THE SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR:

MEETINGS AS A GATEWAY

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Organizational behavior =
“the study of human behavior in organizational settings, the interface between human behavior and the organization, and the organization itself” (Moorhead & Griffin, 1995, p. 4)
“In order for members to achieve the collaboration and interdependence that make them a group rather than co-present individuals, they must *interact*.”

(Bonito & Sanders, 2011, p.343)

Team researchers should examine behavioral data → the visible interactional conduct of team members


But: Most team studies take a static view of organizational behavior, failing to account for dynamic aspects (for an overview, see Cronin, Weingart, & Tedorova, 2011)
NEED FOR BEHAVIORAL INTERACTION ANALYSIS

- Self-reports are limited: What employees say they do is often not equal to what they actually do (e.g., Chiu & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012)

- Understanding the impact of social context, interdependencies, and timing on individual organizational behavior requires studying behavioral processes and real interactions rather than relying on questionnaires (e.g., Cronin et al., 2011)

- Soccer teams know this, too
Why study meetings?

- Team meetings are ubiquitous in contemporary organizations (for an overview, see Allen, Lehmann-Willenbrock, & Rogelberg, 2015)

- Managers spend up to 80% of their working time in meetings (Romano & Nunamaker, 2001)

- Average employee: At least 3 meetings per week, but meeting quality evaluated as poor in 41.9% of the cases (Schell, 2010)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem-focused statements</th>
<th>Procedural statements</th>
<th>Socio-emotional statements</th>
<th>Action-oriented statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive: Goal orientation</td>
<td>Positive: Encouraging</td>
<td>Proactive: Positivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying</td>
<td>participation</td>
<td>Taking responsibility</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Procedural suggestion</td>
<td>Providing support</td>
<td>Action planning</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prioritizing</td>
<td>Active listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>Reasoned disagreement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Task distribution</td>
<td>Giving feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Visualization</td>
<td>Humor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarizing</td>
<td>Separating opinions</td>
<td>Counterproductive:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>from facts</td>
<td>No interest in change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expressing feelings</td>
<td>Complaining</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Offering praise</td>
<td>Seeking someone to blame</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Denying responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative: Losing the train</td>
<td>Negative: Criticizing/</td>
<td>Empty talk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of thought (running off</td>
<td>backbiting</td>
<td>Ending the discussion early</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>topic)</td>
<td>Interrupting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Side conversations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-promotion</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Inter-rater reliability: $\kappa = .81$
Field study on 92 teams from 20 medium-sized organizations:

- Frequency of functional interaction behaviors (e.g., problem-solving, action planning) were linked to improved meeting satisfaction, productivity, and even organizational success 2.5 years later.

- Dysfunctional communication, such as criticizing others or complaining, had significant negative effects on team and organizational outcomes.

- “Bad is stronger than good” phenomenon (Baumeister, Bratlavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001)

Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock (2012)
HUMOR DURING TEAM INTERACTIONS

• Humor and laughter have likely evolved as group behaviors because they promote group cohesion (Gervais & Wilson, 2005; Van Vugt & Kameda, 2013)

• Workplace humor is particularly context-bound, such that jokes among co-workers are often obscure to outsiders (Holmes & Marra, 2002)

• However: Previous research has neglected the context in which humor is produced and reacted to (Westwood & Johnston, 2013)

• Humor decreases tensions and facilitates communication (e.g., Duncan, Smeltzer, & Leap, 1990; Holmes & Marra, 2002; Meyer, 2000)

• Previous theorizing suggests team performance benefits of humor (Romero & Pescosolido, 2008)
Humor and laughter coded during 54 regular team meetings ($N = 352$ employees) using the act4teams coding scheme, $\kappa = .81$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioral unit</th>
<th>Speaker (team member)</th>
<th>Talk</th>
<th>act4teams code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 A</td>
<td>Well, that [machine] keeps breaking down on us.</td>
<td>Problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 B</td>
<td>Uh-huh.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 C</td>
<td>That evil thing!</td>
<td>Humor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 All</td>
<td>(Laughing)</td>
<td>Laughter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Significant lag1 patterns:

humor-laughter ($z = 77.83$), laughter-humor ($z = 26.87$), and humor-humor ($z = 17.58; p < .01$, respectively).
EMERGENT HUMOR PATTERNS

**Significant lag1 patterns:**

humor-laughter ($z = 77.83$), laughter-humor ($z = 26.87$), and humor-humor ($z = 17.58; p < .01$, respectively).

**Significant lag2 pattern:**

humor-…-humor ($z = 23.39, p < .01$)
COMMUNICATION TRIGGERED BY HUMOR PATTERNS

Lag0

Humor pattern

Lag1

Procedural statements:
- z = 4.53 Procedural suggestion
- z = 2.71 Goal orientation
- z = 4.60 Summarizing

Socioemotional statements:
- z = 3.66 Offering praise
- z = 3.66 Encouraging participation

Lag2

Idea generation:
- z = 3.18 New solution

Procedural statements:
- z = 3.71 Distributing tasks
- z = 3.71 Goal orientation

z = 2.66 Question
HUMOR PATTERNS AND TEAM PERFORMANCE

Overall frequency of individual humor behaviors per meeting → no effect

Lehmann-Willenbrock & Allen (2014)
Emotional contagion: one person’s mood can fleetingly determine the mood of others (e.g., Barsade, 2002)

→ How does this work during dynamic team interactions?
### COMPLAINING VS. ACTION PATTERNS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And nothing has ever changed.</td>
<td>Complaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing’s ever changed, that’s right.</td>
<td>Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always the same old story.</td>
<td>Complaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well, we have to look to ourselves and practice what we preach.</td>
<td>Taking responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yup.</td>
<td>Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And that’s really not so bad. That won’t hurt at all.</td>
<td>Positivity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lehmann-Willenbrock, Meyers, Kauffeld, Neininger, & Henschel (2011)
INTERACTION PATTERNS AND EMERGENT GROUP MOOD: FINDINGS

Lehmann-Willenbrock et al. (2011)
SUMMING UP...

- Meetings take up a substantial amount of employees’ work time.
- Behaviors and emergent behavioral patterns in meetings are meaningfully linked to team and organizational outcomes.
- Meetings can serve as a gateway to:
  - Behavioral dynamics in teams
  - Emergent interaction patterns
  - Emotional contagion processes
- Interaction analysis provides a magnifying lens for understanding these dynamic team processes.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.

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