



**Современный
Гуманитарный
Университет**

Дистанционное образование

Рабочий учебник

Фамилия, имя, отчество _____

Факультет _____

Номер контракта _____

**ОРГАНИЗАЦИОННОЕ ПОВЕДЕНИЕ
НА АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ**

ЮНИТА 5

**ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR
UNIT 5**

Foundations of Group Behavior

Communication and Group Decision Making

МОСКВА 1999

ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

Unit 1. Foundations of Organizational Behavior.

Unit 2. Organizational Behavior and Culture.

Unit 3. Perception. Perception and Individual Decision Making.

Unit 4. Basic Motivation Concepts. Communication: A Process View.

Unit 5. Foundations of Group Behavior. Communication and Group Decision Making.

Unit 6. Leadership and Power.

UNIT 5

Foundations of Group Behavior Communication and Group Decision Making

This unit is dedicated to so important subject as organizational behavior. It consists of methodological section (test-training, role-play, situations for discussion) and file of materials for study.

For the students of the Modern University for the Humanities

Юнита соответствует профессиональной образовательной программе № 2

ОГЛАВЛЕНИЕ

ТЕМАТИЧЕСКИЙ ПЛАН	5
ЛИТЕРАТУРА	6
THEMATICAL REVIEW	7
I. Foundations of Group Behavior	7
1. Defining and Classifying Groups	7
2. Why Do People Join Groups	8
2.1. Security	8
2.2. Status	8
2.3. Affiliation	9
2.4. Power	9
2.5. Goal Achievement	9
3. Stages of Group Development	10
3.1. The Five-Stage Model	10
3.2. The Punctuated-Equilibrium Model	11
4. Toward Explaining Work Group Behavior	13
4.1. Organization Strategy	13
4.2. Authority Structures	13
4.3. Formal Regulations	14
4.4. Organizational Resources	14
4.5. Personnel Selection Process	14
4.6. Performance Evaluation and Reward System	14
4.7. Organizational Culture	15
4.8. Physical Work Setting	15
5. Group Member Resources	15
5.1. Abilities	16
5.2. Personality Characteristics	16
6. Group Structure	17
6.1. Formal Leadership	17
6.2. Roles	17
6.3. Norms	19
6.4. Status	23
6.5. Size	26
6.6. Composition	26
7. Group Processes	27
8. Group Tasks	28
9. Should Management Seek Cohesive Work Groups?	29
9.1. Determinants of Cohesiveness	29
9.2. Effects of Cohesiveness on Group Productivity	31
10. Implications for Performance and Satisfaction	32
10.1. Performance	32
10.2. Satisfaction	34

II. Communication and Group Decision Making	34
1. Functions of Communication	34
2. The Communication Process	35
2.1. A Communication Model	35
2.2. Sources of Distortion	37
2.3. Communication Apprehension	37
3. Communication Fundamentals	38
3.1. Direction of Communication	38
3.2. Formal vs Informal Networks	39
3.3. Nonverbal Communications	41
3.4. Choice of Communication Channel	43
3.5. Barriers to Effective Communication	43
4. Key Communication Skills	45
4.1. Active Listening Skills	45
4.2. Feedback Skills	48
4.3. Groups vs the Individual	50
4.4. Groupthink and Groupshift	52
4.5. Group Decision-Making Techniques	55
5. Implications for Performance and Satisfaction	58
6. Communication and Culture	59
6.1. What Is a Subculture?	60
6.2. Reference Group Communication	60
6.3. Regional Cultures and Communication	63
6.4. Rural Cultures and Communication	64
6.5. Urban Cultures and Communication	65
6.6. Socioeconomic Cultures and Communication	66
6.7. In-Group and Out-Group Communication	67
6.8. Solidarity	68
6.9. Countercultural Communication	69
6.10. Poverty Cultures and Communication	70
6.11. The Process of Intergroup Communication	71
6.12. Developing Intercultural Communication Skills with Subcultures	74
Course Tasks	75
ГЛОССАРИЙ *	

* Глоссарий расположен в середине учебного пособия и предназначен для самостоятельного заучивания новых понятий.

ТЕМАТИЧЕСКИЙ ПЛАН

Foundations of group behavior. Stages of group development. External conditions imposed on the group. Group member resources. Group structure. Roles. Norms. Conformity. Status. Size. Group processes. Group tasks. Implications for performance and satisfaction.

Communication and group decision making. Functions of communication. Communication fundamentals. Key communication skills. Intercultural communication and communicator credibility.

ЛИТЕРАТУРА

Базовый учебник

1. Robbins S. Organizational Behavior. Prentice Hall. Any edition.

Дополнительная литература

2. Carley H. Dodd Dynamics of Intercultural Communication. Wm. C. Brown Publishers; Third edition.
3. Anita Taylor, Arthur C. Meyer, Teresa Rosequant, B. Thomas Samples Communicating. Prentice Hall. Sixth edition.

Примечание. Знаком (*) отмечены работы, на основе которых составлен научный обзор.

I. FOUNDATIONS OF GROUP BEHAVIOR

1. Defining and Classifying Groups

A **group** is defined as two or more individuals, interacting and interdependent, who have come together to achieve particular objectives. Groups can be either formal or informal. By **formal groups**, we mean those defined by the organization's structure, with designated work assignments establishing tasks. In formal groups, the behaviors that one should engage in are stipulated by and directed toward organizational goals. The three members making up an airline flight crew are an example of a formal group. In contrast, **informal groups** are alliances that are neither formally structured nor organizationally determined. These groups are natural formations in the work environment that appear in response to the need for social contact.

It is possible to subclassify groups as command, task, interest, or friendship groups. Command and task groups are dictated by the formal organization, whereas interest and friendship groups are informal alliances.

A **command group** is determined by the organization chart. It is composed of the subordinates who report directly to a given manager. An elementary school principal and her twelve teachers form a command group, as do the director of postal audits and his five inspectors.

Task Groups, also organizationally determined, represent those working together to complete a job task. However, a task group's boundaries are not limited to its immediate hierarchical superior. It can cross command relationships. For instance, if a college student is accused of a campus crime, it may require communication and coordination among the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Dean of Students, the Registrar, the Director of Security, and the student's advisor. Such a formation would constitute a task group. It should be noted that all command groups are also task groups, but because task groups can cut across the organization, the reverse need not be true.

People who may or may not be aligned into common command or task groups may affiliate to attain a specific objective with which each is concerned. This is an **interest group**. Employees who band together to have their vacation schedule altered, to support a peer who has been fired, or to seek increased fringe benefits represent the formation of a united body to further their common interest.

Groups often develop because the individual members have one or more common characteristics. We call these formations **friendship groups**. Social

* Жирным шрифтом выделены новые понятия, которые необходимо усвоить, знание этих понятий будет проверяться при тестировании.

alliances, which frequently extend outside the work situation, can be based on similar age, support for “Big Red” Nebraska football, having attended the same college, or the holding of similar political views, to name just a few such characteristics.

Informal groups provide a very important service by satisfying their members’ social needs. Because of interactions that result from the close proximity of work stations or task interactions, we find workers playing golf together, riding to and from work together, lunching together, and spending their breaks around the water cooler together. We must recognize that these types of interactions among individuals, even though informal, deeply affect their behavior and performance.

2. Why Do People Join Groups?

There is no single reason why individuals join groups. Since most people belong to a number of groups, it is obvious that different groups provide different benefits to their members. The most popular reasons for joining a group are related to our needs for security, status, self-esteem, affiliation power, and goal achievement.

2.1. Security

“There’s strength in numbers.” By joining a group, we can reduce the insecurity of “standing alone”—we feel stronger, have fewer self-doubts, and are more resistant to threats. New employees are particularly vulnerable to a sense of isolation, and turn to the group for guidance and support. However, whether we are talking about new employees or those with years on the job, we can state that few individuals like to stand alone. We get reassurance from interacting with others and being part of a group. This often explains the appeal of unions—if management creates an environment in which employees feel insecure, they are likely to turn to unionization to reduce their feelings of insecurity.

2.2. Status

“I’m a member of our company’s running team. Last month, at the National Corporate Relays, we won the national championship. Didn’t you see our picture in the company newsletter?” These comments demonstrate the role that a group can play in giving prestige. Inclusion in a group viewed as important by others provides recognition and status for its members.

2.3. Affiliation

“I’m independently wealthy, but I wouldn’t give up my job. Why? Because I really like the people I work with!” This quote, from a \$45,000-a-year purchasing agent who inherited several million dollars’ worth of real estate, verifies that groups can fulfill our social needs. People enjoy the regular interaction that comes with group membership. For many people, these on-the-job interactions are their primary source for fulfilling their needs for affiliation. For almost all people, work groups significantly contribute to fulfilling their needs for friendships and social relations.

2.4. Power

“I tried for two years to get the plant management to increase the number of restrooms for women on the production floor to the same number as the men have. It was like talking to a wall. But I got about fifteen other women who were production employees together and we jointly presented our demands to management. The construction crews were in here adding restrooms for us within ten days!”

This episode demonstrates that one of the appealing aspects of groups is that they represent power. What often cannot be achieved individually becomes possible through group action. Of course, this power is not always sought to make demands on others. It may be desired merely as a countermeasure. In order to protect themselves from unreasonable demands by management, individuals may align with others.

Informal groups additionally provide opportunities for individuals to exercise power over others. For individuals who desire to influence others, groups can offer power without a formal position of authority in the organization. As a group leader, you may be able to make requests of group members and obtain compliance without any of the responsibilities that traditionally go with formal managerial positions. So, for people with a high power need, groups can be a vehicle for fulfillment.

2.5. Goal Achievement

“I’m part of a three-person team studying how we can cut our company transportation costs. They’ve been going up at over thirty percent a year for several years now, so the corporate controller assigned representatives from cost accounting, shipping, and marketing to study the problem and make recommendations.”

This task group was created to achieve a goal that would be considerably more difficult if pursued by a single person. There are times when it takes more

than one person to accomplish a particular task—there is a need to pool talents, knowledge, or power in order to get a job completed. In such instances, management will rely on the use of a formal group.

3. Stages of Group Development

For twenty years or more, we thought that most groups followed a specific sequence in their evolution and that we knew what that sequence was. But we were wrong. Recent research indicates that there is no standardized pattern of group development. In this section, we'll review the better-known five-stage model of group development, and then the recently discovered punctuated-equilibrium model.

3.1. The Five-Stage Model

From the mid-1960s, it was believed that groups passed through a standard sequence of five stages. These five stages have been labeled forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.

The first stage, **forming**, is characterized by a great deal of uncertainty about the group's purpose, structure, and leadership. Members are "testing the waters" to determine what types of behavior are acceptable. This stage is complete when members have begun to think of themselves as part of a group.

The **storming** stage is one of intragroup conflict. Members accept the existence of the group, but there is resistance to the constraints that the group imposes on individuality. Further, there is conflict over who will control the group. When this stage is complete, there will be a relatively clear hierarchy of leadership within the group.

The third stage is one in which close relationships develop and the group demonstrates cohesiveness. There is now a strong sense of group identity and camaraderie. This **norming** stage is complete when the group structure solidifies and the group has assimilated a common set of expectations of what defines correct member behavior.

The fourth stage is **performing**. The structure at this point is fully functional and accepted. Group energy has moved from getting to know and understand each other to performing the task at hand.

For permanent work groups, performing is the last stage in their development. However, for temporary committees, task forces, teams, and similar groups that have a limited task to perform, there is an **adjourning** stage. In this stage, the group prepares for its disbandment. High task performance is no longer the group's top priority. Instead, attention is directed toward wrapping up activities. Responses of group members vary in this stage. Some are upbeat, basking in the group's accomplishments. Others may be

depressed over the loss of camaraderie and friendships gained during the work group's life.

Many interpreters of the five-stage model have assumed that a group becomes more effective as it progresses through the first four stages. While this assumption may be generally true, what makes a group effective is more complex than this model acknowledges. Under some conditions, high levels of conflict are conducive to high group performance. So we might expect to find situations where groups in Stage II outperform those in Stages III or IV. Similarly, groups do not always proceed clearly from one stage to the next. Sometimes, in fact, several stages go on simultaneously, as when groups are storming and performing at the same time. Groups even occasionally regress to previous stages. Therefore, even the strongest proponents of this model do not assume that all groups follow their five-stage process precisely or that Stage IV is always the most preferable.

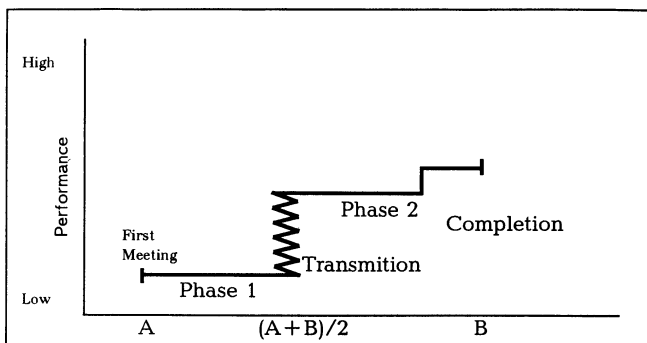
3.2. The Punctuated-Equilibrium Model

Studies of more than a dozen field and laboratory task force groups confirmed that groups don't develop in a universal sequence of stages. But the timing of when groups form and change the way they work is highly consistent. Specifically, it's been found that (1) the first meeting sets the group's direction; (2) the first phase of group activity is one of inertia; (3) a transition takes place at the end of the first phase, which occurs exactly when the group has used up half its allotted time; (4) the transition initiates major changes; (5) a second phase of inertia follows the transition; and (6) the group's last meeting is characterized by markedly accelerated activity. These findings are shown in Figure 1.

The first meeting sets the group's direction. A framework of behavioral patterns and assumptions through which the group will approach its project emerges in this first meeting. These lasting patterns can appear as early as the first few seconds of the group's life.

Once set the group's direction becomes "written in stone" and is unlikely to be reexamined throughout the first half of the group's life. This is a period of inertia—that is, the group tends to stand still or become locken into a fixed course of action. Even if it gains new insights that challenge initial patterns and assumptions, the group is incapable of acting on these new insights in Phase 1.

Figure 1.



One of the more interesting discoveries made in these studies was that each group experienced its transition at the same point in its calendar — precisely halfway between its first meeting and its official deadline—despite the fact that some groups spent as little as an hour on their project while others spent six months. It was as if the groups universally experienced a midlife crisis at this point. The midpoint appears to work like an alarm clock heightening members' awareness that their time is limited and that they need to “get moving.”

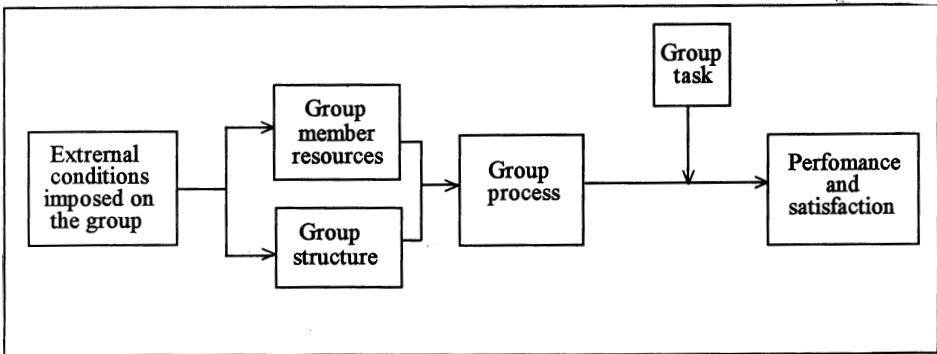
This transition ends Phase 1 and is characterized by a concentrated burst of changes, dropping of old patterns, and adoption of new perspectives. The transition sets a revised direction for Phase 2.

Phase 2 is a new equilibrium or period of inertia. In this phase, the group executes plans created during the transition period.

The group's last meeting is characterized by a final burst of activity to finish its work.

We can use this model to describe some of your experiences with student teams created for doing group term projects. At the first meeting, a basic timetable is established. Members size up one another. They agree they have nine weeks to do their project. The instructor's requirements are discussed and debated. From that point, the group meets regularly to carry out its activities. About four or five weeks into the project, however, problems are confronted. Criticism begins to be taken seriously. Discussion becomes more open. The group reassesses where it's been and aggressively moves to make necessary changes. If the right changes are made, the next four or five weeks find the group developing a first-rate project. The group's last meeting, which will probably occur just before the project is due, lasts longer than the others. In it, all final issues are discussed and details resolved.

Figure 2.



4. Toward Explaining Work Group Behavior

To begin understanding the behavior of a work group, you need to view it as a subsystem embedded in a larger system. That is, when we realize that groups are a subset of a larger organization system, we can extract part of the explanation of the group's behavior from an explanation of the organization to which it belongs.

4.1. Organization Strategy

An organization has a strategy that defines what business it is in or wants to be in, and the kind of organization it is or wants to be. It is set by top management, often in collaboration with lower-level managers. Strategy outlines the organization's goals and the means for attaining these goals. It might, for example, direct the organization toward reducing costs, improving quality, expanding market share, or shrinking the size of its overall operations. The strategy that an organization is pursuing, at any given time, will influence the power of various work groups, which, in turn, will determine the resources that the organization's top management is willing to allocate to it for performing its tasks. To illustrate, an organization that is retrenching through selling off or closing down major parts of its business is going to have work groups with a shrinking resource base, increased member anxiety, and the potential for heightened intragroup conflict.

4.2. Authority Structures

Organizations have authority structures that define who reports to whom, who makes decisions, and what decisions individuals or groups are empowered to make. This structure typically determines where a given work group is placed

in the organization's hierarchy, the formal leader of the group, and formal relationships between groups. So while a work group might be led by someone who emerges informally from within the group, the formally designated leader — appointed by management — has authority that others in the group don't have.

4.3. Formal Regulations

Organizations create rules, procedures, policies, and other forms of regulations to standardize employee behavior. Because McDonald's has standard operating procedures for taking orders, cooking hamburgers, and filling soda containers, the discretion of work group members to set independent standards of behavior is severely limited. The more formal regulations that the organization imposes on all its employees, the more the behavior of work group members will be consistent and predictable.

4.4. Organizational Resources

Some organizations are large and profitable, with an abundance of resources. Their employees, for instance, will have modern, high-quality tools and equipment to do their jobs. Other organizations aren't as fortunate. When organizations have limited resources, so do their work groups.

