their interaction.

- *Disguising conversations*: Disguising conversations refers to concealing information seeking within another conversation.

- *Observation*: Sometimes, newcomers passively observe or watch and listen without disrupting the events that are going on. This passive observation helps newcomers gain the information they seek.

- *Surveillance*: Surveillance refers to analysis of what one has seen and understood to connect events and make sense of these events in the context of the information being sought.

3. Modaff and DeWine (2002) describe the following implications of becoming acquainted with co-workers:

   Becoming acquainted with co-workers is beneficial for new employees because:
   - It helps them gain information about the organization

   - Connecting with co-workers and getting relevant information from them helps shape their attitudes regarding their work and the organization they work for

   - Having relevant information makes it a little easier to learn the tasks required in the workplace

- Connecting with co-workers helps newcomers from formal and informal networks, which may help with professional advancement

- Connecting with co-workers facilitates support and friendship with people who one spends most of one's waking hours with

Becoming acquainted with newcomers in the organization is beneficial for older employees in the organization because it helps them gain new perspectives on what they have been doing. It also facilitates support and friendship and an opportunity to pass on what one has learnt over the years to someone who is in a position to use it.

Socialization between newcomers and the employees that are already working in the organization is beneficial for the organization because:
  - It helps reduce employee turnover

  - It facilitates cohesion among employees

  - Conversation among employees facilitate the surfacing and removal of biases

Lecture 25: Questions

1. Describe some of the factors that affect superior-subordinate communication.
2. What is acculturation and how is it significant in the context of an organization?
3. What is gossip and how does it contribute to the functioning of an organization?

Lecture 25: Answers

1. Some of the factors that affect superior subordinate communication are:
   a. *Openness/ closedness of supervisor subordinate communication* (Redding, 1972, in Myers, Seibold and Park, 2011).
   b. *Influence*: Pelz effect is the level of impact upward influence of superiors has on their subordinates. Pelz (1952, in Myers, Seibold & Park, 2011) proposes that "…workers' feelings of cooperation in work groups and or organizational control are positively influenced by their leader's upward influence."
   c. *Supervisors' communication styles and related effectiveness*
   d. *Supervisor feedback*
   e. *Personal characteristics of supervisors and subordinates*

2. Acculturation as a process includes acknowledgement of the existence of another culture and its various aspects, acceptance of difference, internalization of the fact that the various attributes of a different cultural setup may be worthy of being accepted and imbibed in one's own repertoire, and the final alignment of one's own comfort zone to the comfort zone of the different culture in such a way that one becomes a part of the new culture. Bauer et al. (1998, in Myers, Seibold & Park, 2011) describe acculturation as a process that involves learning about and accepting the culture of a place/ organization. Myers and Oetzel (2003, in Myers, Seibold & Park, 2011) propose that the process of acculturation includes learning the norms of the organization and 'how things get done' within their respective organizations (Myers and Oetzel, 2003 in Myers, Seibold, and Park, 2011). Bauer et al. (1998, in Myers, Seibold & Park, 2011) propose that organizational acculturation helps organizational members understand how they view and value customers, the community, their competitors, and themselves.

3. *Gossip*: Hafen (2004 in Myers, Seibold & Park, 2011) defines gossip as "Healing talk that connects intimately to one another in communication based on community; skill-building talk, as we compare our behaviors to others; and dis/empowering talk that evokes feelings of dominance for gossiper and subordination for gossippee."

   Hafen (2004 in Myers, Seibold & Park, 2011) also lists some ways in which gossip can contribute to the functioning of an organization:

- Gossip can discretely inform newcomers about other members of the organization which can be an invaluable part of socialization.

- "Gossip can be an indirect guide about values and behavioral norms of the organization..." – if people are gossipping about the behavior, it might be best to avoid that behavior in future.

- Learning about the gossip climate and uses of gossip in the organization can inform members about what is appropriate gossip behavior and what is not.

1. Describe some ways in which employees may be recognized in an organization.
2. Describe the factors that affect involvement of employees with their work.
3. How does communication affect organizational involvement?

