

# DS1001: Sociology of Design

Session 9



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY,  
DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING,  
KANCHEEPURAM

- Dr. Sudhir Varadarajan
- Dr Narendran

# Distinguishing the three sociological theories

## Key differences:

- How people react to conflict / differences?
- What kind of solutions are proposed?

A functionalist seeks better clarity and alignment of purpose, functions and structure (institutions)  
... talk is to communicate and convince the other (deviant or dissatisfied members) or keep them out... mostly focused on means (HOW)

A conflict view sees conflict as an essential tool to expose and resolve power imbalances (talk is to bring out instances of injustice and seek reservation or better roles for the underprivileged – WHO gets the Benefits)

An interactionist view explores the differences to see if something new can emerge ... could be a different purpose, structure or functions... ends (WHAT), means (HOW) and WHO are open for rethinking...

Macro order shapes individuals and micro interactions;  
Structure Oriented

Debate /  
Discussion  
  
Negotiation

Micro interactions shape the macro order  
→ (micro is unstable and open to change) –  
Process oriented

Dialogue

# Lessons from “12 angry men”

- Includes Functionalist, Conflict/Power and Interactionist perspectives
- More such scenarios in everyday life and in the industry
- Very similar to the dynamics in some teams doing sociology assignments

## View about interaction or group work

- It is only for formalizing a “open and shut case” (already concluded)
- It is a waste of time ... “talk and talk about nothing”
- We need to finish it fast, more important things to do
- Roles, Experience, Facts, Logic (pre-conditions are sacrosanct) are used to close dialogue... outliers/deviants are exceptions
- All attempts to close the dialogue and sustain status quo about some perceived macro order... “Yes, I am one among them”
- Most often people either talk from their past experience or think about what to say next... *we hardly listen to what is emerging at present*

# Lessons from “12 angry men”

## Elements of an Interactionist Perspective

- Focused on expanding dialogue, within a certain time limit
- Making explicit the intent (“reasonable doubt”) & building trust
- Risk taking (secret vote)
- Amplifying the subtle shifts in momentum, not everyone is aligned (there are differences)
- Bringing new information through research (knife), listening (“ran”), presence (eye glasses)
- Observation – “old man with a torn jacket, wants to feel important”, “lady had nose marks”
- Use of objects/artefacts/demonstration (door locked, knife, layout) to expand dialogue (not close)
- Involving people: senior citizen, taking cough drops, proximity (dagger)
- Confronting prejudices and past experiences

# How are the lessons relevant to design and innovation?

- The power of status quo ... but the feeling of instability between “I and We”
- The willingness to explore this instability ... within a time frame
- Taking risks ... finding partners ... Researching & bringing new information that challenges status quo ... use of prototypes
- Winning over a few more partners ... and extending the conversation so that others bring in additional information
- Confronting the status quo, but also including it... keeping out personal prejudice / agenda

**Leadership, teams and designs emerge from the process of interaction**

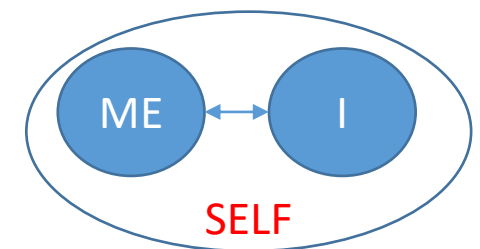
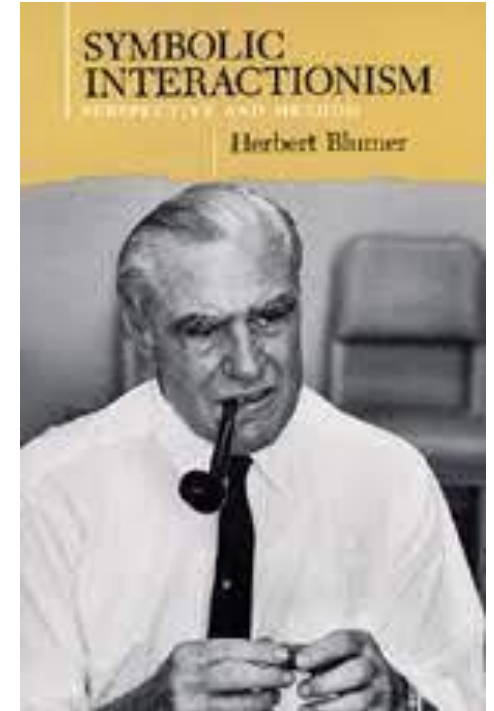
**There are different types of talk beyond Q&A/louder voice:**

- Clarifying, Rephrasing, Persuading...