What a group actually accomplishes is, to a large degree, determined by what it is capable of accomplishing. The presence or absence of resources such as money, time, raw materials, and equipment — which are allocated to the group by the organization — have a large bearing on the group's behavior.

4.5. Personnel Selection Process

Members of any work group are, first, members of the organization of which the group is a part. Members of a cost-reduction task force at Boeing first had to be hired as employees of the company. So the criteria that an organization uses in its selection process will determine the kinds of people that will be in its work groups.

The selection factor becomes even more critical if a large segment of the organization's employees are unionized. In such cases, the terms of the union's collective bargaining contract will play a key part in specifying who is hired as well as acceptable and unacceptable behaviors of work group members.

4.6. Performance Evaluation and Reward System

Another organization-wide variable that affects all employees is the performance evaluation and reward system. Does the organization provide

employees with challenging, specific performance objectives? Does the organization reward the accomplishment of individual or group objectives? Since work groups are part of the larger organizational system, group members' behavior will be influenced by how the organization evaluates performance and what behaviors are rewarded.

4.7. Organizational Culture

Every organization has an unwritten culture that defines for employees standards of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. After a few months, most employees understand their organization's culture. They know things like how to dress for work, whether rules are rigidly enforced, what kinds of questionable behaviors are sure to get them into trouble and which are likely to be overlooked, the importance of honesty and integrity, and the like. While many organizations have subcultures — often created around work groups with an additional or modified set of standards, they still have a dominant culture that conveys to all employees those values the organization holds dearest. Members of work groups have to accept the standards implied in the organization's dominant culture if they are to remain in good standing.

4.8. Physical Work Setting

Finally, we propose that the physical work setting that is imposed on the group by external parties has an important bearing on work group behavior. Architects, industrial engineers, and office designers make decisions regarding the size and physical layout of an employee's work space, the arrangement of equipment, illumination levels, and the need for acoustics to cut down on noise distractions. These create both barriers and opportunities for work group interaction. It's obviously a lot easier for employees to talk or "goof off" if their work stations are close together, there are no physical barriers between them, and their supervisor is in an enclosed office fifty yards away.

5. Group Member Resources

A group's potential level of performance is, to a large extent, dependent on the resources that its members individually bring to the group. In this section, we want to look at two resources that have received the greatest amount of attention: abilities and personality characteristics.

5.1. Abilities

Part of a group's performance can be predicted by assessing the task-relevant and intellectual abilities of its individual members. Sure, it's true that we occasionally read about the athletic team composed of mediocre players who, because of excellent coaching, determination, and precision teamwork, beat a far more talented group of players. But such cases make the news precisely because they represent an aberration. As the old saying goes, "The race doesn't always go to the swiftest nor the battle to the strongest, but that's the way to bet." A group's performance is not merely the summation of its individual members' abilities. However, these abilities set parameters for what members can do and how effectively they will perform in a group.

What predictions can we make regarding ability and group performance? First, evidence indicates that individuals who hold crucial abilities for attaining the group's task tend to be more involved in group activity, generally contribute more, are more likely to emerge as the group leaders, and are more satisfied if their talents are effectively utilized by the group. Second, intellectual ability and task-relevant ability have both been found to be related to overall group performance. However, the correlation is not particularly high, suggesting that other factors, such as the size of the group, the type of tasks being performed, the actions of its leader, and level of conflict within the group, also influence performance.

5.2. Personality Characteristics

There has been a great deal of research on the relationship between personality traits and group attitudes and behavior. The general conclusion is that attributes that tend to have a positive connotation in our culture tend to be positively related to group productivity, morale, and cohesiveness. These include traits such as sociability, self-reliance, and independence. In contrast, negatively evaluated characteristics such as authoritarianism, dominance and unconventionality tend to be negatively related to the dependent variables. These personality traits affect group performance by strongly influencing how the individual will interact with other group members.

Is any one personality characteristic a good predictor of group behavior? The answer to that question is "No." The magnitude of the effect of any single characteristic is small, but taking personality characteristics together, the consequences for group behavior are of major significance. We can conclude, therefore, that personality characteristics of group members play an important part in determining behavior in groups.

6. Group Structure

Work groups are not unorganized mobs. They have a structure that shapes the behavior of members and makes it possible to explain and predict a large portion of individual behavior within the group as well as the performance of the group itself. What are some of these structural variables? They include formal leadership, roles, norms, group status, group size and composition of the group.

6.1. Formal Leadership

Almost every work group has a formal leader. He or she is typically identified by titles such as unit or department manager, supervisor, foreman, project leader, task force head, or committee chair. This leader can play an important part in the group's success. As a sort of "coming attraction," let's highlight a few of the things we know about leadership and group performance.

6.2. Roles

Shakespeare said, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." Using the same metaphor, all group members are actors, each playing a role. By this term, we mean a set of expected behavior patterns attributed to someone occupying a given position in a social unit. The understanding of role behavior would be dramatically simplified if each of us chose one role and "played it out" regularly and consistently. Unfortunately, we are required to play a number of diverse roles, both on and off our jobs. One of the tasks in understanding behavior is grasping the role that a person is currently playing.

ROLE IDENTITY There are certain attitudes and actual behaviors consistent with a role, and they create the **role identity**. People have the ability to shift roles rapidly when they recognize that the situation and its demands clearly require major changes. For instance, when union stewards were promoted to supervisory positions, it was found that their attitudes changed from pro-union to pro-management within a few months of their promotion. When these promotions had to be rescinded later because of economic difficulties in the firm, it was found that the demoted supervisors had once again adopted their pro-union attitudes.

ROLE PERCEPTION One's view of how one is supposed to act in a given situation is a **role perception**. Based on an interpretation of how we believe we are supposed to behave, we engage in certain types of behavior.

Where do we get these perceptions? We get them from stimuli all around us—friends, books, movies, television. Undoubtedly many of today's young surgeons formed their role identities from their perception of Hawkeye on

*M*A*S*H*. It also seems reasonable that many current law enforcement officers learned their roles from reading Joseph Wambaugh novels or watching Dirty Harry movies. Tomorrow's lawyers will certainly be influenced by *L.A. Law*. Of course, the primary reason that apprenticeship programs exist in many trades and professions is to allow beginners to watch an "expert," so that they can learn to act as they are supposed to.

ROLE EXPECTATIONS **Role expectations** are defined as how others believe you should act in a given situation. How you behave is determined to a large extent by the role defined in the context in which you are acting. The role of a United States senator is viewed as having propriety and dignity, whereas a football coach is seen as aggressive, dynamic, and inspiring to his players. In the same context, we might be surprised to learn that the neighborhood priest moonlights during the week as a bartender, because our role expectations of priests and bartenders tend to be considerably different.

When role expectations are concentrated into generalized categories, we have role stereotypes.

During the last four decades, we have seen a major change in the general population's role stereotypes of females. In the 1950s, a woman's role was to stay home, take care of the house, raise children, and generally care for her husband. Today, most of us no longer hold this stereotype. Boys can play with Barbie Dolls and girls can play with G.I. Joes. Girls can aspire to be doctors, lawyers, and astronauts as well as to the more traditional female careers of nurse, schoolteacher, secretary, and housewife. In other words, many of us have changed our role expectations of women, and, similarly, many women carry new role perceptions.

In the workplace, it can be helpful to look at the topic of role expectations through the perspective of the psychological contract. There is an unwritten agreement that exists between employees and their employer.

This psychological contract sets out mutual expectations—what management expects from workers, and vice versa. In effect, this contract defines the behavioral expectations that go with every role. Management is expected to treat employees justly, provide acceptable working conditions, clearly communicate what is a fair day's work, and give feedback on how well the employee is doing. Employees are expected to respond by demonstrating a good attitude, following directions, and showing loyalty to the organization.

What happens when role expectations as implied in the psychological contract are not met? If management is derelict in keeping up its part of the bargain, we can expect negative repercussions on employee performance and satisfaction. When employees fail to live up to expectations, the result is usually some form of disciplinary action up to and including firing.

The psychological contract should be recognized as a "powerful determiner of behavior in organizations." It points out the importance of accurately communicating role expectations.

ROLE CONFLICT When an individual is confronted by divergent role expectations, the result is **role conflict**. It exists when an individual finds that compliance with one role requirement may make more difficult the compliance with another. At the extreme, it would include situations in which two or more role expectations are mutually contradictory.

For example, Bill Patterson had to perform several roles which included several role conflicts—for instance, Bill's attempt to reconcile the expectations placed on him as a husband and father with those placed on him as an executive with Electrical Industries. The former emphasizes stability and concern for the desire of his wife and children to remain in Phoenix. Electrical Industries, on the other hand, expects its employees to be responsive to the needs and requirements of the company. Although it might be in Bill's financial and career interests to accept a relocation, the conflict comes down to choosing between family and career role expectations.

The issue of ethics in business demonstrates a well-publicized area of role conflict among corporate executives. For example, one study found that fifty-seven percent of *Harvard Business Review* readers had experienced the dilemma of having to choose between what was profitable for their firms and what was ethical.

6.3. Norms

Did you ever notice that golfers don't speak while their partners are putting on the green or that employees don't criticize their bosses in public? This is because of "**norms**."

All groups have established norms; that is, acceptable standards of behavior that are shared by the group's members. Norms tell members what they ought and ought not to do under certain circumstances. From an individual's standpoint, they tell what is expected of you in certain situations. When agreed to and accepted by the group, norms act as a means of influencing the behavior of group members with a minimum of external controls. Norms differ among groups, communities, and societies, but they all have them.

Formalized norms are written up in organizational manuals setting out rules and procedures for employees to follow. By far, the majority of norms in organizations are informal. You do not need someone to tell you that throwing paper airplanes or engaging in prolonged gossip sessions at the water cooler are unacceptable behaviors when the "big boss from New York" is touring the office. Similarly, we all know that when we are in an employment interview discussing what we did not like about our previous job, there are certain things we should not talk about (difficulty in getting along with co-workers or our supervisor), while it is very appropriate to talk about other things (inadequate opportunities for advancement or unimportant and meaningless work). Evidence

suggests that even high school students recognize that in such interviews certain answers are more socially desirable than others.

COMMON CLASSES OF NORMS A work group's norms are like an individual's fingerprints—each is unique. Yet there are still some common classes of norms that appear in most work groups.

Probably the most widespread norms deal with **performance-related processes**. Work groups typically provide their members with explicit cues of how hard they should work, how to get the job done, their level of output appropriate communication channels, and the like. These norms are extremely powerful in affecting an individual employee's performance—they are capable of significantly modifying a performance prediction that was based solely on the employee's ability and level of personal motivation.

A second category of norms encompasses **appearance factors**. This includes things like appropriate dress, loyalty to the work group or organization, when to look busy, and when it's acceptable to goof off. Some organizations have formal dress codes. However, even in their absence, norms frequently develop to dictate the kind of clothing that should be worn to work. Presenting the appearance of loyalty is important in many work groups and organizations.

Another class of norms concerns **informal social arrangements**. These norms come from informal work groups and primarily regulate social interactions within the group. With whom group members eat lunch, friendships on and off the job, social games, and the like are influenced by these norms.

A final category of norms relates to **allocation of resources**. These norms can originate in the group or in the organization and cover things like pay assignment of difficult jobs, and allocation of new tools and equipment. In some organizations, for example, new personal computers are distributed equally to all groups. So every department might get five, regardless of the number of people in the department or their need for the computers. In another organization, equipment is allocated to those groups who can make the best use of it. So some departments might get twenty computers and some none. These resource allocation norms can have a direct impact on employee satisfaction and an indirect effect on group performance.

THE "HOW AND "WHY" OF NORMS How do norms develop? Why are they enforced? A review of the research allows us to answer these questions.

Norms typically develop gradually as group members learn what behaviors are necessary for the group to function effectively. Of course, critical events in the group might short-circuit the process and act quickly to solidify new norms. Most norms develop in one or more of the following four ways: (1) *Explicit statements made by a group member* — often the group's supervisor or a powerful member. The group leader might, for instance, specifically say that no personal phone calls are allowed during working hours or that coffee breaks are to be kept to ten minutes. (2) *Critical events in the group's history*. These

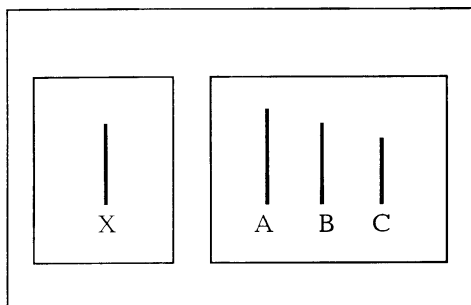
set important precedents. A bystander is injured while standing too close to a machine and, from that point on, members of the work group regularly monitor each other to ensure that no one other than the operator gets within five feet of any machine. (3) *Primacy*. The first behavior pattern that emerges in a group frequently sets group expectations. Friendship groups of students often stake out seats near each other on the first day of class and become perturbed if an outsider takes “their” seats in a later class. (4) *Carry-over behaviors from past situations*. Group members bring expectations with them from other groups of which they have been members. This can explain why work groups typically prefer to add new members who are similar to current ones in background and experience. This is likely to increase the probability that the expectations they bring are consistent with those already held by the group.

But groups do not establish or enforce norms for every conceivable situation. The norms that the group will enforce tend to be those that are important to it. But what makes a norm important? (1) *If it facilitates the group's survival*. Groups don't like to fail, so they look to enforce those norms that increase their chances for success. This means that they will try to protect themselves from interference from other groups or individuals. (2) *If it increases the predictability of group members' behaviors*. Norms that increase predictability enable group members to anticipate each other's actions and to prepare appropriate responses. (3) *If it reduces embarrassing interpersonal problems for group members*. Norms are important if they ensure the satisfaction of their members and prevent as much interpersonal discomfort as possible. (4) *If it allows members to express the central values of the group and clarify what is distinctive about the group's identity*. Norms that encourage expression of the group's values and distinctive identity help to solidify and maintain the group.

CONFORMITY As a member of a group, you desire acceptance by the group. Because of your desire for acceptance, you are susceptible to conforming to the group's norms. There is considerable evidence that groups can place strong pressures on individual members to change their attitudes and behaviors to conform to the group's standard.

Do individuals conform to the pressures of all the groups they belong to? Obviously not, because people belong to many groups and their norms vary. In some cases, they may even have contradictory norms. So what do people do? They conform to the important groups to which they belong or hope to belong. The important groups have been referred to as *reference groups* and are characterized as ones where the person is aware of the others; the person defines himself or herself as a member, or would like to be a member; and the person feels that the group members are significant to him or her. The implication, then, is that *all* groups do not impose equal conformity pressures on their members.

FIGURE 3. Examples of Cards Used in Asch Study



The impact that group pressures for **conformity** can have on an individual member's judgment and attitudes was demonstrated in the now-classic studies by Solomon Asch. Asch made up groups of seven or eight people, who sat in a classroom and were asked to compare two cards held by the experimenter. One card had one line, the other had three lines of varying length. As shown in Figure 3, one of the lines on the three-line card was identical to the line on the one-line card. Also as shown in Figure 3, the difference in line length was quite obvious; under ordinary conditions, subjects made fewer than one percent errors. The object was to announce aloud which of the three lines matched the single line. But what happens if the members in the group begin to give incorrect answers? Will the pressures to conform result in an unsuspecting subject (USS) altering his or her answer to align with the others? That was what Asch wanted to know. So he arranged the group so that only the USS was unaware that the experiment was "fixed." The seating was prearranged: the USS was placed so as to be the last to announce his or her decision.

The experiment began with several sets of matching exercises. All the subjects give the right answers. On the third set, however, the first subject gives an obviously wrong answer—for example, saying "C" in Figure 3. The next subject gives the same wrong answer, and so do the others until it gets to the unknowing subject. He knows "B" is the same as "X," yet everyone has said "C." The decision confronting the USS is this: Do you publicly state a perception that differs from the preannounced position of the others in your group? Or do you give an answer that you strongly believe is incorrect in order to have your response agree with that of the other group members?

The results obtained by Asch demonstrated that over many experiments and many trials, subjects conformed in about thirty-five percent of the trials; that is, the subjects gave answers that they knew were wrong but that were consistent with the replies of other group members.

What can we conclude from this study? The results suggest that there are group norms that press us toward conformity. We desire to be one of the group and avoid being visibly different. We can generalize further to say that when an individual's opinion of objective data differs significantly from that of others in the group, he or she is likely to feel extensive pressure to align his or her opinions to conform with that of the others.

6.4. Status

While teaching a college course on adolescence, the instructor asked the class to list things that contributed to status when they were in high school. The list was long and included being an athlete or a cheerleader and being able to cut class without getting caught. Then the instructor asked the students to list things that didn't contribute to status. Again, it was easy for the students to create a long list: getting straight A's, having your mother drive you to school, and so forth. Finally, the students were asked to develop a third list—those things that didn't matter one way or the other. There was a long silence. At last one student in the back row volunteered, "In high school, nothing didn't matter."

Status — that is, a socially defined position or rank given to groups or group members by others—permeates society far beyond the walls of high school. It would not be extravagant to rephrase the preceding quotation to read, "In the status hierarchy of life, nothing doesn't matter." We live in a class-structured society. Despite all attempts to make it more egalitarian, we have made little progress toward a classless society. Even the smallest group will develop roles, rights, and rituals to differentiate its members.

Status is an important factor in understanding human behavior because it is a significant motivator and has major behavioral consequences when individuals perceive a disparity between what they believe their status to be and what others perceive it to be.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL STATUS Status may be formally imposed by a group—that is, organizationally imposed through titles or amenities. This is the status that goes with being crowned "the heavyweight champion of the world" or receiving the "teacher-of-the-year" award. We are all familiar with the trappings of high organizational status—large offices with impressive views, fancy titles, high pay, preferred work schedules, and so on. (See Table 3) Whether or not management acknowledges the existence of a status hierarchy, organizations are filled with amenities that are not uniformly available and, hence, carry status value. More often, we deal with status in an informal sense. Status may be informally acquired by such characteristics, as education, age, sex, skill, and experience. Anything can have status value, if others in the group evaluate it as status-conferring. Keep in mind that informal status is not necessarily less important than the formal variety.