Lecture 26: Answers

1. Some ways in which employees may be recognized in an organization are:

   a. *Informal recognition*: Bullis and Back (1989, in Myers, Seibold & Park, 2011) propose that informal recognition by peers and superiors in the form of verbal and non-verbal positive reinforcement contributes to employees' feeling of being recognized in the workplace. This is coherent with the concept of positive strokes introduced by Eric Berne in the 1950s.

   b. *Positive feedback*: Explicit positive feedback by colleagues contributes significantly to employees' feeling of being accepted and valued in the organization. The feedback employees receive from their supervisors (Cusella, 1987; O'Reilly & Anderson, 1980, in Myers, Seibold & Park, 2011) is just as significant as the feedback employees receive from their peers or co-workers (Moreland & Levine, 1982, 2001, in Myers, Seibold & Park, 2011). The mechanism and implications of feedback have been discussed in detail in the lecture on listening.

   c. *Emergent leadership*: Fisher (1986, in Myers, Seibold & Park, 2011) proposes that people who emerge as leaders do so begin with informally being recognized as leaders through their interactions with the group. Group dynamics shape in such a way that the group members start internalizing what the most influential person in the group wants the group to do. The initial assertiveness of a member to be heard by the group eventually starts being perceived as emerging leadership especially if the reasons for this person's assertion match those of the other persons in the group. More regarding the interplay between communication and emergent leadership will be covered in the lecture on leadership.

2. The factors that affect involvement of employees with their work may be described as:

   a. *Social information processing*: Caldwell and O'Reilly (1982, in Myers, Seibold & Park, 2011) propose that talk among employees is crucial to how employees feel about their organization. If the most influential members of the organization talk in terms of 'We' and 'Our organization' instead of 'The organization', the rest follow suit. The converse is also true, i.e. conversation in terms of 'The organization' as opposed to 'Our'

organization creates a chain reaction of distancing behaviour by the rest of the employees in the organization.

b. *Challenge of various activities*: An optimal level of challenge is required to establish and maintain organizational involvement. This has already been discussed in the context of technological change in the previous lecture. If the activities employees engage in are too easy for them, they lose interest. If the organizational tasks and activities are too difficult, they suffer from a sense of failure and get frustrated. Both of these situations are not conducive to facilitating organizational involvement.

c. *Organizational expectations communicated formally or informally*: George & Bettenhausen (1990, in Myers, Seibold & Park, 2011) propose that it is important to inform employees what the organization expects from them. It is also essential for employees to know how what they do fits in with the larger goal of the organization. Unless organizational expectations are communicated to the employees in as clear terms as possible, and reinforced periodically, they tend to lose focus of or interest in the overarching goal of the organization. This becomes especially important when employees are engaged in very challenging tasks.

d. *Social comparison*: Festinger (1954, in Myers, Seibold & Park, 2011) proposes that employees tend to develop perceptions about their own selves in comparison with others in their teams. The Equity Theory of Organizational Justice developed by J. Stacy Adams in 1965 describes referent comparisons people make when evaluating their involvement in and commitment to the organization they work for.

e. *Identification with organization/ Citizenship*: Organizational citizenship refers to complete alignment of employees with the values and identity of the organization. Meyer (2004, in Myers, Seibold & Park, 2011) proposes that a quest for this alignment greatly influences how involved employees feel with the organization they work for.

f. *Benefits of communication networks*: Myers, Seibold & Park (2011) propose that communication networks in terms of formal and informal networks including the official grapevine play a significant role in how involved employees feel with their organizations. Being involved with these formal and informal communication networks helps employees feel connected to their peers, superiors and subordinates in addition to their feeling of being privy to information that is available only through these networks. This, in turn, helps them feel more privileged than other employees who do not have access to people involved in these networks or the information being exchanged through these networks. This then

leads to their feeling of being connected more strongly with their organizations as opposed to their non-networked peers.

3. Myers and Sadaghiani (2010, in Myers, Seibold & Park, 2011) observe the following implications of communication on organizational involvement

    a. The need for positive communication by juniors may feel burdensome to senior members

    b. Lack of informal organizational communication negatively relates to job satisfaction of new members

    c. Low levels of communicative support from supervisors may have a bearing on employee turnover

    d. Communication of information on a 'need-to-know basis' can be uncomfortable for new employees, and may lead to one or both of the above.

    e. *Empowerment* of employees needs to be communicated appropriately and adequately.

<u>Lecture 27: Questions</u>

1. What is the difference between a group and a team?
2. Why do people join groups?
3. Describe the differences between the ways in which Individualists and collectivists view what teams do.