**Rhetoric-Responsive ways aimed at surfacing new information / relationships**

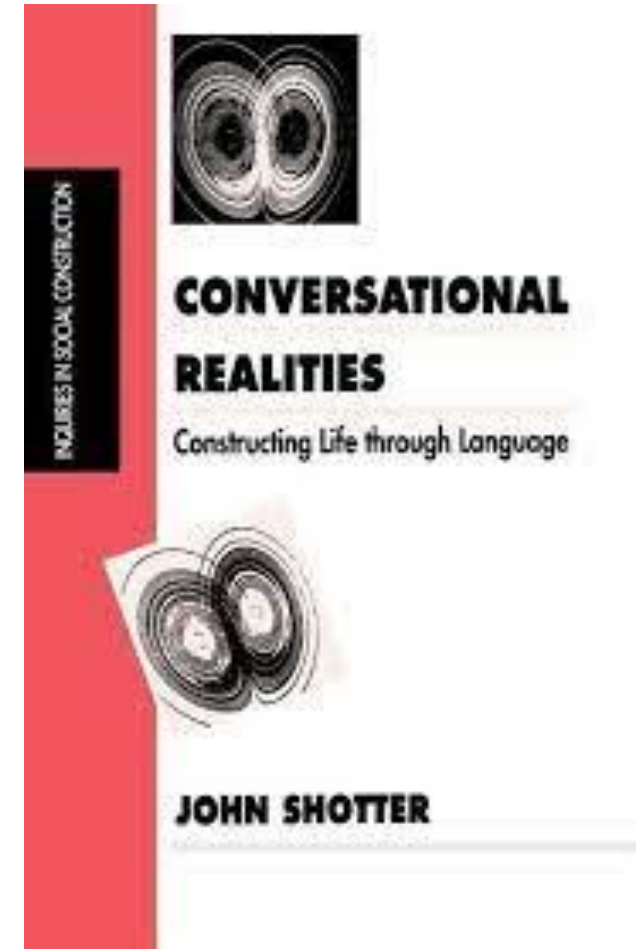
# Theory of Symbolic Interactionism (1 / 3)

- Key Sociologists: Mead, Blumer, Goffman, Randall
- **Three premises of symbolic interactionism**
  - #1: People act towards objects based on the meaning that the objects have for them... objects can be self, other people, artefacts
  - #2: Meaning of objects emerges from the social interactions that one has with others in the society [ME]
  - #3: These meanings are further modified through an interpretation process by the individual. This self-interaction between [I] and [ME] produces the [SELF/IDENTITY] of the individual



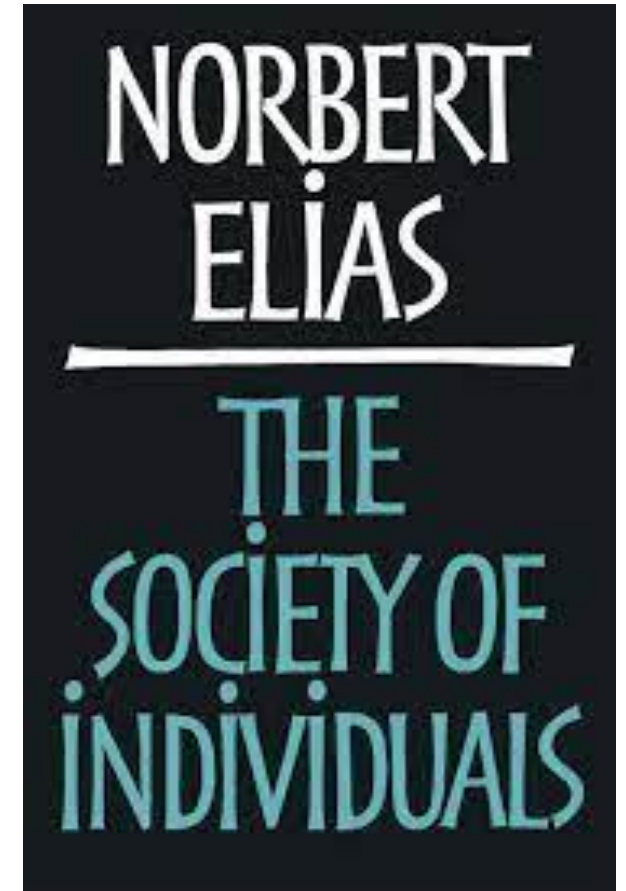
# Theory of Symbolic Interactionism (2/3)