In his classic restaurant study, William F. Whyte demonstrated the importance of status. Whyte proposed that people work together more smoothly if high-status personnel customarily originate action for lower-status personnel. He found a number of instances in which the initiating of action by lower-status people created a conflict between formal and informal status systems. In one instance he cited, waitresses were passing their customers' orders directly on to counter men — which meant that low-status servers were initiating action for high-status cooks. By the simple addition of an aluminum spindle to which the order could be hooked, a buffer was created between the lower-status waitresses and the higher-status counter men, allowing the latter to initiate action on orders when they felt ready.

Whyte also noted that in the kitchen, supply men secured food supplies from the chefs. This was, in effect, a case of low-skilled employees initiating action to be taken by high-skilled employees. Conflict was stimulated when supply men, either explicitly or implicitly, urged the chefs to “get a move on.” However, Whyte observed that one supply man had little trouble with the chefs because he gave the order and asked that the chef call him when it was ready, thus reversing the initiating process. In his analysis, Whyte suggested several changes in procedures that aligned interactions more closely with the accepted status hierarchy and resulted in substantial improvements in worker relations and effectiveness.

TABLE 1. Examples of What May Connote Formal Status

Titles

- Director
- Manager
- Chief
- Head
- Senior

Relationships

- Work for an important individual
- Job requires working with high-ranking organizational members
- Work in a critical group or on an important assignment

Pay and Benefits

- Expense account
- Liberal travel opportunities
- Reserved parking space with one's name on it
- Company-paid car

Work Schedule

- Day work rather than evening or shift

Freedom from punching a time clock
Freedom to come and go as one pleases

Office Amenities

Large desk with high-back chair
Windows with attractive view
Private secretary to screen visitors

STATUS EQUITY It is important for group members to believe that the status hierarchy is equitable. When inequity is perceived, it creates disequilibrium that results in various types of corrective behavior.

The concept of equity applies to status. People expect rewards to be proportionate to costs incurred. If Dana and Anne are the two finalists for the head nurse position in a hospital, and it is clear that Dana has more seniority and better preparation for assuming the promotion, Anne will view the selection of Dana to be equitable. However, if Anne is chosen because she is the daughter-in-law of the hospital director, Dana will believe an injustice has been committed.

The trappings that go with formal positions are also important elements in maintaining equity. When we believe there is an inequity between the perceived ranking of an individual and the status accouterments that person is given by the organization, we are experiencing *status incongruence*. Examples of this kind of incongruence are the more desirable office location being held by a lower-ranking individual and paid country club membership being provided by the company for division managers but not for vice presidents. Pay incongruence has long been a problem in the insurance industry, where top sales agents often earn two to five times more than senior corporate executives. The result is that it is very hard for insurance companies to entice agents into management positions. Our point is that employees expect the things an individual has and receives to be congruent with his or her status.

Groups generally agree within themselves on status criteria and, hence, there is usually high concurrence in group rankings of individuals. However, individuals can find themselves in a conflict situation when they move between groups whose status criteria are different or when they join groups whose members have heterogeneous backgrounds. For instance, business executives may use income, total wealth, or size of the companies they run as determinants of status. Government bureaucrats may use the size of their agencies. Academics may use the number of grants received or articles published. Blue-collar workers may use years of seniority, job assignments, or bowling scores. In groups made up of heterogeneous individuals or when heterogeneous groups are forced to be interdependent, status differences may initiate conflict as the group attempts to reconcile and align the differing hierarchies.

6.5. Size

Does the size of a group affect the group's overall behavior? The answer to this question is a definite "Yes," but the effect depends on what dependent variables you look at.

The evidence indicates, for instance, that smaller groups are faster at completing tasks than are larger ones. However, if the group is engaged in problem solving, large groups consistently get better marks than their smaller counterparts. Translating these results into specific numbers is a bit more hazardous, but we can offer some parameters. Large groups — with a dozen or more members — are good for gaining diverse input. So if the goal of the group is fact-finding, larger groups should be more effective. On the other hand, smaller groups are better at doing something productive with that input. Groups of approximately seven members, therefore, tend to be more effective for taking action.

One of the most important findings related to the size of a group has been labeled **social loafing**. Social loafing is the tendency of group members to do less than they are capable of as individuals. It directly challenges the logic that the productivity of the group as a whole should at least equal the sum of the productivity of each individual in that group.

A common stereotype about groups is that the sense of team spirit spurs individual effort and enhances the group's overall productivity. In the late 1920s, a German psychologist named Ringelmann compared the results of individual and group performance on a rope-pulling task. He expected that the group's effort would be equal to the sum of the efforts of individuals within the group. That is, three people pulling together should exert three times as much pull on the rope as one person, and eight people should exert eight times as much pull. Ringelmann's results, however, did not confirm his expectations. Groups of three people exerted a force only two-and-a-half times the average individual performance. Groups of eight people achieved less than four times the solo rate.

6.6. Composition

Most group activities require a variety of skills and knowledge. Given this requirement, it would be reasonable to conclude that heterogeneous groups — those composed of dissimilar individuals — would be more likely to have diverse abilities and information and should be more effective. Research studies substantiate this conclusion.

When a group is heterogeneous in terms of personalities, opinions, abilities, skills, and perspectives, there is an increased probability that the group will possess the needed characteristics to complete its tasks effectively. The group may be more conflict-laden and less expedient as diverse positions are introduced and assimilated, but the evidence generally supports the

conclusion that heterogeneous groups perform more effectively than do those that are homogeneous.

An offshoot of the composition issue has recently received a great deal of attention by group researchers. This is the degree to which members of a group share a common demographic attribute, such as age, sex, race, educational level, or length of service in the organization, and the impact of this attribute on turnover. We'll call this variable **group demography**.

Here we consider the same type of factors, but in a group context. That is, it is not whether a person is male or female or has been employed with the organization a year rather than ten years that concerns us now, but rather the individual's attribute in relationship to the attributes of others with whom he or she works. Let's work through the logic of group demography, review the evidence, and then consider the implications.

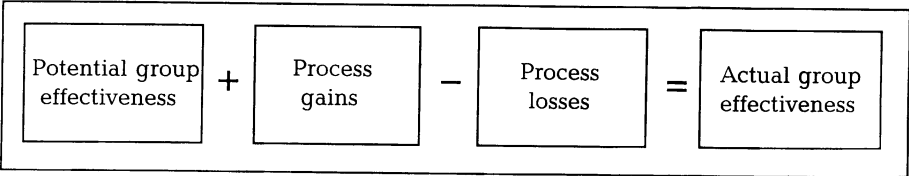
Groups and organizations are composed of **cohorts**, which we define as individuals who hold a common attribute. For instance, everyone born in 1960 is of the same age. This means they also have shared common experiences.

7. Group Processes

The next component of our group behavior model considers the processes that go on within a work group — the communication patterns used by members for information exchanges, group decision processes, leader behavior, power dynamics, conflict interactions, and the like.

Why are processes important to understanding work group behavior? One way to answer this question is to return to the topic of social loafing. We found that one-plus-one-plus-one doesn't necessarily add up to three. In group tasks where each member's contribution is not clearly visible, there is a tendency for individuals to decrease their effort. Social loafing, in other words, illustrates a process loss as a result of using groups. But group processes can also produce positive results. That is, groups can create outputs greater than the sum of their inputs. Figure 4 illustrates how group processes can impact on a group's actual effectiveness.

FIGURE 4. Effects of Group Processes



Synergy is a term used in biology that refers to an action of two or more substances that results in an effect that is different from the individual

summation of the substances. We can use the concept to better understand group processes.

Social loafing, for instance, represents negative synergy. The whole is less than the sum of the parts. On the other hand, research teams are often used in research laboratories because they can draw on the diverse skills of various individuals to produce more meaningful research as a group than could be generated by all of the researchers working independently. That is, they produce positive synergy. Their process gains exceed their process losses.

8. Group Tasks

Imagine, for a moment, that there are two groups at a major oil company. The job of the first is to consider possible location sites for a new refinery. The decision is going to affect people in many areas of the company — production, engineering, marketing, distribution, personnel, purchasing, real estate development, and the like — so key people from each of these areas will need to provide input into the decision. The job of the second group is to coordinate the building of the refinery after the site has been selected, the design finalized, and the financial arrangements completed. Research on group effectiveness tells us that management would be well advised to use a large group for the first task than for the second. The reason is that large groups facilitate pooling of information. The addition of a diverse perspective to a problem-solving committee typically results in a process gain. But when group's task is coordinating and implementing a decision, the process loss created by each additional member's presence is likely to be greater than the process gain he or she makes. So the size-performance relationship is moderated by the group's task requirements.

The preceding conclusions can be extended: The impact of group processes on the group's performance and member satisfaction is also moderated by the tasks that the group is doing. The evidence indicates that the complexity and interdependence of tasks influence the group's effectiveness.

Tasks can be generalized as either simple or complex. Complex tasks are ones that tend to be novel or nonroutine. Simple ones are routine and standardized. We would hypothesize that the more complex the task, the more the group will benefit from discussion among members on alternative work methods. If the task is simple, group members don't need to discuss such alternatives. They can rely on standardized operating procedures for doing the job. Similarly, if there is a high degree of interdependence among the tasks that group members must perform, they'll need to interact more. Effective communication and minimal levels of conflict, therefore, should be more relevant to group performance when tasks are interdependent.

These conclusions are consistent with what we know about information processing capacity and uncertainty. Tasks that have higher uncertainty those

that are complex and interdependent—require more information processing. This, in turn, puts more importance on group processes. So just because a group is characterized by poor communication, weak leadership, high levels of conflict, and the like, it doesn't necessarily mean that it will be low-performing. If the group's tasks are simple and require little interdependence among members, the group still may be effective.

9. Should Management Seek Cohesive Work Groups?

It is often implied that effective work groups are cohesive. In this section, we want to determine whether cohesiveness, as a group characteristic, is desirable. More specifically, should management actively seek to create work groups that are highly cohesive?

Intuitively, it would appear that groups in which there is a lot of internal disagreement and a lack of cooperative spirit would be relatively less effective at completing their tasks than would groups in which individuals generally agree and cooperate and where members like each other. Research to test this intuition has focused on the concept of group cohesiveness, defined as the degree to which members are attracted to one another and are motivated to stay in the group. In the following pages, we'll review the factors that have been found to influence group cohesiveness and then look at the effect of cohesiveness on group productivity.

9.1. Determinants of Cohesiveness

What factors determine whether group members will be attracted to one another? Cohesiveness can be affected by such factors as time spent together, the severity of initiation, group size, the gender make-up of the group, external threats, and previous successes.

TIME SPENT TOGETHER If you rarely get an opportunity to see or interact with other people, you're unlikely to be attracted to them. The amount of time that people spend together, therefore, influences cohesiveness. As people spend more time together, they become more friendly. They naturally begin to talk, respond, gesture, and engage in other interactions. These interactions typically lead to the discovery of common interests and increased attraction.

The opportunity for group members to spend time together is dependent on their physical proximity. We would expect more close relationships among members who are located close to one another rather than far apart. People who live on the same block, ride in the same car pool, or share a common office are more likely to become a cohesive group because the physical distance between them is minimal. For instance, among clerical workers in one organization it was found that the distance between their desks was the single

most important determinant of the rate of interaction between any two of the clerks.

SEVERITY OF INITIATION The more difficult it is to get into a group, the more cohesive that group becomes. The hazing through which fraternities typically put their pledges is meant to screen out those who don't want to "pay the price" and to intensify the desire of those who do to become fraternity actives. But group initiation needn't be as blatant as hazing. The competition to be accepted into a good medical school results in first-year medical school classes that are highly cohesive. The common initiation rites — applications, test taking, interviews, and the long wait for a final decision — all contribute to creating this cohesiveness.

GROUP SIZE If group cohesiveness tends to increase with the time members are able to spend together, it seems logical that cohesiveness should decrease as group size increases, since it becomes more difficult for a member to interact with all the other members. This is generally what the research indicates. As a group's size expands, interaction with all members becomes more difficult, as does the ability to maintain a common goal. Not surprisingly, too, as the group's size increases, the likelihood of cliques forming also increases. The creation of groups within groups tends to decrease overall cohesiveness.

GENDER OF MEMBERS A consistent finding in recent studies is that women report greater cohesion than men. For example, in one study, all female and mixed-sex six-person personal growth groups rated themselves higher on cohesion than did members of all-male groups. In another study, female intercollegiate basketball players reported higher group cohesion than their male counterparts. Just why this occurs is not evident. A reasonable hypothesis, however, is that women are less competitive and/or more cooperative with people they see as friends, colleagues, or teammates than men are, and this results in greater group bonding.

EXTERNAL THREATS Most of the research supports the proposition that a group's cohesiveness will increase if the group comes under attack from external sources. Management threats frequently bring together an otherwise disarrayed union. Efforts by management to redesign unilaterally even one or two jobs or to discipline one or two employees occasionally grab local headlines because the entire work force walks out in support of the abused few. These examples illustrate the kind of cooperative phenomenon that can develop within a group when it is attacked from outside.

While a group generally moves toward greater cohesiveness when threatened by external agents, this does not occur under all conditions. If group members perceive that their group may not meet an attack well, then the group becomes less important as a source of security, and cohesiveness will not necessarily increase. Additionally, if members believe the attack is directed at

the group merely because of its existence and that it will cease if the group is abandoned or broken up, there is likely to be a decrease in cohesiveness.

PREVIOUS SUCCESSES If a group has a history of successes, it builds an esprit de corps that attracts and unites members. Successful firms find it easier to attract and hire new employees than unsuccessful ones. The same holds true for successful research teams, well-known and prestigious universities, and winning athletic teams. In the 1950s and 1960s, General Motors was the premier manufacturing company in the world — and it never had trouble attracting the best engineering and business school graduates. Today, the recent successes of Microsoft make it easy for that company to recruit “the best and the brightest.” If you harbor ambitions of attending top-quality graduate school of business, you should recognize that the success of these schools attracts large numbers of candidates — many have twenty or more applicants for every vacancy.

9.2. Effects of Cohesiveness on Group Productivity

The previous section indicates that, generally speaking, group cohesiveness is increased when members spend time together and undergo a severe initiation, when the group size is small and predominantly female, when external threats exist, and when the group has a history of previous successes. But is increased cohesiveness always desirable from the point of view of management? That is, is it related to increased productivity?

Research has generally shown that highly cohesive groups are more, effective than those with less cohesiveness, but the relationship is more complex than merely allowing us to say high cohesiveness is good. First, high cohesiveness is both a cause and an outcome of high productivity. Second, the relationship is moderated by performance-related norms.

Cohesiveness influences productivity and productivity influences cohesiveness. Camaraderie reduces tension and provides a supportive environment for the successful attainment of group goals. But as already noted, the successful attainment of group goals, and the members' feelings of having been a part of a successful unit, can serve to enhance the commitment of members. Basketball coaches, for example, are famous for their devotion to teamwork. They believe that if the team is going to win games, its members have to learn to play together. Popular coaching phrases include “There are no individuals on this team” and “We win together, or we lose together.” The other side of this view is that winning reinforces camaraderie and leads to increased cohesiveness; that is, successful performance leads to increased intermember attractiveness and sharing.

More important has been the recognition that the relationship of cohesiveness and productivity depends on the performance-related norms

established by the group. The more cohesive the group, the more its members will follow its goals. If performance-related norms are high (for example, high output, quality work, cooperation with individuals outside the group), a cohesive group will be more productive than a less cohesive group. But if cohesiveness is high and performance norms are low, productivity will be low. If cohesiveness is low and performance norms are high, productivity increases, but less than in the high cohesiveness-high norms situation. Where cohesiveness and performance-related norms are both low, productivity will tend to fall into the low-to-moderate range. These conclusions are summarized in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5. Relationship Between Group Cohesiveness, Performance Norms, and Productivity

		Cohesiveness	
		High	Low
Performance Norms	High	High productivity	Moderate productivity
	Low	Low productivity	Moderate to productivity

10. Implications for Performance and Satisfaction

10.1. Performance

Any predictions about a group’s performance must begin by recognizing that work groups are part of a larger organization and that factors such as the organization’s strategy, authority structure, selection procedures, and reward system can provide a favorable or unfavorable climate for the group to operate within. For example, if an organization is characterized by distrust between management and workers, it is more likely that work groups in that organization will develop norms to restrict effort and output than will work groups in an organization where trust is high. So don’t look at any group in isolation. Rather, begin by assessing the degree of support external conditions provide the group. It is obviously a lot easier for any work group to be productive when the overall organization of which it is a part is growing and it has both top management’s support and abundant resources. Similarly, a group is more likely to be

productive when its members have the requisite skills to do the group's tasks and the personality characteristics that facilitate working well together.

A number of structural factors show a relationship to performance. Among the more prominent are role perception, norms, status inequities, the size of the group, its demographic makeup, the group's task, and cohesiveness.

There is a positive relationship between role perception and an employee's performance evaluation. The degree of congruence that exists between an employee and his or her boss in the perception of the employee's job influences the degree to which that employee will be judged as an effective performer by the boss. To the extent that the employee's role perception fulfills the boss's role expectations, the employee will receive a higher performance evaluation.

Norms control group member behavior by establishing standards: right and wrong. If we know the norms of a given group, it can help us explain the behaviors of its members. Where norms support high output we can expect individual performance to be markedly higher than where group norms aim to restrict output. Similarly, acceptable standards of absenteeism will be dictated by the group norms.

Status inequities create frustration and can adversely influence productivity and the willingness to remain with an organization. Among the individuals who are equity sensitive, incongruence is likely to lead to reduced motivation and an increased search for ways to bring about fairness (i.e., taking another job).

The impact of size on a group's performance depends upon the type of task in which the group is engaged. Larger groups are more effective at fact finding activities. Smaller groups are more effective at action-taking tasks. Our knowledge of social loafing suggests that if management uses large groups, efforts should be made to provide measures of individual performance within the group.

We found the group's demographic composition to be a key determinate of individual turnover. Specifically, the evidence indicates that group members who share a common age or date of entry into the work group are less prone to resign.

The primary contingency variable moderating the relationship between group processes and performance is the group's task. The more complex and interdependent the tasks, the more that inefficient processes will lead to reduced group performance.

Finally, we found that cohesiveness can play an important function in influencing a group's level of productivity. Whether or not it does depends on the group's performance-related norms.

10.2. Satisfaction

As with the role perception-performance relationship, high congruence between a boss and employee, as to the perception of the employee's job shows a significant association with high employee satisfaction. Similarly, role conflict is associated with job-induced tension and job dissatisfaction.