<u>Lecture 27: Answers</u>

1. Wood (1998) defines groups and teams as:

   - *Group*: A group comprises of "…three or more individuals who interact over time, depend on one another, and follow shared rules of conduct to reach a common goal."

   - *Team*: A team is " … a special kind of group that is characterized by different and complimentary resources of members and by a strong sense of collective identity."

   A team is a group with a specific goal with members armed with unique and specific skills coming together only to achieve a pre-decided goal.

2. Argyle (1996, in Cathcart, Samovar & Henman, 1996) and Seiler and Beall (2005) propose that people join groups because:

   - Membership in groups helps them satisfaction their psychological and social needs (e.g. attention, affection, belongingness).

   - Membership in groups helps them with the achievement of larger goals. When people join groups, the volume of work gets divided among the members. Because of this division of labor, the group is able to achieve goals that are much larger and much more complex than individual members can deal with.

   - They are gain access to multiple sources of information and knowledge available through the membership network that might not be available to one individual that can aid the above.

   - As they say, there is safety in numbers. Membership in groups helps meeting the need for security, both social and psychological (Seiler & Beall, 2005).

- Groups help contribute to an individual's sense of positive social identity (Seiler & Beall, 2005): When one joins a group, one starts being identified with the characteristics the group is known by. If the group has a favourable impression or public image, the individual joining the group also partakes in this favourable impression or public image.

- Social facilitation (Argyle, 1996): Membership in groups helps individuals move up the social ladder because of the contacts they make through other members.

3. Beebe and Masterson (2003) and Mole (1995, in Seiler and Beall, 2005) suggest that fundamental differences exist between the way individualist and collectivist societies view small groups. A summary of the differences between the way individualist and collectivist societies view various parameters of group functioning is presented below:

   - *Decision-making ability and prerogative*: Individualist societies believe that individuals make better decisions than groups, and if every individual member of a group makes decisions to the best of his/ her ability keeping in mind the needs of other group members, the group succeeds as a whole. So, the rest of the group members should place their faith in the individual member who is making the decision for the entire group. Collectivist societies, on the other hand, believe that individual inputs from the group members are essential to making a decision that is best suited to the needs of and acceptable by all group members. This results in the assurance that everyone's needs and preferences have been catered to.

   - *Rewards and recognition*: Individualist societies feel that rewards and recognition should be a function of and proportional to individual contribution to the group. This, they feel, reduces the risk of free-loading within the group and ensures fairness of reinforcement especially for members who really work hard. Collectivist societies, on the other hand, feel that membership in the group provides a kind of insurance to individual members that the group will absorb individual shocks and failures and stand by them in time of need. Group members also believe that any work assigned to the group is done best when every member of the group contributes in terms of what they do best to the common goal even though only one person is assigned the responsibility of doing it for the sake of ownership. So, collectivist societies place their faith in shared rewards and recognition, and a shared sense of responsibility for failures by individual members of the group.

   - *Competition and teamwork*: Individualist societies believe that competition is essential to motivating individual members to performing to the best of their abilities. This belief probably stems from the self determination theory of

motivation which proposes that the complexity of challenges in the environment motivates individuals to overcome those challenges by mastering the skills required to deal with those challenges. Collectivist societies, on the other hand, believe that the only way to get things done is to work like a team by aligning comfort zones and sharing resources as the quantum of resources and energy available to individual members is limited, which in turn limits what and how much and how well they can do the work assigned to them. Collectivist societies believe that competition among members within the same team is a hotbed for conflict and hence destructive for the team.

- *Delegation of work*: Individualist societies believe that if each individual does what s/he has been assigned to the best of her/his ability, the team progresses as a whole. Collectivist societies believe that if all members of a team pool in their resources and connect with each other, the sheer size of the collective unit and their belief in being valuable contributors to that collective unit is motivator enough for the team to succeed as a whole.

- *Basis for decision making*: Individualist societies believe that groups and teams are a waste of time because the management of a number of people and their diverse needs, and states of mind, and perspectives, and belief systems, and styles of communicating and working etc. takes up a lot of time and energy, which can be otherwise successfully utilized in other more important activities. Collectivist societies, on the other hand, believe that once the structure of the team is concretized and team members align their comfort zones to work with and connect with each other, the processes requiring interdependence (which is an essential characteristic of group and team work) become smoother and the team functions like a well-oiled machine.