- Social- and self-interaction are dependent on gestures & utterances (non-symbolic and symbolic)
  - Verbal (LANGUAGE) & Non-verbal communication (Body language) plays a crucial role in development of THOUGHT. Language is more than a medium of communication - *English for communication? (Languages, words and the way we observe & think)*
  - (Vygotsky, John Shotter – Rhetoric-Responsive vs Representational-Recursive)
- Social Norms, Values, Needs, Views about Past or Future are not given and stable, but shaped by people in the present
  - What appears stable at a macro level, can be highly unstable at a micro level...
  - Understanding the socio-historical context of issues is critical to know how meanings have changed over time... this is why you need to know the history of objects / people



# Theory of Symbolic Interactionism (3 / 3)

- The focus shifts from studying individuals (parts) to the social interaction among people (relations)
  - The whole emerges out of interactions among parts
  - Where boundaries are not natural, society is a network of individuals (Norbert Elias – Society of Individuals)
- Symbolic interactionism views individuals as ‘active’ participants in a situation ... not passive



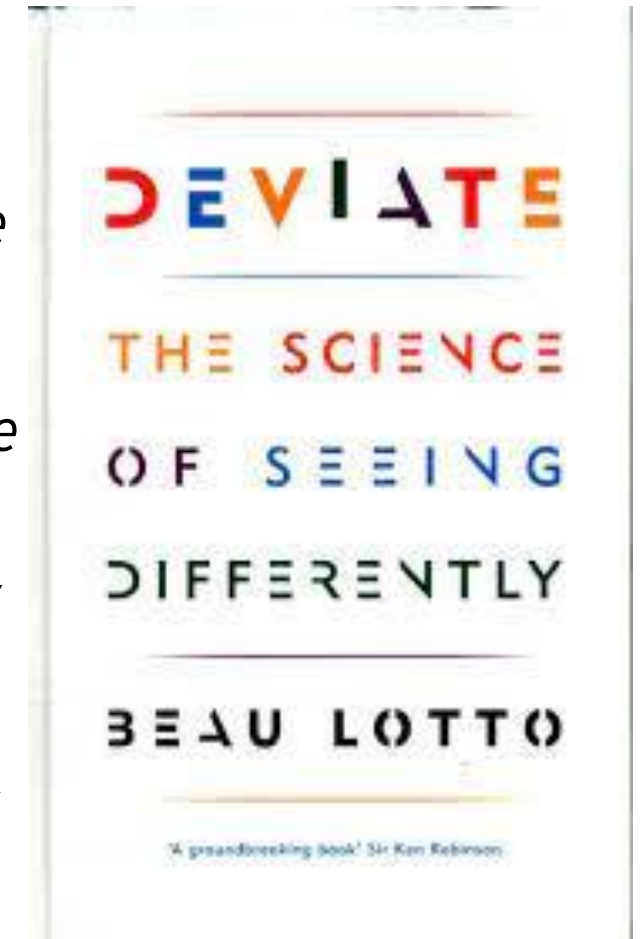


# How would an interactionist look at participation in a classroom?

- The process of engaging with each other at this moment is everything
- It is only by paying attention to the everyday interactions and enhancing communication that we create possibilities for joint action
- You can end up with an improved understanding of yourself, your friends, the issue of interest and the courage to recognize and engage with what is emerging, yet unknown

# Seeing and listening differently

- *‘Most essential, we must listen differently... that is, actively observe.*
- *Instead of listening only to help us better defend ourselves, we must listen with the thought that conflict is a genuine opportunity. And by conflict, I mean this generally, namely a situation that doesn't match one's expectation, hope, or desire*
- *The most essential space for learning is in conflict when in the right ecology. Within interpersonal relationships, that ecology requires both sides letting go of the idea of a confrontational conversation... “I’m right and here’s why” (though there are times when this is an essential position to take, just not nearly as many as we seem to think)’*