Most people prefer to communicate with others at their own status level or a higher one rather than with those below them. As a result, we should expect satisfaction to be greater among employees whose job minimizes interaction with individuals who are lower in status than themselves.

The group size — satisfaction relationship is what one would intuitively expect: Larger groups are associated with lower satisfaction. As size increases, opportunities for participation and social interaction decrease, as does the ability of members to identify with the group's accomplishments. At the same time, having more members also prompts dissension, conflict, and the formation of subgroups, which all act to make the group a less pleasant entity to be a part of.

Finally, we can make a set of predictions regarding both performance and satisfaction based on the impact of task as a moderating variable and research on the job characteristics model. A group can be expected to work especially hard on its tasks and members of that group are likely to be satisfied with their work when: (1) the group task requires members to use a variety of relatively high-level skills; (2) the group task is a whole and meaningful piece of work, with a visible outcome; (3) the outcomes of the group's work on the task have significant consequences for other people either inside or outside the organization; (4) the task provides group members with substantial autonomy for deciding about how they do the work; and (5) work on the task generates regular, trustworthy feedback about how well the group is performing.

II. COMMUNICATION AND GROUP DECISION MAKING

1. Functions of Communication

Communication serves four major functions within a group or organization: control, motivation, emotional expression, and information.

Communication acts to *control* member behavior in several ways. Organizations have authority hierarchies and formal guidelines that employees are required to follow. When employees, for instance, are required to first communicate any job-related grievance to their immediate boss, to follow their job description, or to comply with company policies-communication is performing a control function. But informal communication also controls behavior. When work groups tease or harass a member who produces too much

(and makes the rest of the group look bad), they are informally communicating with, and controlling, the member's behavior.

Communication fosters *motivation* by clarifying to employees what is to be done, how well they are doing, and what can be done to improve performance if it's subpar. We saw this operating in our review of goal-setting and reinforcement theories. The formation of specific goals, feedback on progress toward the goals, and reinforcement of desired behavior all stimulate motivation and require communication.

For many employees, their work group is a primary source for social interaction. The communication that takes place within the group is a fundamental mechanism by which members show their frustrations and feelings of satisfaction. Communication, therefore, provides a release for the *emotional expression* of feelings and for fulfillment of social needs.

The final function that communication performs relates to its role in facilitating decision making. It provides the *information* that individuals and groups need to make decisions by transmitting the data to identify and evaluate alternative choices.

No one of these four functions should be seen as being more important than the others. For groups to perform effectively, they need to maintain some form of control over members, stimulate members to perform, provide a means for emotional expression, and make decision choices. You can assume that almost every communication interaction that takes place in a group or organization performs one or more of these four functions.

2. The Communication Process

Communication can be thought of as a process or flow. Communication problems occur when there are deviations or blockages in that flow. In this section, we will describe the process in terms of a communication model, consider how distortions can disrupt the process, and introduce the concept of communication apprehension as another potential disruption.

2.1. A Communication Model

Before communication can take place, a purpose, expressed as a message to be conveyed, is needed. It passes between a source (the sender) and a receiver. The message is encoded (converted to symbolic form) and is passed by way of some medium (channel) to the receiver, who retranslates (decodes) the message initiated by the sender. The result is a transference of meaning from one person to another.

The model of the **communication process** is made up of seven parts: (1) the communication source, (2) encoding, (3) the message, (4) the channel, (5) decoding, (6) the receiver, and (7) feedback.

The source initiates a message by **encoding** a thought. Four conditions have been described that affect the encoded message: skill, attitudes, knowledge, and the social-cultural system.

My success in communicating to you is dependent upon my writing skills; if the authors of textbooks are without the requisite writing skills, their messages will not reach students in the form desired. One's total communicative success includes speaking, reading, listening, and reasoning skills as well. Our attitudes influence our behavior. We hold predisposed ideas on numerous topics, and our communications are affected by these attitudes. Further, we are restricted in our communicative activity by the extent of our knowledge of the particular topic. We cannot communicate what we do not know, and should our knowledge be too extensive, it is possible that our receiver will not understand our message. Clearly, the amount of knowledge the source holds about his or her subject will affect the message he or she seeks to transfer. And, finally, just as attitudes influence our behavior, so does our position in the social cultural system in which we exist. Your beliefs and values, all part of your culture, act to influence you as a communicative source.

The **message** is the actual physical product from the source encoding. When we speak, the speech is the message. When we write, the writing is the message. When we paint, the picture is the message. When we gesture, the movements of our arms, the expressions on our face are the message. Our message is affected by the code or group of symbols we use to transfer meaning, the content of the message itself, and the decisions that we make in selecting and arranging both codes and content.

The **channel** is the medium through which the message travels. It is selected by the source, who must determine which channel is formal and which one is informal. Formal channels are established by the organization and transmit messages that pertain to the job-related activities of members. They traditionally follow the authority network within the organization. Other forms of messages, such as personal or social, follow the informal channels in the organization.

The receiver is the object to whom the message is directed. But before the message can be received, the symbols in it must be translated into a form that can be understood by the receiver. This is the **decoding** of the message. Just as the encoder was limited by his or her skills, attitudes, knowledge, and social-cultural system, the receiver is equally restricted. Just as the source must be skillful in writing or speaking, the receiver must be skillful in reading or listening, and both must be able to reason. One's knowledge, attitudes, and cultural background influence one's ability to receive, just as they do the ability to send.

The final link in the communication process is a **feedback loop**. If a communication source decodes the message that he encodes, if the message is put back into his system, we have feedback. Feedback is the check on how

successful we have been in transferring our messages as originally intended. It determines whether understanding has been achieved.

2.2. Sources of Distortion

Unfortunately, most of the seven components in the process model have the potential to create distortion and, therefore, impinge upon the goal of communicating perfectly. These sources of distortion explain why the message that is decoded by the receiver is rarely the exact message that the sender intended.

If the encoding is done carelessly, the message decoded by the sender will have been distorted. The message itself can also cause distortion. The poor choice of symbols and confusion in the content of the message are frequent problem areas. Of course, the channel can distort a communication if a poor one is selected or if the noise level is high. The receiver represents the final potential source for distortion. His or her prejudices, knowledge, perceptual skills, attention span, and care in decoding are all factors that can result in interpreting the message somewhat differently than envisioned by the sender.

2.3. Communication Apprehension

Another major roadblock to effective communication is that some people—an estimated five to twenty percent of the population — suffer from debilitating **communication apprehension** or anxiety. Although lots of people dread speaking in front of a group, communication apprehension is a more serious problem because it affects a whole category of communication techniques. People who suffer from it experience undue tension and anxiety in oral communication, written communication, or both. For example, oral apprehensive may find it extremely difficult to talk with others face-to-face or become extremely anxious when they have to use the telephone. As a result, they may rely on memos or letters to convey messages when a phone call would not only be faster but more appropriate.

Studies demonstrate that oral-communication apprehensives avoid situations that require them to engage in oral communication. We should expect to find some self-selection in jobs so that such individual don't take positions, such as teacher, where oral communication is a dominant requirement. But almost all jobs require some oral communication. And of greater concern is the evidence that high-oral-communication apprehensives distort the communication demands of their jobs in order to minimize the need for communication. So we need to be aware that there is a set of people in organizations who severely limit their oral communication and rationalize this practice by telling themselves that more communication isn't necessary for them to do their job effectively.

3. Communication Fundamentals

3.1. Direction of Communication

Communication can flow vertically or laterally. The vertical dimension can be further divided into downward and upward directions.

DOWNWARD Communication that flows from one level of a group or organization to a lower level is a downward communication.

When we think of managers communicating with subordinates, the downward pattern is the one we usually think of. It is used by group leaders and managers to assign goals, provide job instructions, inform underlings of policies and procedures, point out problems that need attention, and offer feedback about performance. But downward communication doesn't have to be oral or face-to-face contact. When management sends letters to employees' homes to advise them of the organization's new sick leave policy, it is using downward communication.

UPWARD Upward communication flows to a higher level in the group or organization. It is used to provide feedback to higher-ups, inform them of progress toward goals, and relay current problems. Upward communication keeps managers aware of how employees feel about their jobs, co-workers, and the organization in general. Managers also rely on upward communication for ideas on how things can be improved.

Some organizational examples of upward communication are performance reports prepared by lower management for review by middle and top management, suggestion boxes, employee attitude surveys, grievance procedures, superior-subordinate discussions, and informal "gripe" sessions where employees have the opportunity to identify and discuss problems with their boss or representatives of higher management.

LATERAL When communication takes place among members of the same work group, among members of work groups at the same level, among managers at the same level, or among any horizontally equivalent personnel, we describe it as lateral communications.

Why would there be a need for horizontal communications if a group or organization's vertical communications are effective? The answer is that horizontal communications are often necessary to save time and facilitate coordination. In some cases, these lateral relationships are formally sanctioned. Often, they are informally created to short-circuit the vertical hierarchy and expedite action. So lateral communications can, from management's viewpoint, be good or bad. Since strict adherence to the formal vertical structure for all communications can impede the efficient and accurate transfer of information, lateral communications can be beneficial. In such cases, they occur with the knowledge and support of superiors. But they can create dysfunctional conflicts when the formal vertical channels are breached, when members go above or

around their superiors to get things done, or when bosses find out that actions have been taken or decisions made without their knowledge.

3.2. Formal vs. Informal Networks

Communication networks define the channels by which information flows. These channels are one of two varieties — either formal or informal. **Formal networks** are typically vertical, follow the authority chain, and are limited to task-related communications. In contrast, the **informal network** — usually better known as the *grapevine* — is free to move in any direction, skip authority levels, and is as likely to satisfy group members’ social needs as it is to facilitate task accomplishments.

FORMAL SMALL-GROUP NETWORKS There are three common small-group networks. These are the chain, wheel, and all-channel. The chain rigidly follows the formal chain of command. The wheel relies on the leader to act as the central conduit for all the group’s communication. The all-channel network permits all group members to actively communicate with each other.

As Table 2 demonstrates, the effectiveness of each network depends on the dependent variable you are concerned about. For instance, the structure of the wheel facilitates the emergence of a leader, the all-channel network is best if you are concerned with having high member satisfaction, and the chain is best if accuracy is most important. So Table 2 leads us to the conclusion that no single network will be best for all occasions.

TABLE 2. Small-Group Networks and Effectiveness Criteria

Criteria	Networks			
	Chain	Wheel	All-Channel	
Speed	Moderate	Fast	Moderate	
Accuracy	High	High	High	
Emergence of a leader	Moderate	High	Moderate	
Member satisfaction	Moderate	Low	Moderate	

THE INFORMAL NETWORK The previous discussion of networks emphasized formal communication patterns, but the formal system is not the only communication system in a group or between groups. Let us, therefore, turn our attention to the informal system, where information flows along the well-known grapevine and rumors can flourish.

The grapevine has three main characteristics. First, it is not controlled by management. Second, it is perceived by most employees as being more

believable and reliable than formal communiques issued by top management. Third, it is largely used to serve the self-interests of those people within it.

One of the most famous studies of the grapevine investigated the communication pattern among sixty-seven managerial personnel in a small manufacturing firm. The basic approach used was to learn from each communication recipient how he first received a given piece of information and then trace it back to its source. It was found that, while the grapevine was an important source of information, only ten percent of the executives acted as liaison individuals; that is, passed the information on to more than one other person. For example, when one executive decided to resign to enter the insurance business, eighty-one percent of the executives knew about it, but only eleven percent transmitted this information on to others.

Two other conclusions from this study are also worth noting. Information on events of general interest tended to flow between the major functional groups (that is, production, sales) rather than within them. Also, no evidence surfaced to suggest that members of any one group consistently acted as liaisons; rather, different types of information passed through different liaison persons.

An attempt to replicate this study among employees in a small state government office also found that only a small percentage (ten percent) acted as liaison individuals. This is interesting since the replication contained a wider spectrum of employees — including rank-and-file as well as managerial personnel. However, the flow of information in the government office took place within, rather than between, functional groups. It was proposed that this discrepancy might be due to comparing an executive-only sample against one that also included rank-and-file workers. Managers, for example, might feel greater pressure to stay informed and thus cultivate others outside their immediate functional group. Also, in contrast to the findings of the original study, the replication found that a consistent group of individuals acted as liaisons by transmitting information in the government office.

Is the information that flows along the grapevine accurate? The evidence indicates that about seventy-five percent of what is carried is accurate. But what conditions foster an active grapevine? What gets the rumor mill rolling?

It is frequently assumed that rumors start because they make titillating gossip. Such is rarely the case. Rumors have at least four purposes: to structure and reduce anxiety; to make sense of limited or fragmented information; to serve as a vehicle to organize group members, and possibly outsiders, into coalitions; and to signal a sender's status ("I'm an insider and with respect to this rumor, you're an outsider") or power ("I have the power to make you into an insider"). Research indicates that rumors emerge as a response to situations that are *important* to us, where there is *ambiguity*, and under conditions that arouse *anxiety*. Work situations frequently contain these three elements, which explains why rumors flourish in organizations. The secrecy and competition that typically prevail in large organizations—around

such issues as the appointment of new bosses, the relocation of offices, and the realignment of work assignments—create conditions that encourage and sustain rumors on the grapevine. A rumor will persist either until the wants and expectations creating the uncertainty underlying the rumor are fulfilled or until the anxiety is reduced.

What can we conclude from this discussion? Certainly the grapevine is an important part of any group or organization’s communication network and well worth understanding. It identifies for managers those confusing issues that employees consider important and anxiety provoking. It acts, therefore, as both a filter and a feedback mechanism, picking up the issues that employees consider relevant. Maybe more important, again from a managerial perspective, it seems possible to analyze grapevine information and to predict its flow, given that only a small set of individuals (around ten percent) actively passes on information to more than one other person. By assessing which liaison individuals will consider a given piece of information to be relevant, we can improve our ability to explain and predict the pattern of the grapevine.

Can management entirely eliminate rumors? No! What management can do, however, is minimize the negative consequences of rumors by limiting their range and impact. Table 3 offers a few suggestions for minimizing those negative consequences.

TABLE 3. Suggestions for Reducing the Negative Consequences of Rumors

-
1. Announce timetables for making important decisions.
 2. Explain decisions and behaviors that may appear inconsistent or secretive.
 3. Emphasize the downside, as well as the upside, of current decisions and future plans.
 4. Openly discuss worst-case possibilities — it is almost never as anxiety provoking as the unspoken fantasy.

3.3. Nonverbal Communications

Anyone who has ever paid a visit to a singles bar or a nightclub is aware that communication need not be verbal in order to convey a message. A glance, a stare, a smile, a frown, a provocative body movement — they all convey meaning. This example illustrates that no discussions of communication would be complete without a discussion of **nonverbal communications**. This includes body movements, the intonations or emphasis we give to words, facial expressions, and the physical distance between the sender and receiver.

The academic study of body motions has been labeled **kinesics**. It refers to gestures, facial configurations, and other movements of the body. But it is a

relatively new field, and it has been subject to far more conjecture and popularizing than the research findings support. Hence, while we acknowledge that body movement is an important segment of the study of communication and behavior, conclusions must be necessarily guarded. Recognizing this qualification, let us briefly consider the ways in which body motions convey meaning.

It has been argued that every *body movement* has a meaning and that no movement is accidental. For example, through body language,

We say, "Help me, I'm lonely. Take me, I'm available. Leave me alone, I'm depressed." And rarely do we send our messages consciously. We act out our state of being with nonverbal body language. We lift one eyebrow for disbelief. We rub our noses for puzzlement. We clasp our arms to isolate ourselves or to protect ourselves. We shrug our shoulders for indifference, wink one eye for intimacy, tap our fingers for impatience, slap our forehead for forgetfulness.

While we may disagree with the specific meaning of these movements body language adds to and often complicates verbal communication. A body position or movement does not by itself have a precise or universal meaning, but when it is linked with spoken language, it gives fuller meaning to a sender's message.

If you read the verbatim minutes of a meeting, you could not grasp the impact of what was said in the same way you could if you had been there or saw the meeting on video. Why? There is no record of nonverbal communication. The emphasis given to words or phrases is missing. To illustrate how *intonations* can change the meaning of a message, consider the student in class who asks the instructor a question. The instructor replies, "What do you mean by that?" The student's reaction will be different depending on the tone of the instructor's response. A soft, smooth tone creates a different meaning from an intonation that is abrasive with strong emphasis placed on the last word.

The *facial expression* of the instructor will also convey meaning. A snarled face says something different from a smile. Facial expressions, along with intonations, can show arrogance, aggressiveness, fear, shyness, and other characteristics that would never be communicated if you read a transcript of what had been said.

The way individuals space themselves in terms of *physical distance* also has meaning. What is considered proper spacing is largely dependent on cultural norms. For example, what is "businesslike" distance in some European countries would be viewed as "intimate" in many parts of North America. If someone stands closer to you than is considered appropriate, it may indicate aggressiveness or sexual interest. If farther away than usual, it may mean disinterest or displeasure with what is being said.

It is important for the receiver to be alert to these nonverbal aspects of communication. You should look for nonverbal cues as well as listen to the literal

meaning of a sender's words. You should particularly be aware of contradictions between the messages. The boss may say that she is free to talk to you about that raise you have been seeking, but you may see nonverbal signals that suggest that this is not the time to discuss the subject. Regardless of what is being said, an individual who frequently glances at her wristwatch is giving the message that she would prefer to terminate the conversation. We misinform others when we express one emotion verbally, such as trust, but nonverbally communicate a contradictory message that reads, "I don't have confidence in you." These contradictions often suggest that "actions speak louder (and more accurately) than words."

3.4. Choice of Communication Channel

Why do individuals choose one channel of communication over another—for instance, a phone call instead of a face-to-face talk? One answer might be: Anxiety! As you will remember, some people are apprehensive about certain kinds of communication. What about the eighty to ninety-five percent of the population who don't suffer from this problem? Is there any general insight we might be able to provide regarding choice of communication channel? The answer is a qualified "Yes." A model of media richness has been developed to explain channel selection among managers.

Recent research has found that channels differ in their capacity to convey information. Some are rich in that they have the ability to (1) handle multiple cues simultaneously, (2) facilitate rapid feedback, and (3) be very personal. Others are lean in that they score low on these three factors. Face-to-face talk scores highest in terms of **channel richness** because it provides for the maximum amount of information to be transmitted during a communication episode. That is, it offers multiple information cues (words, posture, facial expressions, gestures, intonations), immediate feedback (both verbal and nonverbal), and the personal touch of "being there." Impersonal written media such as bulletins and general reports rate lowest in richness.