1. Describe the significance of groups in organizations.
2. Based on the purpose of the group, how might groups be organized?
3. Describe the types of defensive groups that one might find in organizations.

Lecture 28: Answers

1. Burkel-Rothfuss (1985) suggests that groups play the following roles:

   - *Information management*: As described earlier, pooling of informational resources, exchange of information, and management of the information collected and organized by the group in a manner that can be used by the group, are essential functions of a group with a focus.

   - *Problem-analysis*: Groups facilitate critical examination and analysis of problems members may face individually or collectively.

   - *Executive*: Groups also play an executive function in terms of establishment and discussion of goals, norms, and procedures in the group, especially when the group is working collectively towards an end.

   - *Gatekeeping*: Groups tend to encourage and regulate participation in the group.

   - *Climate building*: Groups tend to develop their own climates. Group dynamics tend to encourage members to perform to the best of their abilities or facilitate negotiation among group members towards alignment of comfort zones of individual group members, which in turn helps the group achieve the status of a cohesive unit.

2. Depending upon the <u>purpose of the group</u> and how explicit the goals of the group are, groups may be organized as task groups or maintenance groups.

   o *Task groups*: Task groups refer to groups that are organized with the explicit intention of achieving specific goals. Task groups may be further organized as:

      ▪ Standing committees: Standing committees are more permanent, and are constituted to deal with ongoing problems in an organization.

      ▪ Quality circles: Quality circles are groups that are specially constituted to improve quality in organization by getting together

experts that evaluate and provide feedback regarding various aspects of different processes in an organization.

- Ad hoc committees: Ad hoc committees are temporary groups that are constituted for immediate solutions to problems.

- Work teams: Work teams are more permanent, and are constituted to maintain consistency of top quality work in an organization.

- *Personal groups*: Personal groups refer to groups that perform the necessary function of maintenance of stability among group members. Such groups may be further classified as follows:

  - Self help groups: Self help groups refer to support systems that are constituted to help members deal with problems they may be facing. These groups encourage discussion and sharing among members so that individual members are able to relate to and learn from others who may be facing similar problems. For example, alcoholics anonymous.

  - Therapy groups: Therapy groups refer to support systems that are constituted to help and advise groups of members who may be facing similar problems by collectively administering psychological and social therapeutic techniques. In these groups, there is more one way communication between the group leader or therapist and the rest of the members than mutual sharing between group members. For example, various therapy groups.

  - Special interest groups: Special interest groups refer to groups that meet with the exclusive intention of sharing and encouragement to common activities. For example, Meetup.com, Women on Wanderlust (Facebook), etc.

3. <u>Defensive groups</u> are the groups in which "…members offer different solutions to the same problem, causing anxiety within the group." These may be categorized further as:
    - *Homogenized groups* are groups in which members meet and discuss issues but the group has no specific direction. No leader is permitted or permitted. Autonomous behaviour is not acknowledged or at times even attacked by other group members. The members who take the initiative are singled out and at times even discarded by the group. After a while members in these groups start feeling frustrated because their roles are not defined and the group lacks direction.

- *Institutionalized groups* have a pre-determined structure. The status and roles assigned to members are a function of this structure. Every activity of the group is governed by rules determined by the structure of the group. The structure and rules of the group decide the direction of the work of the group, the goals of the group and the leadership of the group. Positive and negative reinforcement to members depends upon the policies and procedures that are decided in coherence with the structure of the group. After a while members start feeling frustrated in this group because the rigid structure of the group limits their autonomous and creative behaviour.

- *Autocratic Groups*: As the term suggests, an autocratic group has a leader who decides everything for the group. The work in the group depends upon the leader's whims and the rewards and punishments for group members are a result of the leader's personal preferences and personal decisions. The direction of the group is decided by the leader or autocrat. Autonomous behaviour of members is treated either favourably or unfavourably according to the personal likes and dislikes of the autocrat. As a result of the above, the members who are not too close to the autocrat feel frustrated as they feel they are being treated unfairly, and the people who are close to the autocrat feel scared of the negative repercussions they might suffer if they deviate from what the leader says.