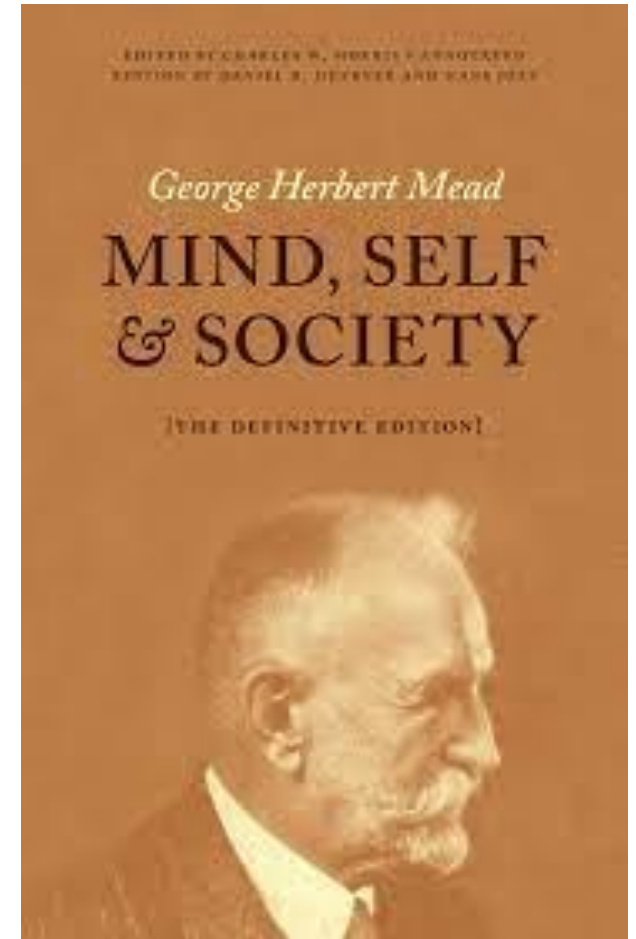
# An interactionist view focuses on the present & everyday interactions among actors

- Instead of analyzing the reasons for inaction/dysfunction in the psychological or sociological factors (pre-conditions) of participants (that are unstable), explore opportunities for joint action in the present moment
- Need to move beyond modeling macro factors that influence individual behaviors to observing actors in action and developing shared meanings that enable joint action



# Interactionism calls for dissolving the Inside-Outside Divide

- According to Mead, self emerges through interaction between I and Me (generalized other)
  - Instead of making too many assumptions of what others might be thinking about us, try to listen, explore and interact with people and objects...
  - It is through this interaction that your observation, language and thought can potentially open up and change...
- Classroom provides one such forum; Problem based learning in smaller groups is another opportunity
  - Do not lose this opportunity by treating these interactions as assignments to be submitted for marks. They are opportunities to form deep partnerships
  - Instead of joining a group or event to check if it can boost your emotional energy and pass judgment, look at how you can be present and contribute to the group