3.5. Barriers to Effective Communication

We conclude our discussion of communication fundamentals by reviewing several of the more prominent barriers to effective communication of which you should be aware.

FILTERING **Filtering** refers to a sender manipulating information so that it will be seen more favorably by the receiver. For example, when a manager tells his boss what he feels his boss wants to hear, he is filtering information. Does this happen much in organizations? Sure! As information is passed up to senior executives, it has to be condensed and synthesized by underlings so those on top don't become overloaded with information. The

personal interests and perceptions of what is important by those doing the synthesizing are going to result in filtering. As a former group vice president of General Motors described it, the filtering of communications through levels at GM made it impossible for senior managers to get objective information because “lower-level specialists...provided information in such a way that they would get the answer they wanted. I know. I used to be down below and do it.” The major determinant of filtering is the number of levels in an organization’s structure. The more vertical levels in the organization’s hierarchy, the more opportunities there are for filtering.

SELECTIVE PERCEPTION

We have mentioned selective perception before. It appears again because the receivers in the communication process selectively see and hear based on their needs, motivations, experience, background, and other personal characteristics. Receivers also project their interests and expectations into communications as they decode them. The employment interviewer who expects a female job applicant to put her family ahead of her career is likely to see that in female applicants, regardless of whether the applicants feel that way or not. We don’t see reality; rather, we interpret what we see and call it reality.

EMOTIONS

How the receiver feels at the time of receipt of a communication message will influence how he or she interprets it. The same message received when you’re angry or distraught is likely to be interpreted differently when you’re in a neutral disposition. Extreme emotions—such as jubilation or depression—are most likely to hinder effective communication. In such instances, we are most prone to disregard our rational and objective thinking processes and substitute emotional judgments.

LANGUAGE

Words mean different things to different people. The meanings of words are not in the words; they are in us. Age, education, and cultural background are three of the more obvious variables that influence the language a person uses and the definitions he or she gives to words. The language of William F. Buckley, Jr., is clearly different from that of the typical high school-educated Burger King employee. The latter, in fact, would undoubtedly have trouble understanding much of Buckley’s vocabulary (but then, so do a lot of people with graduate degrees!).

In an organization, employees usually come from diverse backgrounds and, therefore, have different patterns of speech. Additionally, the grouping of employees into departments creates specialists who develop their own jargon or technical language. In large organizations, members are also frequently widely dispersed geographically—even operating in different countries—and individuals in each locale will use terms and phrases that are unique to their area. Table 4 provides a humorous look at how jargon can hinder, as well as improve, general communication.

**TABLE 4. The Jargon of the Politically Correct, or Terms to Ensure
You Offend No One**

Jargon facilitates communication among those who are part of the in-group. The following politically correct terms, ironically, probably hinder general communication because their meaning is less well understood than the terms they were created to replace.
1. Physically challenged (replaces <i>physically disabled or handicapped</i>)
2. Educational equity (replaces <i>quotas</i>)
3. Undocumented workers (replaces <i>illegal aliens</i>)
4. Monocultural (replaces <i>white</i>)
5. Senior (replaces <i>elderly</i> or <i>old</i>)
6. Vertically challenged (replaces <i>dwarfs</i> or <i>midgets</i>)
7. Indigenous people (replaces <i>Native Americans</i> or <i>American Indians</i>)
8. Differently-sized people (replaces significantly <i>overweight</i> or <i>obese</i>)
9. Visually impaired (replaces <i>blind</i>)
10. Eurocentric suit (replaces <i>Western clothes</i>)

*With apologies to those who may be humor-disabled.

The existence of vertical levels can also cause language problems. For instance, differences in meaning with regard to words such as *incentives* and *quotas* have been found at different levels in management. Top managers often speak about the need for incentives and quotas, yet these terms imply manipulation and create resentment among many lower managers.

4. Key Communication Skills

Given the barriers that exist to retard effective communications, what can a person do to reduce those barriers?

Good communication skills take considerable effort to learn and year, to perfect. But they can be learned. In this section, we'll briefly introduce two of the more critical skills related to effective communication—active listening and providing feedback—and demonstrate how you can begin to apply them immediately and develop your proficiency with them.

4.1. Active Listening Skills

Too many people take their listening skills for granted. They confuse hearing with listening. What's the difference? Hearing is merely picking up sound vibrations. Listening is making sense out of what we hear. That is, listening requires paying attention, interpreting, and remembering sound stimuli.

ACTIVE VS. PASSIVE LISTENING Effective listening is active rather than passive. In passive listening, you're much like a tape recorder. You

absorb the information given. If the speaker provides you with a clear message and makes his or her delivery interesting enough to keep your attention, you'll probably get most of what the speaker is trying to communicate. But active listening requires you to get inside the speaker so that you can understand the communication from his or her point of view. As you'll see, active listening is hard work. You have to concentrate and you have to want to fully understand what a speaker is saying. Students who use active listening techniques for an entire fifty-minute lecture are as tired as their instructor when that lecture is over because they have put as much energy into listening as the instructor put into speaking.

There are four essential requirements for **active listening**. You need to listen with (1) intensity, (2) empathy, (3) acceptance, and (4) a willingness to take responsibility for completeness.

Our brain is capable of handling a speaking rate of about four times the speed of the average speaker. That leaves a lot of time for idle mindwandering while listening. The active listener concentrates intensely on what the speaker is saying and tunes out the thousands of miscellaneous thoughts (about money, sex, vacations, parties, friends, getting the car fixed, and the like) that create distractions. What do active listeners do with their idle brain time? Summarize and integrate what has been said! They put each new bit of information into the context of what has preceded it.

Empathy requires you to put yourself in the speaker's shoes. You try to understand what the *speaker* wants to communicate rather than what *you* want to understand. Notice that empathy demands both knowledge of the speaker and flexibility on your part. You need to suspend your own thoughts and feelings and adjust what you see and feel to your speaker's world. In that way, you increase the likelihood that you will interpret the message being spoken in the way the speaker intended.

An active listener demonstrates acceptance. He or she listens objectively without judging content. This is no easy task. It is natural to be distracted by the content of what a speaker says, especially when we disagree with it. When we hear something we disagree with, we begin formulating our mental arguments to counter what is being said. Of course, in doing so, we miss the rest of the message. The challenge for the active listener is to absorb what is being said and to withhold judgment on content until the speaker is finished.

The final ingredient of active listening is taking responsibility for completeness. That is, the listener does whatever is necessary to get the full intended meaning from the speaker's communication. Two widely used active listening techniques to achieve this end are listening for feeling's as well as for content and asking questions to ensure understanding.

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLSBased on a review of the active listening literature, we can identify eight specific behaviors that effective listeners demonstrate. (See Table 5) As you review these

behaviors, ask yourself the degree to which they describe your listening practices. If you're not currently using these techniques, there is no better time than today to begin developing them.

TABLE 5. Behaviors Related to Effective Active Listening

1. Make eye contact.
2. Exhibit affirmative head nods and appropriate facial expressions.
3. Avoid distracting actions or gestures.
4. Ask questions.
5. Paraphrase.
6. Avoid interrupting the speaker.
7. Don't overtalk.
8. Make smooth transitions between the roles of speaker and listener.

1. *Make eye contact.* How do you feel when somebody doesn't look at you when you're speaking? If you're like most people, you're likely to interpret this as aloofness or disinterest. It's ironic that while you listen with your ears, people judge whether you are listening by looking at your eyes.

2. *Exhibit affirmative head nods and appropriate facial expressions.* The effective listener shows interest in what is being said. How? Through nonverbal signals. Affirmative head nods and appropriate facial expressions, when added to good eye contact, convey to the speaker that you're listening.

3. *Avoid distracting actions or gestures.* The other side of showing interest is avoiding actions that suggest your mind is somewhere else. When listening, don't look at your watch, shuffle papers, play with your pencil, or engage in similar distractions. They make the speaker feel you're bored or uninterested. Maybe more importantly, they indicate that you aren't fully attentive and may be missing part of the message that the speaker wants to convey.

4. *Ask questions.* The critical listener analyzes what he or she hears and asks questions. This behavior provides clarification, ensures understanding, and assures the speaker that you're listening.

5. *Paraphrase.* **Paraphrasing** means restating what the speaker has said in your own words. The effective listener uses phrases like: "What I hear you saying is ..." or "Do you mean ...?" Why rephrase what's already been said? Two reasons! First, it's an excellent control device to check on whether you're listening carefully. You can't paraphrase accurately if your mind is wandering or if you're thinking about what you're going to say next. Second, it's a control for accuracy. By rephrasing what the speaker has said in your own words and feeding it back to the speaker, you verify the accuracy of your understanding.

6. *Avoid interrupting the speaker.* Let the speaker complete his or her, thought before you try to respond. Don't try to second-guess where the speaker's thoughts are going. When the speaker is finished, you'll know it!

7. *Don't overtalk.* Most of us would rather speak our own ideas than listen to what someone else says. Too many of us listen only because it's the price we have to pay to get people to let us talk. While talking may be more fun and silence may be uncomfortable, you can't talk and listen at the same time. The good listener recognizes this fact and doesn't overtalk.

8. *Make smooth transitions between the roles of speaker and listener.* As a student sitting in a lecture hall, you find it relatively easy to get into an effective listening frame of mind. Why? Because communication is essentially one-way: The teacher talks and you listen. But the teacher-student dyad is atypical. In most work situations, you're continually shifting back and forth between the roles of speaker and listener. The effective listener, therefore, makes transitions smoothly from speaker to listener and back to speaker. From a listening perspective, this means concentrating on what a speaker has to say and practicing not thinking about what you're going to say as soon as you get your chance.

4.2. Feedback Skills

Ask a manager how much feedback he or she gives subordinates and you're likely to get a qualified answer. If the feedback is positive, it's likely to be given promptly and enthusiastically. Negative feedback, however, is often treated very differently. Managers, like most of us, don't particularly enjoy being the bearers of bad news. They fear offending or having to deal with defensiveness by the recipient. The result is that negative feedback is often avoided, delayed, or substantially distorted. The purposes of this section are to show you the importance of providing both positive and negative feedback and to identify specific techniques to make your feedback more effective.

POSITIVE VS. NEGATIVE FEEDBACK We said that managers treat positive and negative feedback differently. So, too, do recipients. You need to understand this fact and adjust your style accordingly.

Positive feedback is more readily and accurately perceived than negative feedback. Further, while positive feedback is almost always accepted, the negative variety often meets resistance. Why? The logical answer seems to be that people want to hear good news and block out the bad. Positive feedback fits what most people wish to hear and already believe about themselves.

Does this mean that you should avoid giving negative feedback? No! What it means is that you need to be aware of potential resistance and learn to use negative feedback in situations where it is most likely to be accepted. What are those situations? Research indicates that negative feedback is most likely to be accepted when it comes from a credible source or if it is objective in form.

Subjective impressions carry weight only when they come from a person with high status and credibility. This suggests that negative feedback that is supported by hard data—numbers, specific examples, and the like— has a good chance of being accepted. Negative feedback that is subjective can be a meaningful tool for experienced managers, particularly those high in the organization who have earned the respect of their employees. From less experienced managers, those in the lower ranks of the organization, and those whose reputation has not yet been established, negative feedback is not likely to be well received.

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK SKILLS There are six specific suggestions we can make to help you be more effective in providing feedback (see Table 6).

1. *Focus on specific behaviors.* Feedback should be specific: rather than general. Avoid statements like “You have a bad attitude” or “I’m really impressed with the good job you did.” They’re vague, and while they provide information, they don’t tell the recipient enough to correct the “bad attitude” or on what basis you concluded that a “good job” had been done.

TABLE 6. Behaviors Related to Providing Effective Feedback

- 1. Focus on specific behaviors.
- 2. Keep feedback impersonal.
- 3. Keep feedback goal-oriented.
- 4. Make feedback well-timed.
- 5. Ensure understanding.
- 6. Direct negative feedback toward behavior that is controllable by the recipient

Suppose you said something like “Bob, I’m concerned with your attitude toward your work. You were a half hour late to yesterday’s staff meeting, and then told me you hadn’t read the preliminary report we were discussing. Today you tell me you’re taking off three hours early for a dental appointment”; or “Jan, I was really pleased with the job you did on the Phillips account. They increased their purchased from us by twenty-two percent last month and I got a call a few days ago from Dan Phillips complimenting me on how quickly you responded to those specification changes for the MJ-7 microchip.” Both of these statements focus on specific behaviors. They tell the recipient why you are being critical or complimentary.

2. *Keep feedback impersonal.* Feedback, particularly the negative kind, should be descriptive rather than judgmental or evaluative. No matter how upset you are, keep the feedback job-related and never criticize someone personally because of an inappropriate action. Telling people they’re “stupid,” “incompetent,” or the like is almost always counterproductive. It provokes such an emotional reaction that the performance deviation itself is apt to be

overlooked. When you're criticizing, remember that you're censuring a job-related behavior, not the person. You may be tempted to tell someone he or she is "rude and insensitive" (which may well be true); however, that's hardly impersonal. Better to say something like "You interrupted me three times, with questions that were not urgent, when you knew I was talking long distance to a customer in Scotland."

3. *Keep feedback goal-oriented.* Feedback should not be given primarily to "dump" or "unload" on another. If you have to say something negative, make sure it's directed toward the recipient's goals. Ask yourself whom the feedback is supposed to help. If the answer is essentially you — "I've got something I just want to get off my chest" — bite your tongue. Such feedback undermines your credibility and lessens the meaning and influence of future feedback.

4. *Make feedback well-timed.* Feedback is most meaningful to a recipient when there is a very short interval between his or her behavior and the receipt of feedback about that behavior. To illustrate, a new employee who makes a mistake is more likely to respond to his manager's suggestions for improvement right after the mistake or at the end of that working day than during a performance review session several months later. If you have to spend time recreating a situation and refreshing someone's memory of it, the feedback you're providing is likely to be ineffective. Moreover, if you are particularly concerned with *changing* behavior, delays providing feedback on the undesirable actions lessen the likelihood that the feedback will be effective in bringing about the desired change. Of course, making feedback prompt merely for promptness' sake can backfire if you have insufficient information, if you're angry, or if you're otherwise emotionally upset. In such instances, "well-timed" may mean "somewhat delayed."

4.3. Groups vs. the Individual

Decision-making groups may be widely used in organizations, but does that imply that group decisions are preferable to those made by an individual alone? The answer to this question depends on a number of factors. Let's begin by looking at the advantages and disadvantages that groups afford.

ADVANTAGES OF GROUPS Individual and group decisions each have their own set of strengths. Neither is ideal for all situations. The following identifies the major advantages that groups offer over individuals in the making of decisions:

1. *More complete information and knowledge.* By aggregating the resources of several individuals, we bring more input into the decision process.
2. *Increased diversity of views.* In addition to more input, groups can bring heterogeneity to the decision process. This opens up the opportunity for more approaches and alternatives to be considered.

3. *Increased acceptance of a solution.* Many decisions fail after the final choice has been made because people do not accept the solution. However, if people who will be affected by a decision and who will be instrumental in implementing it are able to participate in the decision itself, they will be more likely to accept it and encourage others to accept it. This translates into more support for the decision and higher satisfaction among those required to implement it.
4. *Increased legitimacy.* North American and many other capitalistic societies value democratic methods. The group decision-making process is consistent with democratic ideals and, therefore, may be perceived as being more legitimate than decisions made by a single person. When an individual decision maker fails to consult with others before making a decision, the decision maker's complete power can create the perception that the decision was made autocratically and arbitrarily.

DISADVANTAGES OF GROUPS

Of course, group decisions are not without drawbacks. Their major disadvantages include:

1. *Time-consuming.* It takes time to assemble a group. The interaction that takes place once the group is in place is frequently inefficient. The result is that groups take more time to reach a solution than would be the case if an individual were making the decision. This can limit management's ability to act quickly and decisively when necessary.
2. *Pressures to conform.* There are social pressures in groups. The desire by group members to be accepted and considered as an asset to the group can result in squashing any overt disagreement, thus encouraging conformity among viewpoints.
3. *Domination by the few.* Group discussion can be dominated by one or a few members. If this dominant coalition is composed of low and medium-ability members, the group's overall effectiveness will suffer.
4. *Ambiguous responsibility.* Group members share responsibility, but who is actually accountable for the final outcome? In an individual decision, it is clear who is responsible. In a group decision, the responsibility of any single member is watered down.

EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY Whether groups are more effective than individuals depends on the criteria you use for defining effectiveness. In terms of accuracy, group decisions will tend to be more accurate. The evidence indicates that, on the average, groups make better-quality decisions than individuals. This doesn't mean, of course, that all groups will outperform every individual. Rather, group decisions have been found to be better than those that would be reached by the average individual in the group. However, they are seldom better than the performance of the best individual.

If decision effectiveness is defined in terms of speed, individuals are superior. If *creativity* is important, groups tend to be more effective than individuals. And if effectiveness means the degree of *acceptance* the final solution achieves, the nod again goes to the group.

But effectiveness cannot be considered without also assessing efficiency. In terms of efficiency, groups almost always stack up as a poor second to the individual decision maker. With few exceptions, group decision making consumes more work hours than if an individual were to tackle the same problem alone. The exceptions tend to be those instances where, to achieve comparable quantities of diverse input, the single decision maker must spend a great deal of time reviewing files and talking to people. Because groups can include members from diverse areas, the time spent searching for information can be reduced. However, as we noted, these advantages in efficiency tend to be the exception. Groups are generally less efficient than individuals. In deciding whether to use groups, then, consideration should be given to assessing whether increases in effectiveness are more than enough to offset the losses in efficiency.

SUMMARY Groups offer an excellent vehicle for performing many of the steps in the decision-making process. They are a source of both breadth and depth of input for information gathering. If the group is composed of individuals with diverse backgrounds, the alternatives generated should be more extensive and the analysis more critical. When the final solution is agreed upon, there are more people in a group decision to support and implement it. These pluses, however, can be more than offset by the time consumed by group decisions, the internal conflicts they create, and the pressures they generate toward conformity. Table 7 briefly outlines the group's assets and liabilities. It allows you to evaluate the net advantage or disadvantage that would accrue in a given situation when you have to choose between an individual and a group decision.