1. Explain the stages of group development proposed and developed by Tuckman and Jensen.
2. Why do groups exert pressure on group members?
3. Why do individuals conform to the pressure exerted by the group?
4. Describe some factors that influence group effectiveness.

Lecture 29: Answers

1. Tuckman (1965, in Tuckman & Jensen, 2010) presented a review of the literature "… dealing with stages of small group development in an attempt to isolate those concepts common to the various studies and produce a generalizable model of changes in group life over time." He used this review to propose "…a model of developmental stages for various group settings over time, labeled (1) testing and dependence, (2) intragroup conflict, (3) development of group cohesion, and (4) functional role relatedness. The stages of task activity were labeled (1) orientation to task, (2) emotional response to task demands, (3) open exchange of relevant interpretations, and (4) emergence of solutions. An essential correspondence between the group-structure realm and the task-activity realm over time caused Tuckman to summarize the four stages as 'forming,' 'storming,' 'norming,' and 'performing.' "

   Lewis (1980) explained the stages proposed by Tuckman in 1965 as:

   - Stage 1: *Forming*: The primary activity in this stage is to test to which extent members need to depend upon each other and connect with each other. This is the stage at which members mutually decide that they want to connect with each other and establish or 'form' a group.

   - Stage 2: *Storming*: This is the stage at which members try to achieve a balance between their individual identities and behaviours and becoming a part of the group. This is the stage at which members tend to air out their differences with each other and re-define their position within their group. Lewis (1980) describes this as the 'fitting stage.'

   - Stage 3: *Norming*: After the individual members have aired out their differences and connected with each other, they start bonding with each other. At this stage, members decide the norms of group interaction and what should and should not be done within the group.

   - Stage 4: *Performing*: After the details of interdependence have been worked out and the group has acquired and identity of its own, members start

'performing' or working on specific tasks. In order to do that, they identify how their individual skill sets can help the common goal. They then assume responsibility for the task assigned to the group and for their individual contributions to the group activity and work primarily towards solutions for the problem being faced by the group.

Tuckman's proposition generated a lot of interest in the academic community which led to the identification of the significance of the 'death of groups' or termination of the group structure. As a result of feedback from the academic community, in 1977, the original model proposed by Tuckman was amended to include 'adjourning' as a final stage in group development (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977, in Tuckman & Jensen, 2010).

Stage 5: *Adjourning*: This stage refers to the stage at which the members no longer feel the need to be part of the group. This may be as a result of the completion of the goal assigned to the group, or due to individual personality differences, or something else. The adjourning stage is the stage at which individual members assess the situation within the group and move on since there is no reason to stay connected with the group.

2. The reasons for the pressure exerted on group members by groups can be explained by the following theories:

   a. *Group locomotion hypothesis*: Festinger (1950, in Cathcart, Samovar & Henman, 1996) proposes that, "…groups have goals and typically attempt to function in ways designed to allow them to achieve these goals." The momentum generated by the movement of a group towards its goal is usually sufficient to ensure compliance and conformity within the group.

   b. *Social comparison theory*: Festinger (1954, Cathcart, Samovar & Henman, 1996) proposes that, "…most people do not need to consult the views of others to validate their perceptions of physical reality, but social perceptions (comparisons, adjectives) are socially constructed." We see reality as our senses inform us, and we form our opinions regarding the physical environment based on our individual perceptions about this physical environment. But when we move into more complex phenomena like descriptions and comparisons of the physical environment we experience vis-à-vis the physical environment experienced by others, we become dependent on how other people in our environment view their physical environments and our physical environments. It is only through mutual discussion and convincing that we come to an understanding about what we describe on a more complex level as compared to other entities in the environment. This mutual discussion and process of coming to an

understanding by comparing our perceptions to the perceptions of others that forces members to conform to and comply with the direction of the group.

   c. *Balance Theories:* Why disturb the status quo?: Heider (1946, in Cathcart, Samovar & Henman, 1996) and Osgood and Tannenbaum (1955, in Cathcart, Samovar & Henman, 1996) propose that the instability caused by deviation from the group is so unpleasant for the group members that members feel compelled to maintain the status quo and conform to the activities of the group.