Listen to the song and tell me which phrases refer to interactionist approach



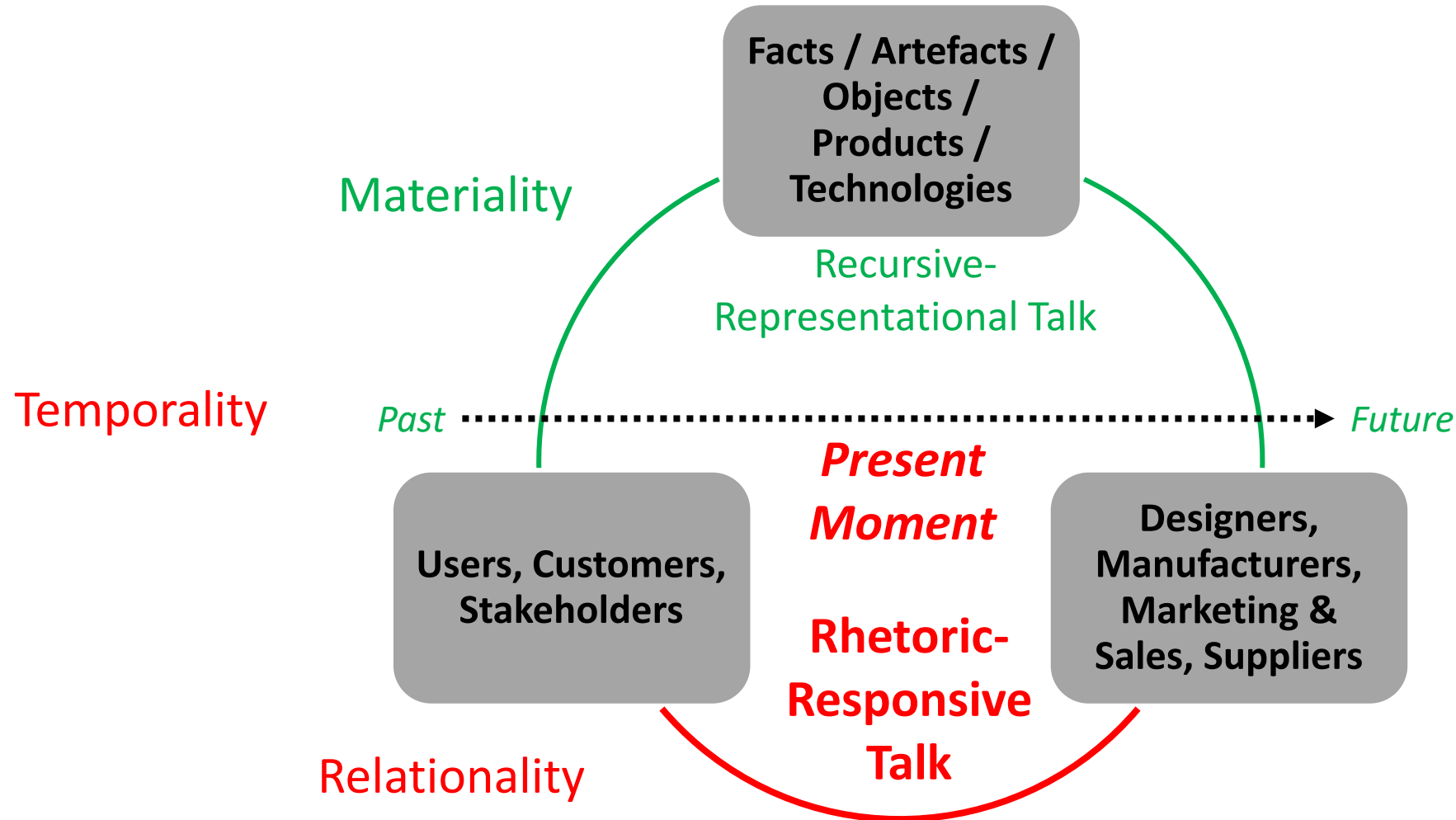
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewvddSUEONQ>

*Movie is a small fragment of reality...*

*Forces seeking status quo can be extremely powerful, **but also vulnerable at certain times***

***Focus on the present... observe and enjoy everyday activities...***

# Importance of the **Present** and **Rhetoric-Responsive** Talk for Design and Innovation





# How do we develop these skills?

- Rhetoric-Responsive... from within the relationship
- Games in improvisation and spontaneity can help
- Let us try some

# Game 9.1: Mimed Tug O' War (2-3 min)

- Rules of the Game:
  - Form a pair
  - Imagine both of you are pulling a rope in a mimed Tug O' War
  - More people can join each side and increase the length of the chain
  - We can have multiple contests
- Debrief:
  - What happened? Which groups lasted long? What does it tell? Struggling to Fail?
- David vs the Class



## Game 9.2:

- Form small circles of 6 people
- Start with a volunteer. Say one thing that you believe is unique about you and may not apply to others
- Those who feel they also relate to the same aspect can agree. Must not lie
- Those who feel it does not apply to them can fold one finger
- Repeat until the first person with all five fingers closed goes out
- The person who went out can rejoin when another person exits

## Game 9.3: Giving Presents (5 min)

- Rules of the Game:
  - Organize yourselves in pairs
  - Person 1 may think of a present he/she would like to give to Person 2 and through a gesture (without saying a word) give it to Person 2
  - Person 2 may receive it and explain the present and why it is the best present for him/her
  - Now exchange roles (person 2 gives to person 1) and continue
- Debrief:
  - Was the work good – i.e., did your partner enjoy working with you?
- Defining a present you receive ... Secret of a good listener

## Game 9.4: One word sentence + “Yes And” (15)

- Six volunteers may come to the dais
- One of them says any top of the mind sentence
- The next one must accept this (YES), (AND) extend it / improvise
- Observe what is happening