TABLE 7. The Group Decision: Its Assets and Liabilities

Assets	Liabilities
Breadth of information	Time-consuming
Diversity of information	Conformity
Acceptance of solution	Domination of discussion
Legitimacy of process	Ambiguous responsibility

4.4. Groupthink and Groupshift

Two by-products of group decision making have received a considerable amount of attention by researchers in OB. As we'll show, these two phenomena

have the potential to affect the group's ability to appraise alternatives objectively and arrive at quality decision solutions.

The first phenomenon, called **groupthink**, is related to norms. It describes situations in which group pressures for conformity deter the group from critically appraising unusual, minority, or unpopular views. Groupthink is a disease that attacks many groups and can dramatically hinder their performance. The second phenomenon we shall review is called **groupshift**. It indicates that in discussing a given set of alternatives and arriving at a solution, group members tend to exaggerate the initial positions that they hold. In some situations, caution dominates, and there is a conservative shift. More often, however, the evidence indicates that groups tend toward a risky shift. Let's look at each of these phenomena in more detail.

GROUPTHINK A number of years ago I had a peculiar experience. During a faculty meeting, a motion was placed on the floor stipulating each faculty member's responsibilities in regard to counseling students. The motion received a second, and the floor was opened for questions. There were none. After about fifteen seconds of silence, the chairperson asked if he could "call for the question" (fancy terminology for permission to take the vote). No objections were voiced. When the chair asked for those in favor, a vast majority of the thirty-two faculty members in attendance raised their hands. The motion was passed, and the chair proceeded to the next item on the agenda.

Nothing in the process seemed unusual, but the story is not over. About twenty minutes following the end of the meeting, a professor came roaring into my office with a petition. The petition said that the motion on counseling students had been rammed through and requested the chairperson to replace the motion on the next month's agenda for discussion and a vote. When I asked this professor why he had not spoken up less than an hour earlier, he gave me a frustrated look. He then proceeded to tell me that in talking with people after the meeting, he realized there actually had been considerable opposition to the motion. He didn't speak up, he said, because he thought he was the only one opposed. Conclusion: The faculty meeting we had attended had been attacked by the deadly groupthink "disease."

Have you ever felt like speaking up in a meeting, classroom, or informal group, but decided against it? One reason may have been shyness. On the other hand, you may have been a victim of groupthink, the phenomenon that occurs when group members become so enamored of seeking concurrence that the norm for consensus overrides the realistic appraisal of alternative courses of action and the full expression of deviant, minority, or unpopular views. It describes a deterioration in an individual's mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment as a result of group pressures.

We have all seen the symptoms of the groupthink phenomenon:

1. Group members rationalize any resistance to the assumptions they have made. No matter how strongly the evidence may contradict their

basic assumptions, members behave so as to reinforce those assumptions continually.

2. Members apply direct pressures on those who momentarily express doubts about any of the group's shared views or who question the validity of arguments supporting the alternative favored by the majority.
3. Those members who have doubts or hold differing points of view seek to avoid deviating from what appears to be group consensus by keeping silent about misgivings and even minimizing to themselves the importance of their doubts.
4. There appears to be an illusion of unanimity. If someone does not speak, it is assumed that he or she is in full accord. In other words, abstention becomes viewed as a "Yes" vote.

In studies of historic American foreign policy decisions, these symptoms were found to prevail when government policy-making groups failed — unpreparedness at Pearl Harbor in 1941, the U.S. invasion of North Korea, the Bay of Pigs fiasco, and the escalation of the Vietnam War. Importantly, these four groupthink characteristics could not be found where group policy decisions were successful — the Cuban missile crisis and the formulation of the Marshall Plan. Groupthink appears to be closely aligned with the conclusions Asch drew in his experiments with a lone dissenter. Individuals who hold a position that is different from that of the dominant majority are under pressure to suppress, withhold, or modify their true feelings and beliefs. As members of a group, we find it more pleasant to be in agreement — to be a positive part of the group — than to be a disruptive force, even if disruption is necessary to improve the effectiveness of the groups decisions.

Are all groups equally vulnerable to groupthink? The evidence suggests not. Researchers have focused in on three moderating variables — the group's cohesiveness, its leader's behavior, and its insulation from outsiders — but the findings have not been consistent. At this point, the most valid conclusions we can make are: (1) highly cohesive groups have more discussion and bring out more information, but it's unclear whether such groups discourage dissent; (2) groups with impartial leaders who encourage member input generate and discuss more alternative solutions; (3) leaders should avoid expressing a preferred solution early in the group's discussion because this tends to limit critical analysis and significantly increase the likelihood that the group will adopt this solution as the final choice; and (4) insulation of the group leads to fewer alternatives being generated and evaluated.

GROUPSHIFT In comparing group decisions with the individual decisions of members within the group, evidence suggests that there are differences. In some cases, the group decisions are more conservative than the individual decisions. More often, the shift is toward greater risk.

What appears to happen in groups is that the discussion leads to a significant shift in the positions of members toward a more extreme position in

the direction toward which they were already leaning before the discussion. So conservative types become more cautious and the more aggressive types take on more risk. The group discussion tends to *exaggerate* the initial position of the group.

The groupshift can be viewed as actually a special case of groupthink. The decision of the group reflects the dominant decision-making norm that develops during the group's discussion. Whether the shift in the group's decision is toward greater caution or more risk depends on the dominant prediscussion norm.

The greater occurrence of the shift toward risk has generated several explanations for the phenomenon. It's been argued, for instance, that the discussion creates familiarization among the members. As they become more comfortable with each other, they also become more bold and daring. Another argument is that our society values risk, that we admire individuals who are willing to take risks, and that group discussion motivates members to show that they are at least as willing as their peers to take risks. The most plausible explanation of the shift toward risk, however, seems to be that the group diffuses responsibility. Group decisions free any single member from accountability for the group's final choice. Greater risk can be taken because even if the decision fails, no one member can be held wholly responsible.

So how should you use the findings on groupshift? You should recognize that group decisions exaggerate the initial position of the individual members, that the shift has been shown more often to be toward greater risk, and that whether a group will shift toward greater risk or caution is a function of the members' prediscussion inclinations.

4.5. Group Decision-Making Techniques

The most common form of group decision making takes place in face-to-face **interacting groups**. But as our discussion of groupthink demonstrated, interacting groups often censor themselves and pressure individual members toward conformity of opinion. Brainstorming, nominal group and Delphi techniques, and electronic meetings have been proposed as ways to reduce many of the problems inherent in the traditional interacting group. We'll discuss each in this section.

BRAINSTORMING **Brainstorming** is meant to overcome pressures for conformity in the interacting group that retard the development of creative alternatives. It does this by utilizing an idea-generation process that specifically encourages any and all alternatives, while withholding any criticism of those alternatives.

In a typical brainstorming session, a half-dozen to a dozen people sit around a table. The group leader states the problem in a clear manner so that it is understood by all participants. Members then "free-wheel" as many

alternatives as they can in a given length of time. No criticism is allowed, and all the alternatives are recorded for later discussion and analysis. That one idea stimulates others and that judgments of even the most bizarre suggestions are withheld until later encourages group members to “think the unusual.”

Brainstorming, however, is merely a process for generating ideas. The next three techniques go further by offering methods of actually arriving at a preferred solution.

NOMINAL GROUP TECHNIQUE The **nominal group technique** restricts discussion or interpersonal communication during the decision making process; hence, the term *nominal*. Group members are all physically present, as in a traditional committee meeting, but members operate independently. Specifically, a problem is presented and then the following steps take place:

1. Members meet as a group but, before any discussion takes place, each member independently writes down his or her ideas on the problem.
2. This silent period is followed by each member presenting one idea to the group. Each member takes his or her turn, going around the table, presenting a single idea until all ideas have been presented and recorded (typically on a flip chart or chalkboard). No discussion takes place until all ideas have been recorded.
3. The group now discusses the ideas for clarity and evaluates them.
4. Each group member silently and independently rank-orders the ideas. The final decision is determined by the idea with the highest aggregate ranking.

The chief advantage of the nominal group technique is that it permits the group to meet formally but does not restrict independent thinking, as does the interacting group.

DELPHI TECHNIQUE A more complex and time-consuming alternative is the **Delphi technique**. It is similar to the nominal group technique except that it does not require the physical presence of the group's members. In fact, the Delphi technique never allows the group's members to meet face-to-face. The following steps characterize the Delphi technique.

1. The problem is identified and members are asked to provide potential solutions through a series of carefully designed questionnaires.
2. Each member anonymously and independently completes the first questionnaire.
3. Results of the first questionnaire are compiled at a central location, transcribed, and reproduced.
4. Each member receives a copy of the results.
5. After viewing the results, members are again asked for their solutions. The results typically trigger new solutions or cause changes in the original position.
6. Steps 4 and 5 are repeated as often as necessary until consensus is reached.

Like the nominal group technique, the Delphi technique insulates group members from the undue influence of others. Because it does not require the physical presence of the participants, the Delphi technique can be used for decision making among geographically scattered groups. For instance, Sony could use the technique to query its managers in Tokyo Brussels, Paris, London, New York, Toronto, Rio de Janeiro, and Melbourne as to the best worldwide price for one of the company's products. The cost of bringing the executives together at a central location is avoided. Of course, the Delphi technique has its drawbacks. Because the method is extremely time-consuming, it is frequently not applicable where a speedy decision is necessary. Additionally, the method may not develop the rich array of alternatives that the interacting or nominal group technique does. Ideas that might surface from the heat of face-to-face interaction may never arise.

ELECTRONIC MEETINGS The most recent approach to group decision making blends the nominal group technique with sophisticated computer technology. It's called the *electronic meeting*.

Once the technology is in place, the concept is simple. Up to fifty people sit around a horseshoe-shaped table, empty except for a series of computer terminals. Issues are presented to participants and they type their responses onto their computer screen. Individual comments, as well as aggregate votes, are displayed on a projection screen in the room.

The major advantages of electronic meetings are anonymity, honesty, and speed. Participants can anonymously type any message they want and it flashes on the screen for all to see at the push of a participant's board key. It also allows people to be brutally honest without penalty. And it's fast because chitchat is eliminated, discussions don't digress, and many participants can "talk" at once without stepping on one another's toes.

Experts claim that electronic meetings are as much as fifty-five percent faster than traditional face-to-face meetings. Phelps Dodge Mining, for instance, used the approach to cut its annual planning meeting from several days down to twelve hours. Yet there are drawbacks to this technique. Those who can type fast can outshine those who are verbally eloquent but lousy typists; those with the best ideas don't get credit for them; and the process lacks the information richness of face-to-face oral communication. But although this technology is currently in its infancy, the future of group decision making is very likely to include extensive use of electronic meetings.

SUMMARY: EVALUATING EFFECTIVENESS How do these various techniques stack up against the traditional interacting group? As we find so often, each technique has its own set of strengths and weaknesses. The choice of one technique over another will depend on what criteria you want to emphasize. For instance, as Table 8 indicates, the interacting group is good for building group cohesiveness, brainstorming keeps social pressures to a minimum, the Delphi technique minimizes interpersonal conflict, and electronic

meetings process ideas fast. So the “best” technique is defined by the criteria you use to evaluate the group.

TABLE 8. Evaluating Group Effectiveness

Effectiveness Electronic Criteria	Type of Group			Nominal	Delphi
	Interacting	Brainstorming			
Number of ideas	Low	Moderate	High	High	High
Quality of ideas	Low	Moderate	High	High	High
Social pressure	High	Low	Moderate	Low	Low
Money costs	Low	Low	Low	Low	High
Speed	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High
Task orientation	Low	High	High	High	High
Potential for inter- personal conflict	High	Low	Moderate	Low	Low
Feelings of accomplishment	High to low	High	High	Moderate	High
Commitment to solution	High	Not applicable	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Develops group cohesiveness	High	High	Moderate	Low	Low

5. Implications for Performance and Satisfaction

A careful review of this section finds a common theme regarding the relationship between communication and employee satisfaction: The less the uncertainty, the greater the satisfaction. Distortions, ambiguities, and incongruities all increase uncertainty and, hence, have a negative impact on satisfaction.

The less distortion that occurs in communication, the more that goals, feedback, and other management messages to employees will be received as they were intended. This, in turn, should reduce ambiguities and clarify the group’s task. Extensive use of vertical, lateral, and informal channels will increase communication flow, reduce uncertainty, and improve group performance and satisfaction. We should also expect incongruities between verbal and nonverbal communiques to increase uncertainty and reduce satisfaction.

Findings suggest that the goal of perfect communication is unattainable. Yet, there is evidence that demonstrates a positive relationship between effective communication (which includes factors such as perceived trust, perceived accuracy, desire for interaction, top-management receptiveness, and upward information requirements) and worker productivity. Choosing the correct channel, clarifying jargon, and utilizing feedback may therefore, make for more

effective communication. But the human factor generates distortions that can never be fully eliminated. The communication process represents an exchange of messages, but the outcome is meanings that may or may not approximate those that the sender intended. Whatever the sender's expectations, the decoded message in the mind of the receiver represents his or her reality. And it is this "reality" that will determine performance, along with the individual's level of motivation and his or her degree of satisfaction. The issue of motivation is critical, so we should briefly review how communication is central in determining an individual's degree of motivation.

You will remember from expectancy theory that the degree of effort an individual exerts depends on his or her perception of the effort-performance, performance-reward, and reward-goal satisfaction linkages. If individuals are not given the data necessary to make the perceived probability of these linkages high, motivation will suffer. If rewards are not made clear, if the criteria for determining and measuring performance are ambiguous, or individuals are not relatively certain that their effort will lead to satisfactory performance, then effort will be reduced. So communication plays a significant role in determining the level of motivation.

A final implication from the communication literature relates to predicting turnover. The use of realistic job previews acts as a communication device for clarifying role expectations. Employees who have been exposed to a realistic job preview have more accurate information about that job. Comparisons of turnover rates between organizations that use the realistic job preview versus either no preview or only presentation of positive job information show that those not using the realistic preview have, on average, almost twenty-nine percent higher turnover. This makes a strong case for management conveying honest and accurate information about a job to applicants during the recruiting and selection process.

6. Communication and Culture

A fundamental principle of social communication is that we do not live in isolation but, inevitably, must coordinate our behaviors with other societal members. Social support for attitudes and behaviors stems from significant others and from salient reference groups, including subcultural groups. Even in the most individualistic cultures, subcultural groups act as reference points for individual thought and action. For example, a person deciding how to vote in a major election in the United States is often heavily influenced by family, peers, unions, and recreational associates.

Even though we properly speak of similarities of customs and the like that constitute a culture, a web of subcultures within a culture mediates communication. For example, North America contains numerous subcultural groups that act as reference groups, mediating thought and behavior. A Mexican

American in South Texas may reject culturally expected participation in a Fiesta because of his loyalty to an educational group, a religious sect, or uppermiddle-class ideals—all of which represent subcultures.

This section focuses on group influence and some individual characteristics of various subcultures. Since many intercultural communication problems stem from intergroup or subcultural communication situations, to understand reference-group influence is to more fully appreciate microcosms that make up the whole of a culture.

6.1. What Is a Subculture?

The term *subculture* is used interchangeably with identification groups and does not connote any notion of “less than” or “below.” It is like a microculture. Rodgers (1978) advanced an eclectic definition of subculture, suggesting that a subculture is any collectivity of persons who possess conscious membership in identifiable units of an encompassing cultural unit as well as the larger cultural unit itself. His definition reminds us that groupings and social identification are powerful concepts related to interpersonal bonding. American coal miners exemplify just such a closed culture. Perhaps a key ingredient in defining subcultures is shared self-image. Boulding (1972) argued that communication serves to reinforce group images, making them self-supporting and self-propagating. More important, the group bonding and anchoring are pivotal, influencing and filtering individual communication.

6.2. Reference Group Communication

Reference groups, sometimes called primary groups, are highly important to us and influence many of our decisions. These groups act as mediating influences upon a given communication. Again, they serve as a focal point for interpreting messages and affect perceptions of issues and events.

The term *reference group* refers to a primary group anchor. A group’s influence is strong, touching our opinions and becoming a reference, even a symbol, of personal self-worth and identification.

Most reference groups center around family, play, or peer groups, committees, workers, and co-members in voluntary organizations (Smith, Bruner, and White 1956, Sherif and Sherif 1967; Berelson and Steiner 1964). The importance lies in their influence.

Most of us belong to multiple groups. One of their major functions is to set and enforce norms, often determining behavior for the individuals. How? By creating drives toward conformity. By conforming to group norms, we receive two rewards: (1) acceptance by the group and (2) title to group beliefs, to which we can cling as a way of interpreting life’s events (Abelson 1959).

There is security when the group acts as a source, reinforcement, and support, bolstering old attitudes and providing a context for future conversion to new positions (Sherif, Sherif, and Nebergall 1965). This social communication “web of influence” is most meaningful under the following group variables:

Group size. The smaller the reference group, the greater the pressure to conform. Within a large group, for example, less interpersonal interaction occurs, and thus the group looks to a central leader to structure the communication (Bettinghaus 1980). The size of the group influences the amount and type of participation potentially available to members. Thus, small-group members are more easily involved in discussion, and accountability results.

Frequency of contact. Another group characteristic is the relationship between attitudes and frequency of contact. Researchers have observed that the more interaction within a group, the more likely that members will have positive feelings toward other group members. This process of in-group communication is obviously influential.

When in-group meets out-group, however, what happens? They realize that the negative stereotypes are inaccurate and therefore seek to correct the prejudice. As Gudykunst (1977) pointed out, however, intergroup contact or the *contact hypothesis* works best under certain favorable conditions:

1. When the status of persons of both groups is similar, positive attitudes result.
2. When someone in charge promotes intergroup contact, positive attitudes result.
3. When the intergroup contact is personal, rather than casual or impersonal, positive attitudes result.
4. When the intergroup contact seems rewarding and pleasant, positive attitudes result.
5. When the individuals within each group differ markedly from commonly held negative stereotypes, positive attitudes result.

The implications for minority, family, international, and regional differences are enormous.

Cohesiveness. Another factor in group influence is cohesiveness, which most frequently is defined as the degree of group attraction for group members. Cohesion implies a unity of group-centeredness and loyalty. In Back's (1958) classic study of cohesive and noncohesive groups, (1) cohesive members showed efforts toward uniformity and agreement, (2) fewer individual differences emerged in the highly cohesive groups, and (3) discussion was more effective, producing more influence and change than in noncohesive groups. In contrast, members of low-cohesive groups appeared to act independently, disregarding the needs and desires of other group members.