3. Some reasons why individuals conform to the pressure exerted on them by their groups are:

   a. *Group locomotion hypothesis*: Festinger (1950, in Cathcart, Samovar & Henman, 1996) proposes that members succumb to the pressure exerted by the group because they feel that their own goals may be able to piggy-back on the fulfillment of the group goals, i.e., if the group is able to achieve its goals, a channel may be opened or resources may be made available for the fulfillment of individual goals of the members of the group.

   b. *Balance theories:* Heider (1946, in Cathcart, Samovar & Henman, 1996) and Osgood and Tannenbaum (1955, in Cathcart, Samovar & Henman, 1996) propose that individual members succumb to the pressure exerted by groups because they feel that it will be easier and much less stressful to stay in line and comply with their group rather than deviating.

   c. *Social exchange view*: Symbiotic relationship with the organization: Homans (1958, in Cathcart, Samovar & Henman, 1996) proposes that members succumb to the pressure exerted by their group because they are in a symbiotic relationship with the group, i.e. they are benefitting just as much individually by participating in the group as the group is through their contribution to the group activities and goal.

   d. *Social judgment theory*: Doesn't affect me either way, might as well go along with it: Sherif, Sherif & Nebergall (1965, in Cathcart, Samovar & Henman, 1996), Snyder (1974, in Cathcart, Samovar & Henman, 1996) and Snyder and Monson (1975, in Cathcart, Samovar & Henman, 1996) propose that some members go along with the activities of the group because their participation or lack thereof does not affect the group anyway, and the existence or non-existence of the goals of their group does not affect them anyway. So they go along with whatever the group is doing just to remain a part of the group.

e. *Deviance discomfort*: Lewis (1980) proposes that sometimes the unpleasantness and discomfort caused by deviating from the group is so high that members go along with whatever the group is doing just to prevent the repercussions as a result of being singled out.

f. *Enforcement*: Lewis (1980) proposes that members follow the norms of a group because a formal policy or rule is put in place by the group to ensure compliance and conformity.

g. *Internalization*: Lewis (1980) also proposes that members may decide to follow the group because they are internally convinced that what the group is right and must be done.

4. Some of the factors that can impact how effectively groups perform as groups, may be categorized as:

- *Diversity consensus dilemma*: In 1993, Argote and McGrath proposed the Diversity Consensus dilemma to explain the challenges to group direction, motivation, and output. The Diversity Consensus Dilemma refers to the tendency for the existence of diversity among group members to make it harder for them to work together, even though the diversity itself expands the skills and perspectives available for problem solving. The dilemma here refers to dialectical tension between the need for unique individual perspective to facilitate creative decision making and the difficulty in coming to a consensus among the team members because of this very diversity of perspectives.

- *Status congruence*: Hunt (1967) proposes that,

  "*Status* is the ranking of a person in a social system, i.e., his standing on a number of different "status factors" — age, ethnicity, pay, occupation, etc. *Status congruence* is based on status factors and can he considered on both an individual and group basis. *Individual status congruence* is the extent to which an individual's standing on one status factor is consistent with his standing on other factors. *Group status congruence* is the extent to which persons within a group have the same standing on corresponding status factors with respect to other people within the group."

  Statuses become congruent when the perception of an individual regarding his/her standing in the group comes close to the perception of this person's perception regarding his/her standing in other groups not related to the group in question.

- *FIRO-B (Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation) Theory*: We have already discussed the meaning of the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations

Orientation Theory. Applied to groups and group communication, this theory postulates that groups whose members have compatible needs are likely to be more effective than groups whose members are more incompatible.

- *Group Size*: Group size is an important determinant of group effectiveness. As a group becomes larger, more and more people are available to divide up the work and accomplish needed tasks. But, other factors, including some of the ones mentioned above, for example, the diversity consensus dilemma, confound the role of the large size of the group in the effectiveness and speed of performance.

- *Group Dynamics*: The interpersonal communication between the group members, their interdependence, their individual activities within and outside the group, and their sentiments towards each other combined with the factors above influence the effectiveness of the group they are part of.

1. What makes the work of groups and teams difficult?
2. Describe the concepts of strong and weak demographic fault lines in the context of interpersonal communication.
3. Describe some types of communication networks in organizations.
4. How might conversational constraints affect compliance among team members from diverse backgrounds?