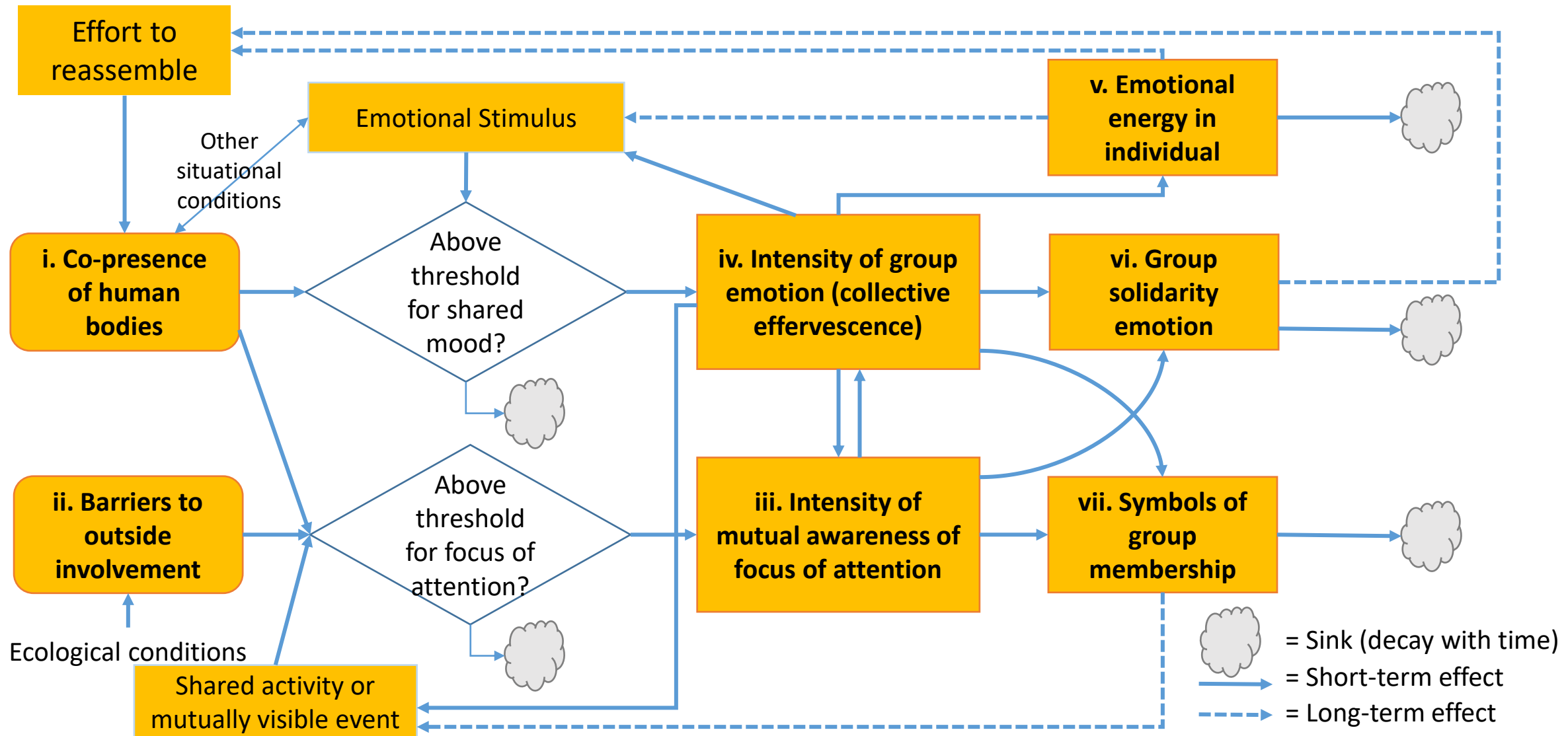
## 9.5 So, what happened in the last few min?

- Summarize your experience in half a page
  - How did you feel by participating or observing others in the activities?
  - Did you see a change in your emotional energy?
  - Why?
- Another half - Give an example of an occasion where you felt you did something spontaneously, going with the flow of events around you; and what happened?