Group cohesiveness extends to several general principles that can be summarized as follows (Bettinghaus 1980):

1. Highly cohesive groups have fewer deviants in their decisions.
2. Cohesive groups are more likely to be influenced by persuasive communication.
3. Members of a highly cohesive group communicate frequently, and the communication is distributed more evenly among group members.
4. Members of a highly cohesive group offer mutual support and tend to reject threatening messages.
5. The higher the cohesiveness of the group, the stronger the pressure for individuals to conform.

Group salience. Salience refers to the importance of a group and, therefore, the value the individual places upon the group. In another sense, salience specifies personal awareness of the group and perceptions of its importance. Researchers tell us that resistance to change of group norms and attitudes is in direct proportion to the group's degree of salience. For example, Middle East terrorist groups would be expected to resist outside communication because of the salience the groups hold for their members.

In addition, research has demonstrated that the more interested an individual is in group membership and the more salient the group, the more he or she tends to conform to its norms of behavior. An example of this principle is the Jonestown, Guyana, religious community, where group salience may have been a factor leading to an ultimate cohesive behavior — mass suicide of nine hundred victims.

Clarity of group norms. Studies concerning group norms have shown that, in general, the more ambiguous the group norms and standards of conduct, the less control the group has over its members. However, if the standards are clear and unambiguous, the pressure to conform is greater. Also, when ambiguity is prevalent within a group, interaction among group members increases to reduce the ambiguity. For example, in college life, if the rules for fraternity membership are unclear, then it is unlikely that the fraternity will influence its members.

Homogeneity. While homophily refers to degree of similarity on various characteristics between two people, homogeneity refers to similarity among many group members. We know that small groups tend toward uniformity in actions and attitudes as homogeneity increases. Group homogeneity also contributes toward cohesiveness. Also, when homogeneous attitudes prevail, an individual tends to hold personal attitudes more tenaciously. Homogeneity of opinion is most directly observable in reference groups, such as family, friends, and co-workers, a point still as true as when Katz (1963) first reported it.

Issues. The issues that confront the reference group influence group members. As the importance of a particular issue increases, we tend to conform in attitudes, behaviors, and values. On the other hand, when an issue is ambiguous, or even overly complex, we find consolation in conforming to views consistent with the majority, especially when we lack experience in dealing with that particular issue.

Affiliative needs of group members. Reference-group influence extends only as far as the boundaries of the human personality allow. Personality affects individual response in concert with group influences. For example, whenever group members depend strongly upon the group for satisfying various needs, they conform to group expectations, if they understand the norms. And this conformity may result from a need to resemble highly esteemed persons, or to sustain social approval. No one wants rejection, but some people fear it significantly. In such situations, communication may become overly self-serving, since dependent members may offer frequent “positive strokes” to win the favor of high-status members and to receive positive strokes themselves.

Affiliative personalities experience a high need for acceptance. The more strongly we are motivated to stay in a group, for example, the more susceptible we are to persuasion from the group. Also, individuals who are strongly attached to the group are least influenced by later communication that attacks their group norms. A high need for acceptance and fear of rejection may explain why some people are compulsive “joiners” — they seek acceptance through group affiliation.

Goal-directed reasons for group membership. As we have already stated, although groups influence individuals, some people join groups for the primary purpose of reinforcing their existing beliefs. For example, a person who already holds a position consistent with the goals of the organization may join a civic club. Membership may deepen this person’s beliefs and strengthen commitment, but a favorable predisposition existed before joining. A secondary individual purpose for joining groups concerns the person’s using the group for personal goals. The person who joins the civic club may indeed associate with the group because the group shares similar viewpoints, but the same person may identify with the group because of less idealistic motives. For example, a salesperson may wish to make contacts, useful later for sales appointments. In this sense, reference groups serve instrumentally, mostly as a stepping-stone for individual purposes.

6.3. Regional Cultures and Communication

People filter messages through what DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1976) called the “social categories” of communication. The inherent idea of this approach is that certain groupings of people are sufficiently similar in outlook. We may wish to think of these categories, as some researchers do, as demographic groupings, which are another dimension describing subcultures and communication. Regional differences are not only demographically geographical, but also social. Intercultural communicators who face any cultural difference are faced with uncertainty. Even speech patterns and dialectical differences can produce feelings of disrespect toward others. Because negative perceptual filters mislead a person, each intercultural communication event

should be viewed in light of the uniqueness of each separate interaction. Evidence indicates that regional cultures (for example, West Coast or East Coast) apply different approaches to information management and particularly to intercultural relationship style in the United States. Some of the dimensions that mark the differences in communicator style are

1. Perceived abruptness
2. Speed of speech communication delivery
3. Amount of verbal buffering or preparation with introductory phrase in a sentence
4. Amount of interpersonal buffering where informal rapport is built to various extents
5. Amount of eye contact, touch, space, and verbal pausing
6. Amount of verbal and nonverbal behavior surrounding phrases and messages before leaving a conversation
7. Amount of warmth and openness
8. Amount of animation
9. Amount of dominance
10. Amount of contentiousness

While these categories do not represent all possible regional differences, they highlight some of the most common areas of communication difference, besides accent. Regional differences can silently keep people apart. Some of the most sophisticated people seemingly let the nonobvious prejudices of regional differences affect their attitudes, relationships, and communication style. This unfortunate waste of human resources is preventable.

6.4. Rural Cultures and Communication

In addition to regional differences, it is possible to identify characteristic norms of rurality. Norms of rural cultures include an emphasis on personal knowhow, practicality, and simplicity over complexity in approaching decisions. Skills at “doing” rather than “being” or “knowing” are often valued. Of course, cultural norms in some rural cultures may favor innovation and change, while others resist change and embrace traditionalism. Even in those cases, though, an emphasis on skills and action is still evident.

A strong norm toward interpersonal relationships also exists within rural cultures. Indications are that bonds of friendship last longer. Friendship is rooted deeper. And not surprisingly, norms of rurality extend into traditional American values and themes.

Of further research interest is the recent notion that rurality is a mindset. For example, there are pockets of rural Southerners in the greater Detroit area. In many cases, their cognitive, behavioral, and linguistic subculture is as it was fifty years ago when migration from South to North was high.

A study by Tichenor (1981) showed a higher degree of communication apprehension among rural cultural people. She also found higher cognitive complexity for rural individuals, which indicates a higher ability to form accurate interpersonal impressions. This also means that rural individuals possess a more diverse set of categories by which to finely judge interpersonal relations. In fact, as Perrin (1980) writes in his book *First Person Rural*, rural people can judge rather quickly according to the interpersonal rules.

Communication style differences of rural individuals involve cultural norms blended with regional practices. For instance, a GM plant relocated into a traditional Southern rural area from an urban, midwestern region. Most of the management team was oriented toward urban culture, while most of the machinists and other members of the work force were native to that rural area. The problems that were most evident were the communication style differences. Beyond accent and dialectical differences, there were some diverse approaches to managerial style of communication.

Overall, characteristics of rural communication style, based on clinical observations and on the work by Perrin (1980), are the following:

1. Requests and other forms of communication are not made in a demanding style.
2. Messages tend to be phrased in personal terms, rather than objective terms.
3. Respect is shown for the free will of the other person.
4. Story, image, and describing background scenarios play an important role in the communication style. Communication is filled with anecdotes and stories, often about family or friends, though in a number of cases about “out-groups.”
5. Messages are usually related to a unified whole. There is a kind of implicit theory about how this person or that event fits into the whole picture from a cultural point of view. For instance, “He acted kind a crazy, most likely because he’s been working long hours.”
6. History behind events, people, and conditons serve organizing functions for messages, as, for instance, “He perty near fell off the hay wagon, but that’s no wonder, cause his grandpa did the same thing twice when he was a boy.”

6.5. Urban Cultures and Communication

Metropolitan communities seem characterized as composed of members needing identification. For example, from a census of Catholic Mass attenders in Montreal, Serge Carlos (1970) discovered that the frequency of church attendance increased as people moved from the central areas of the city to the periphery. Although a certain amount of quality in religious practices diminished, Carlos explained higher church attendance as a need for community integration when people moved from the urban core to the suburbs.

Certain forms of neighborhood identification, such as when neighbors stand together on an issue, lead to cohesive neighborhoods. Also, when people have high identification needs, they tend to be joiners, which leads to more neighborhood cohesiveness. Strong upward mobility and an emphasis on success symbols are also associated with urban cultures (McDonald 1985).

Inner-city communities, however, may be characterized as composed of isolated members with little group cohesion. Few social participation outlets are available, and isolation seems to remain entrenched unless other group memberships override the isolation. Housing problems and high crime rates affect social participation in urban areas and foster less dependence on interpersonal communication networks.

Anomia, a generalized isolation and loneliness, may result partly from crowded physical surroundings. Such conditions can easily lead to urban fears and suspicions predicated upon an urban dweller's experience with such things as increased crime and decreased personal territoriality.

6.6. Socioeconomic Cultures and Communication

Social systems often become stratified as a result of socioeconomic variables, such as occupation, income, and education. That is, members of a society rank people into higher or lower social positions, producing a rank order of respect and prestige. Respect is conferred to individuals according to their conformity to a society's ideals. *Class* is a role-related position determined by the prestige, esteem, and value that other members of the social system place on the individual's position and, therefore, on the individual. Some intercultural communication problems result from misunderstandings among socioeconomic subcultures.

Overall, classes are inclined to depreciate the social differences between themselves and higher classes and to magnify differences with lower classes. Sometimes, this perceptual set is heightened so that a certain unity of outlook exists by allusions to "people like us" and to persons "not our kind." A feeling of "we-ness" especially occurs when expressing dissatisfaction with the upward mobility of the lower classes or resentment toward the higher classes. Unity is further intensified through common beliefs and patterns of overt behavior. The Indian caste system is an example of a highly ordered and rigidly determined class ranking, which in turn predicts attitudes and communication between different castes within the larger context of India's culture. Labor and management differences also reflect the attitudes that some classes hold toward other classes and of the importance of communication in resolving those differences.

Research reveals unique tendencies concerning where socioeconomic differences emerge. First, compared with stationary members, those members climbing upward in the class system are not as likely to maintain close

personal friendships. This phenomenon can partly be traced to their more frequent geographical movement, as Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock* reminds us. Second, prestige and achievement become more valuable to middle-class members than to lower-class members and, especially, to middle-class persons who are moving upward. Third, lower classes seem to be more distrustful of authority utilized by more powerful classes (Berelson and Steiner 1964).

6.7. In-Group and Out-Group Communication

Groups we identify with are “in-groups”; those we do not identify with are “outgroups.” Probably the most frequent type of in/out groups in subcultural communication are interethnic and interracial communication groups. So principles in understanding intergroup communication usually hold true for interethnic situations. The characteristics common to interracial communication and interethnic communication may broadly apply to many intergroup interactions. While far more information exists about these specialized forms of communication, the following three areas touch a chord of commonality and serve to draw significant aspects together.

Suspicion. Some situations are frequently marked by mutual suspicions of group *A* toward group *B*. The era of the 1960s in the United States serves to illustrate the intense feelings of a number of racial and ethnic groups toward contrasting groups. The level of suspicion aroused is clearly irrational in most cases and is fueled by specific features, such as the “we-they” syndrome and mistrust.

We-They dichotomy. An accompanying characteristic of suspicion in the interracial and interethnic context is the distinction between “we” and “they.” Such a distinction clearly heightens a sense of loyalty and group identity, both of which are necessary for social change. The words of Malcom X illustrate this principle: “No, I’m not an American. I’m one of the 22 million black people who are victims of Americanism. One of the 22 million black people who are victims of democracy.” . . . (Minnick 1979, 143)

Mistrust. Suspicion is also aroused by attitudes of mistrust. Unfortunately, since contacts are often limited, people selectively perceive racial and ethnic groups that contrast with their own in such a way to create mutual mistrust. The mistrust, however, is often predicated upon not only selective perception but also upon negative, erroneous stereotypes.

Stereotypes develop as a way of organizing our world. Categorizing is a necessary part of daily functioning. However, stereotyping categories of people is often misleading, since all people within a category are not alike and since we may not always fully understand what we perceive.

Experimental studies confirm anecdotal notions of stereotypes and specify the ways in which those stereotypes operate. For example, in his study of stereotypic attitudes toward Mexican Americans, England (1977) used two

groups of matched respondents. Both groups were shown a series of eight slides. The central figure in the slides shown to group 1 was a Mexican American male in various scenes—in a yard behind a frame house, carrying trash cans, raking leaves around a tree, and putting the leaves into a wagon. He was dressed in a work shirt, work pants, and an outdoor work hat. Group 2 was shown exactly the same scenes, except that the man in the slides was an Anglo male dressed exactly as the Mexican American stimulus figure. Subjects were told they would be shown some slides and were then asked to evaluate what they saw. The slides were shown twice in succession with no narration.

On a series of questions, several significant test results revealed perceived differences toward the Mexican American and the Anglo. The subjects perceived the Mexican American as having a larger family and less education than the Anglo. They further perceived the Mexican American as being engaged in the process of working for someone else in that person's backyard. These data clearly revealed that the perception of ethnic background alone precipitates significant differences in assessing a person's characteristics, usually in the direction of negative stereotypes.

The solution to the problem of negative stereotypes, in terms of communication, is complex, as evidenced by the volumes written on the subject. However, the following simple but direct observations are helpful in indicating where to begin:

1. *Seek a common code.* Frequently, linguistic variations and dialectical differences cause people to close the door to further understanding and communication attempts. By seeking a common code, we can maximize our chances for a heightened overlap of experiences. Communication in establishing a common code should become two-way; asking questions and seeking to clarify are excellent ways to begin the process.
2. *Seek to build trust.* Trust comes from showing trust. An accompanying sense of empathy toward others can turn hostility into a meaningful relationship.
3. *Suspend judgments.* If interaction with a person from a different racial or ethnic background raises negative attitudes toward that group, then make a conscious effort to suspend those attitudes. Consider the uniqueness of each individual by carefully listening, expressing your view honestly, and then continuing to listen.

6.8. Solidarity

A third characteristic of interracial and interethnic communication is the group's solidarity, often corresponding to a group's self-identity, as noted earlier. This solidarity was well illustrated in the words of Martin Luther King when he declared:

“But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination.

One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So we have come here today to dramatize a shameful condition. In a sense, we have come to our nation’s capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir.” (Minnick 1979, 140-41)

The point of commonality, so eloquently stressed in this excerpt, was the mutual suffering and the future promise of mutual reward to a group showing solidarity (emphasized by the “we”).

6.9. Countercultural Communication

A counterculture is a unit that stands in opposition to the larger culture, though a part of the larger culture. The exploration of countercultural communication is largely a matter of understanding the counterculture itself. To best understand a counterculture, let us discuss some features that serve to bind its members: common code, common enemy, and common symbols.

Common code. Counterculture group members gravitate toward a common set of linguistic usages, such as jargon, slang, and so on, that are meaningfully interpreted usually only in light of the group members assigned meanings to the code system. Street language, while constantly changing, is an example of specialized code usage in antisocial groups such as gangs.

Common enemy. In a number of countercultures, there is a perceived common enemy, such as the dominant culture, big business, the world and its “rat race,” and so on. When attention is focused on the common enemy, who incidently is allegedly responsible for some ill affecting the countercultural group, the group then has a rallying point. In this way, group members are reinforced in their beliefs, and the reinforcement tends to bond the group into an even more cohesive unit. The numerous terrorist groups found throughout the world clearly use images of enemy hatred, etc.

Many countercultural members use symbolic objects, such as flags, graphic art, highly prized objects, drugs, and so forth, to emphasize commonality. The symbols become another rallying point — and thus provide not only a sense of unification but a tangible reflection of personal and group identity.

6.10. Poverty Cultures and Communication

Another subculture is poverty culture which is marked by lack of financial and material resources. The economic condition of the poverty culture, however, correlates with several value and attitudinal beliefs. Rogers (1969) described several factors that indicate a profile of attitudes among the poor. In some ways, these factors can be attributed to oppressed cultures found in many parts of the world.

Perceived limited. Members of many traditional subcultures believe the world's goods to be something like a pie with a limited number of slices. Consequently, if someone prospers, that prosperity is perceived to occur only at others' expense, since it is assumed that prosperity means one has taken an inordinate amount of the pie. It follows that neighbors may become suspicious of a community member who financially succeeds and thus violates the unspoken norms of this subculture.

Familism. Members of many traditional subcultures subordinate personal goals to the wishes and perceived good of the family. These people typically do not think of themselves apart from the family, and this heavy emphasis upon the family is called familism.

Fatalism. Fatalism is the degree to which we cannot control our future. In many traditional subcultures, the future is often viewed as humanly unknown and certainly uncontrollable.

Lack of innovativeness. Members of traditional subcultures typically react negatively, rather than positively, to innovations. In the case of technological innovations, the resistance may be purely economic, although a strong element of traditionalism also dictates that, despite the cost, most things need to be done according to the past ways, which have been tried and proven by predecessors.

Limited aspirations. Members of many subcultures in the poverty cycle have a low motivation for achievement. They simply do not think of raising themselves in this world in an economic or status sense. That a poverty-level person does not actively seek a job should not be surprising in light of the lowered goals accompanying the debilitating effects of poverty.

Lack of deferred gratification. Apparently, members of poverty subcultures and traditional societies find it difficult to think about deferring gratifying experiences until the future. The concept of saving money for a later time has few takers in this subcultural pattern. Perhaps the immediacy of personal subsistence leads to a "here-and-now" syndrome of reward, rather than postponement of immediate satisfaction to await future rewards. Also, some traditional cultures may not have linguistic notions of future time.

Low empathy. Members of poverty subcultures seem unable to project themselves into any situation or role other than their present one. This lack of

projection may be why traditional subcultures around the world resist attempts at modernization.

Table 8 shows how various concepts are viewed by the poverty culture in the United States. Features here are added from Daniel’s (1976) seminal ideas on U.S. poverty.