Lecture 30: Answers

1. Researchers have, over the years, discussed what it is that makes the work of groups and teams even more difficult. Some categories of reasons that are revealed after a careful review of many studies conducted on teams that are constituted globally (consist of members from different geographical regions or nationalities) may be:

   - *Challenges stemming from intercultural diversity*, which leads to significant differences in ideologies and thought processes, which in turn lead to diversity in interpersonal understanding, cohesion, interdependence, and consensus, all of which have discussed in previous lectures.

   - *Language*: A lot of the meaning gets 'lost in translation' as they say. Global teams constituted of multi-lingual members face a major problem with meanings lost in translation. Members try and adapt to each other's linguistic needs and speak in a language that is common to the group. The loss of meaning occurs when native speakers speak with non-native speakers of a language (For example, British co-workers speaking in English with primarily Hindi speaking Indians) or when non-native speakers of a language interact with each other in a foreign language (For example, a conversation in English among primarily Hindi speaking Indians).

   - *Technology*: With the fast pace of technology these days, many times the diversity in the comfort levels with communication technology results in confusion among team members, especially between technophiles and technophobes. This results in the technophiles speaking in one language and the technophobes interpreting it in another – metaphorically speaking. This, in turn, leads to a lot of intra-team conflict, especially if the technophiles and technophobes share interdependent tasks or roles.

2. In 1998, Dora C. Lau and J. Keith Murnighan introduced the concept of demographic fault-lines as a natural outcome of diversity, and discussed their impact on team dynamics in organizations.

A group with *strong fault-lines* refers to a group in which members identify more with sub-groups than with their team. This poses problems in terms of team cohesiveness, team effort, and 'We' communication. This kind of group is prone to a lot of conflict, less satisfaction among team members and a decreased sense of security within the membership of the group.

A group with *weak fault-lines* refers to a group in which members identify more with the team than with subgroups. They are there as members of the team than as members of a specific community or as members sharing sets of common interests. Groups with weak fault-lines face lesser conflicts and facilitate more satisfaction and increased sense of security among members by virtue of their membership within the group.

3. Gamble and Gamble (2002) explain the communication networks proposed by Rogers and Kincaid in 1981 in the context of their applicability to team effectiveness.

- Cliques: Cliques are networks in which members are so well connected with each other that they share "...majority of their contacts with each other."

- Liaisons: Liaisons are connectors of cliques. They are usually not individual members of any one group or clique but they help members of one group connect with members of another group. There are pros and cons to this kind of membership. Liaisons feel connected to the groups they serve as connections for, but because they are not involved members of any one group, they do not feel frustrated with group pressures or the phase of inertia that the group may sometimes go through.

- Bridges: Bridges are the primary hubs of communication activity within and outside their groups. They are the ones who most of the members within the group are connected to. They may also be the persons who are able to connect easily with persons from other groups. persons in groups who have a predominant number of intragroup contacts and who also communicate with one or more persons in another group or clique.

- Isolates: Isolates are, as the term suggests, members who are more reserved within the group. They do not feel connected enough to other members to be able to contribute wholeheartedly to the activities of the group. Such members may experience a passive sense of disgruntlement as a result of or as a contributor to this strained relationship with other group members.

4. Kim and Wilson (1994, in Canary, Cody & Manusov, 2000) describe how <u>conversational constraints</u> can affect compliance among team members from diverse backgrounds.

- *Clarity and explicitness of intention when making verbal requests*: Explicitness is culture specific, as discussed in the lecture on intercultural communication. While explicitness may be expected and encouraged in one culture, it may be considered crude and disturbing, and hence discouraged in another. This difference in ideologies may lead to confusions in expectations of explicitness or sub-textuality which may pose some difficulty regarding the choice of style when trying to convince team members.

- *Minimization of imposition: Requests vs. demands/orders*: Statements that are considered requests in one culture may be considered as orders in another. So, drafting common statements that are suitable to the different cultures coming together through teams may become quite challenging.

- *Consideration for the other's feelings*: Especially while dealing with people from different cultures, it becomes very difficult to design common communication strategies that cater to individual comfort levels of different team members.

- *Risking disapproval for the self*: In addition to catering to the feelings of other team members, one also needs to ensure that one's own position is not challenged. But, while dealing with people from different cultures, the persuader needs to take some risk of being misunderstood and not being considered worthy of a response or being rebuked for making such a request etc. The quantum and quality of risk one should take and one ends up taking become reasons for concern in such diverse teams.