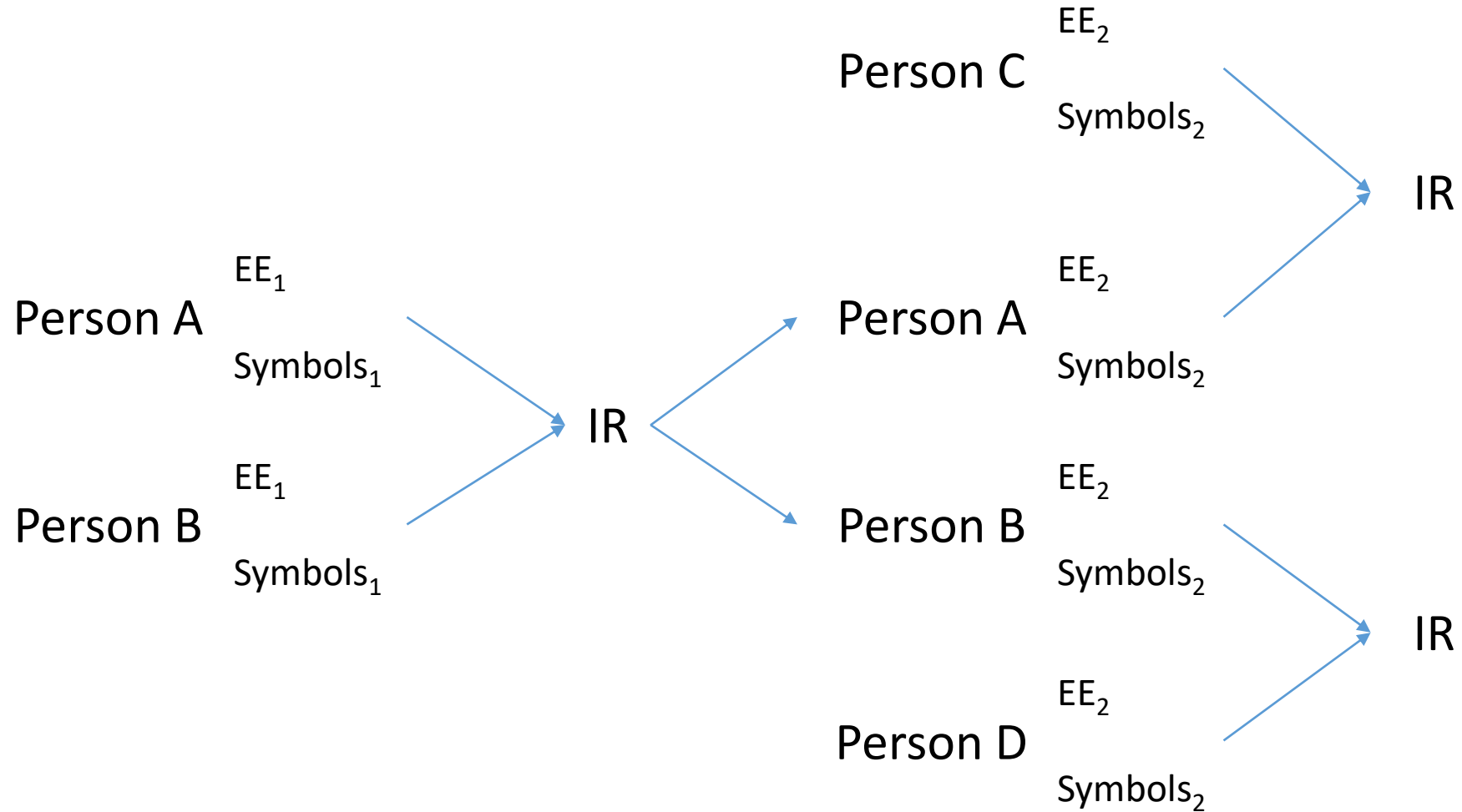
# Some questions to ponder

- Why did you feel “emotionally charged” after the three games?
- Why do we get excited when we go to a theatre or watch a cricket match in stadium?
- Why do we carry flags, wear caps / T-shirts with team logos etc.?
- Why this excitement dies down after we get back to the routine?
- Can we build excitement through routine everyday activities?

# Interaction Ritual (IR): How interaction builds EE



# IR Chains lead to shared symbols (macro level) and change energy levels (+ve or -ve)



## 9.6: Map your Emotional Energy (EE)

- Sketch a graph showing how your emotional energy in sociology course changed from start of semester (week wise, last 10 weeks)
- Explain key shifts using the different feedback loops in the IR model



For next session, pls read the articles on EV and Portuguese expansion