TABLE 8. Perceptions of the Poverty Culture in the United States

Concept	Poverty Culture’s View
Success	Generally unattainable, limited only to people with a lot of luck
Failure	Inevitable, no hope to overcome inherent failure
Emotions	Emotions are made to be expressed, publicly or privately
Future	Difficult to envision, so live for now
Money	To be used before it gets away, not saved for the future
Police	Unfriendly, out to get us, and should be avoided
Education	Useful for poor people with upward aspirations, an obstacle for individuals with low aspirations
Fate	Dominates some people since various seen and unseen forces control our destiny.

6.11. The Process of Intergroup Communication

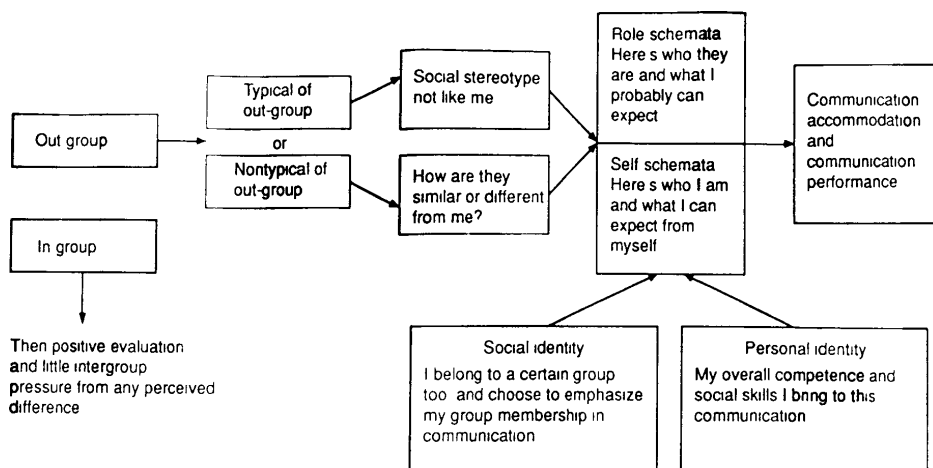
In sum, what we are saying is that group memberships play an important role in shaping a person’s social behavior. We can indicate something about the nature of that person because of the primary or ethnic group influence or a host of other group patterns. But the question remains, exactly what process is occurring out of which people draw upon these group anchors? Furthermore, how does that reservoir of self-identification affect intergroup communication? People draw upon their cultural roots to respond to interactions. So what we see in others is often a reflection of a personality, or a reflection of how that person thinks about fellow communicators, or partly a pattern of how culture teaches one to respond to communication.

Social categorization. This process of how intergroup communication works really proceeds through in several stages. The first part of the process is really a series of stages that occur called *social categorization* (Gudykunst and Gumbs 1989). It is something like stereotyping. We put people in different boxes, and, unfortunately, build fences around the boxes. For example, a person is either a Mexican or an Anglo, an Asian or a Black. And over time, we tend to build a set of expectations of how Asians, Mexicans, Angles, and Blacks are supposed to act. Some folks have a more permeable border than

others, but the point is the tendency to build these perimeters. Of course, we need to recognize, as many scholars have reminded us, that there are a number of personality factors that intervene or mediate in this social categorization practice. For example, people who are somewhat rigid and dogmatic tend to have narrower and less permeable categories than individuals who are more open and less rigid.

As the reader can see in Figure 6, the model of intergroup communication continues, following the social categorization process. For one thing, the social categorization process leads to two possible classifications: the person is seen either as an in-group member or an out-group member. If the person is an out-group member, then social stereotyping takes place. That is, many people assume various traits, emotions, roles, abilities, and interests of others. All the old mental tapes get played that trigger rigid thoughts of how we are just so certain about this person's likes and dislikes: "She must like a certain kind of music, because she is from a certain particular ethnic group" or "He is probably a good athlete because he is of a particular racial heritage." As it turns out, these social stereotypes operate mostly if we perceive a person as typical of a social group. If the person is not typical, another set of dynamics kicks in, dynamics involving attribution concerning the other person. So, for the typical members, social stereotyping leads further into the process, a process which is affected by two kinds of internal perceptions: those about self and those about others.

FIGURE 6. A Model of Social Categorization



We perceive similarity or difference and assign typicality. Based on role and self expectations, the second rooted in social and personal identity, we

then engage in communication accommodation and performance. The desire or ability to engage in positive communication and performance also depends on positive social and personal identifications. (See research by Gudykunst and Gumbs 1989, Gallois and others 1988, Ting-Toomey 1989.)

Self- and role-schemata. Perceptions about self, intercultural communication scholars call self-schemata (Gudykunst and Gumbs 1989). It is very similar to the idea of self-concept, but it refers to two specific identity issues. One identification factor is called *social identity* — my perception of belonging to a group. If a group, for instance, is very positive for me, and I choose to identify with that group, then I would have a very high social identification in my self-schemata. A second aspect of the self in interpersonal terms is my *personal identity*. That issue has to do with the question of personal capabilities or personal competence. These two aspects of the self-schemata answer the questions. Who am I in this communication situation, and what can I expect of myself?

A second dimension, called *role-schemata*, however, overlaps at this point. Role-schemata answers the questions: Who is the other group, and what can I probably expect from this group?

Communication accommodation. Based on the cumulative processing of this out-group member, (that is, stereotypes about the person, perceptions about specific attributes, what I can expect from him, what I can expect from myself), there is then a motivation to engage in communication accommodation and communication performance, according to research by Gallois and others (1988). If social and personal identification are positive, we expect positive communication performance. However, the more we develop intimacy, the less important the differences initially perceived are in the first place.

Ethnolinguistic vitality. There are some factors that could easily prevent this model from being active. For one thing, positive results will not occur if what is called *ethnolinguistic vitality* (the perceived prestige of a language group) somehow produces or relates to a sense of extreme pride or arrogance on the part of one of the interactants, an arrogance that we frequently call ethnocentrism. Also, if anxiety or threat or uncertainty remains in high proportions, following the stereotyping process, then that, too, would preclude effective communication. Third, certain personality factors could mediate the process, and lead to ineffective outcomes. Overall, a person who is highly rigid, who is not very good at self-monitoring, and who is low in cognitive complexity and lacks sufficient cognitive categories will short-circuit the communication process at this point.

When we engage in intercultural listening, it is easy now to see how intercultural groups with which we socially identify can help or hinder. Clearly, our perception of groups is hindered if we stereotype prematurely and draw upon negative attributions toward another person or group. If our own identities are insecure, lacking robust social or personal identification, it is less likely that we

would listen very carefully. Also, our entire motivation to listen to others is undermined when there is no desire toward communication accommodation. Finally, if we lack empathy and sensitivity to the communication needs of others, we can fail.

6.12. Developing Intercultural Communication Skills with Subcultures

We invite you to consider some suggestions for intercultural skills. We hope this list will stimulate your own response to your endeavors.

1. *Test your stereotypes.* We may have negative impressions of others that are based on incorrect information. Ask yourself why you feel as you do, and try to correct false impressions.
2. *Treat cultural differences as a resource.* All too often, we treat cultural differences as something highly negative and thus approach intercultural communication with something of a jaundiced eye. We should look upon differences as an opportunity, a resource from which to learn exciting things about a new culture, a new person, and ourselves.
3. *Develop ways of handling uncertainty.* Intercultural communication by its nature poses various degrees of uncertainty—uncertainty about ourselves, and about what to say and do. Thus, each of us needs to develop an ability to handle contradictions and uncertainty with grace and ease.
4. *Develop self-respect.* One of the best things that can help us in developing intercultural contacts is to take an extra dose of self-confidence. Be positive about others, and that will help you become positive about yourself. Criticism and resentment only serve to hurt you.
5. *Do not rely on past experiences to deal with every new situation.* The past comes from your own cultural background. But the new culture represents a situation where your familiar cues are not present, and thus, to respond to features in the new culture as if you were in the old culture would be misleading.
6. *Outgoingness may not work.* If you handle new situations in your own culture with outgoingness, you may be surprised to find that being extra friendly does not necessarily work in the subculture where you are currently interacting.
7. *Competition may not work.* If you like competitiveness, do not be surprised if cultural differences preclude this value from being mutually appreciated.

8. *Progressivism may not work.* You may also hold strong attitudes toward goal orientation and “progressivism.” That is, you may expect a subculture to be moving in a linear manner straight toward some goals that you have predetermined are good. Do not be surprised should such a direction not work for you.
9. *Stress areas of positive relations.* As we have already indicated throughout this section, look for ways to build bridges of understanding.
10. *Do not assume that your needs are like everyone else’s needs.* Because you feel a certain way, do not assume that your feelings reflect anyone else’s opinion. By listening and asking questions, you can quickly discover how your personal frame of reference does not match another person’s viewpoint. And that discovery is the beginning of effective intercultural communication within subcultures.
11. *Learn the rules of the subculture.* You may think that subcultures do not have a systematized way of behaving, but a subculture, like a culture, has rules. Effective intercultural communication requires an understanding of the system.

COURSE TASKS

1. Make up a logic scheme of your basic knowledge on unit’s theme.

2. Self-assessment.

1. “Communication is the transference of meaning among group members.” Discuss this definition and indicate what is missing from this definition to ensure that communication is effective.
2. Describe the functions that communication provides within a group or organization. Give an example of each.
3. Describe the communication process and identify its key components. Give an example of how this process operates with both oral and written messages.
4. “Ineffective communication is the fault of the sender.” Do you agree or disagree? Discuss.
5. What characterizes a communication that is rich in capacity to convey information?
6. Contrast active and passive listening.
7. When is negative feedback most likely to be accepted?
8. What can you do to improve the likelihood that your communiques will be received and understood as you intend?
9. “Informal communication can facilitate a group’s effectiveness.” Do you agree or disagree? Discuss.
10. “Rumors start because something makes titillating gossip.” Do you agree or disagree? Discuss.

11. What is groupthink? Is the concept applicable to the family unit as well as -to organizations? Explain.
12. When are group decisions likely to be better than those made by individuals?

ROLE-PLAY

PART 1 CASE-INCIDENT 1

Read the text and prepare to answer the questions.

John-Book Management

John Davis - J. D. to his friends - is a vice president at Re: Member Data Services. His company sells data-processing systems to credit unions and J. D. runs the department known as Conversions and Training in Re: Member's Memphis office. Once a sale is made, J.D.'s group converts the customer's database to the new system and then trains the customer's employees.

Until 1989, when Re:Member bought it, J.D.'s office was owned by a large Minneapolis firm that prided itself on keeping its employees in the dark. J.D. would learn about a new job when it landed on his desk, deadline attached. He never knew which prospects were being courted or what the salesperson was promising them or how many jobs he and his colleagues would be faced with in the next month or three. Nor did he know how much money his department made or lost or, indeed, how the office itself was doing.

When Re:Member came in, J.D. was made a vice president and thereby gained access to all the information he needed. But the frustrating experience of working in the dark stuck with him. What would happen, J.D. wondered, if every employee to keep a record of time spent on each job, materials costs, travel and entertainment, and so on. He had the computer track each employee's time, daily billing, salary costs, and expenses. Then he explained to his employees that each of them would now be responsible for his or her own profitability. Every month, J.D. would provide his twelve-person staff with printouts showing how much the company made or lost on each job. Every person would also get a printout showing how much money he or she made or lost for the company that month.

The new system made some people nervous at first because they feared it would be found out that they weren't making any money for the firm. But gradually those fears subsided. And with their newfound information, employees began coming up with ways their group could generate revenues, cut costs, and

expand their skills to improve their individual accounts. In the first year of the program, J.D. found that employee-initiated ideas saved the company \$37,000. In addition, he believes he has made his office a more exciting and challenging place to work.

QUESTIONS

1. Secrecy is power. Sharing information undermines the separation of management and labor. A boss's claim to authority rests on knowing more about company affairs than subordinates do. Isn't J.D.'s approach to managing, therefore, an example of poor management?
2. J.D.'s program assumes that employees care. But not all employees want the bottom-line responsibility and pressure that come with information. What type of people do you think would prefer working for this kind of organization?
3. Would J.D.'s program work in an office where employees belonged to a labor union? Would it succeed with blue-collar workers who have assembly-line jobs? Discuss.

CASE-INCIDENT 2

Read the text and prepare to answer the questions.

Games People Play in the Shipping Department

The Science Fiction Book Club (SFBC) sells a large list of science fiction books, at discount prices, entirely by mail order. In 1992, the club shipped over 370,000 books and generated revenues of \$6,4 million. Anyone familiar with the mail-order business realizes that it offers extremely high profit potential because, under careful management, inventory costs and overhead can be kept quite low. The biggest problems in mail-order businesses are filling orders, shipping the merchandise, and billing the customers. At SFBC, the Packing and Shipping (P&S) Department employs eight full-time people:

Ray, forty-four years old, has worked in P&S for seven years.

Al, forty-nine years old, has worked in P&S for nine years.

R.J., fifty-three years old, has worked in P&S for sixteen years. He had been head of the department for two years back in the late 1970s, but stepped down voluntarily because of continuing stomach problems that doctors attributed to supervisory pressures.

Pearl, fifty-nine years old, was the original employee hired by the founder. She has been at SFBC for twenty-five years and in P&S for twenty-one years.

Margaret, thirty-one years old, is the newest member of the department. She has been employed less than a year.

Steve, twenty-seven years old, has worked in P&S for three years. He goes to college at nights and makes no effort to hide that he plans on leaving P&S and probably SFBC when he gets his degree next year.

George, forty-six years old, is currently head of P&S. He has been with SFBC for ten years, and in P&S for six.

Gary, twenty-five years old, has worked in P&S for two years.

The jobs in a shipping department are uniformly dull and repetitive. Each person is responsible for wrapping, addressing, and making the bills out on anywhere from one hundred to two hundred books a day. Part of George's responsibilities are to make allocations to each worker and to ensure that no significant backlogs occur. However, George spends less than ten percent of his time in supervisory activities. The rest of the time he wraps, addresses, and makes out bills just like everyone else.

Apparently to deal with the repetitiveness of their jobs, the department members have created a number of games that they play among themselves. They seem almost childish, but it is obvious that the games mean something to these people. Importantly, each is played regularly. Some of the ones that will be described are played at least once a day. All are played a minimum of twice a week.

"The Stamp Machine Is Broken" is a game that belongs to Al. At least once a day, Al goes over to the postage meter in the office and unplugs it. He then proceeds loudly to attempt to make a stamp for a package. "The stamp machine is broken again," he yells. Either Ray or Gary, or both, will come over and spend thirty seconds or so trying to "fix" it, then "discover" that it's unplugged. The one who finds it unplugged then says "Al, you're a mechanical spastic" and others in the office join and laugh.

Gary is the initiator of the game "Steve, There's a Call for You." Usually played in the late afternoon, an hour or so before everyone goes home, Gary will pick up the phone and pretend that there is someone on the line. "Hey, Steve, it's for you," he'll yell out. "It's Mr. Big [the president of SFBC]. Says he wants you to come over to his office right away. You're going to be the new vice president!" The game is an obvious sarcastic jab at Steve's going to college and his frequent comments about someday being a big executive.

R.J., though fifty-three years old, has never married and lives with his mother. The main interests in his life are telling stories, showing pictures of last year's vacation, and planning for this year's trip. Without exception, everyone finds R.J.'s vacation talk boring. But that doesn't stop Pearl or George from "setting him up" several times a week. "Hey R.J., can we see those pictures you took last year in Oregon again?" That question always gets R.J. to drop whatever he's doing and pull seventy-five to one hundred pictures from his top drawer. "Hey, R.J., what are you planning to do on your vacation this year?" always gets R.J.'s eyes shining and invariably leads to the unfolding of maps he also keeps in his top drawer.

George's favorite game is "What's It Like to Be Rich?" which he plays with Pearl. Pearl's husband had been a successful banker and had died a half-dozen years earlier. He left her very well off financially. Pearl enjoys everyone knowing that she doesn't have to work, has a large lovely home, buys a new car every year, and includes some of the city's more prominent business people and politicians among her friends. George will mention the name of some big shot in town, and Pearl never fails to take the bait. She proceeds to tell how he is a close friend of hers. George might also bring up money in some context in order to allow Pearl to complain about high taxes, the difficulty in finding good housekeepers, the high cost of traveling to Europe, or some other concern of the affluent.

QUESTIONS

- 1. Analyze the group's interactions using the group behavior model.
- 2. How do these games affect the department's performance?
- 3. Are these games functional? Dysfunctional? Explain.

PART 2

Situation for Tutorial
The Story Evaluation Exercise

OBJECTIVE: To contrast individual and group decision making.

TIME: Fifteen minutes.

PROCEDURE:

- A. You have five minutes to read the following story and respond to each of the eleven questions as either true, false, or unknown (indicated by question mark). Begin.

The Story A businessman had just turned off the lights in the store when a man appeared and demanded money. The owner opened a cash register. The contents of the cash register were scooped up, and the man sped away. A member of the police force was notified promptly.

State ment about the Story

- | | |
|--|------|
| 1. A man appeared after the owner had turned off his store lights. | TF ? |
| 2. The robber was a man. | TF ? |
| 3. The man did not demand money. | TP ? |
| 4. The man who opened the cash register was the owner. | TF ? |

5. The store owner scooped up the contents of the cash register and ran away. T F ?
6. Someone opened a cash register. T F ?
7. After the man who demanded the money scooped up the contents of the cash register, he ran away. T F ?
8. While the cash register contained money, the story does not, state how much. T F ?
9. The robber demanded money of the owner. T F ?
10. The story concerns a series of events in which only three persons are referred to: the owner of the store, a man who demanded money, and a member of the police force. T F ?
11. The following events in the story are true: someone demanded money, a cash register was opened, its contents were scooped up, and a man dashed out of the store. T F ?

B. When your five minutes are up, form groups of four to five members each. Group members have ten minutes to discuss their answers and agree on the correct answers to each of the eleven statements.

C. Your instructor will give you the actual correct answers. How many correct answers did you get at the conclusion of Step A? How many did your group achieve at the conclusion of Step B? Did the group outperform the average individual? The best individual? Discuss the implications of these results.

ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR ОРГАНИЗАЦИОННОЕ ПОВЕДЕНИЕ ЮНИТА 5

Редакторы: С.И.Букштынович, В.А.Соломатин
Оператор компьютерной верстки: А. В. Баринов

Изд. лиц. ЛР №071765 от 07.12.98

Сдано в печать

НОУ «Современный Гуманитарный Институт»

Тираж

Заказ

Современный Гуманитарный Университет