UNIT-II
Theories in Social Group Work

SWRK 4010

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UNIT-2

- Theories Applicable to Group Work Practice;

- *Psychoanalytical Theory*
- *Learning Theory*
- *Field Theory*
- *System Theory*
- *Conflict Theory*

Theories- in Social Group Work

- **Psychodynamic / Psychoanalytic Theory**

  Freud is perhaps one of the earliest theorists to provide an explanation of human personality. Freud conceptualized that the human mind has two broad systems.

  One he described as conscious, pre-conscious and unconscious and the other as Id, Ego and super Ego. Freud suggested that mind was composed of thoughts (ideas), feelings, instincts, drives, conflicts and motives. Most of these elements are located in the unconscious or preconscious.

- There is a repressed area which serves as a barrier where a lot of disturbing material (thoughts and feelings), and unresolved conflicts, are placed through the process of defense mechanism.

- Defense mechanism or repression is a process in which unacceptable desires, memories and thoughts are excluded from consciousness by sending the material into the unconscious process of mind.

- Describing the second system Freud explains that Id Ego and Super Ego- **Id** is the primitive psychic force hidden in the unconsciouness.

It represents the basic needs and drives such as hunger, thirst, sex and self preservation, which support other personality factors. Id governed by the pleasure principle primarily seeks to express itself irrespective of the consequences, while Ego acts as the rational component of the mind which controls the thinking of the mind. Super ego serves as the conscience/ Sprit by indicating what is right and wrong socially and morally.

- **Learning Theory**

Learning Theory has created a lot of controversy in [group work](#) as it focuses more on individual than on group dynamics with reference to influencing individual behaviour.

Learning theory also **provides a frame work** for understanding human behaviour in group. It provides an understanding of the social functioning of persons within their environments.

- **The Learning theory try to Understand the human behavior & social functioning of persons within the environment.**

➢ **The persons in Dynamic interactions with all aspects of environment is the focus of attentions.**

➢**Behavior is learned & unlearned**.

➢It is called Conditioning learning

- The another type of learning is called **Modelling,** which simply refers to learning by observation.

- The children of parents who smoke likely to be smokers. Children of parents with ability to control their feelings under stress are likely to learn self-control.

- However, a number of factors or conditions can affect the effectiveness of modelling.

Operant conditioning is a type of learning in which behaviours are altered primarily by regulating the subsequences which follow them. New behaviours could be learned and undesirable behaviours could be eliminated by regulating the consequences.

By using the learning theory framework, the group can provide reinforcements to strengthen behaviour. There are both positive and negative reinforcements.

Brief Analysis:

- Responded conditioning- manifestation of behavior in response to stimuli.

- Modeling- Learning by observing.(children of smokers learns smoking, stress, feelings etc.)

- **Operant Conditioning** – behaviors are altered by consequences.

- New behaviors can be learned & undesirable behavior can be eliminated out by positive & negative reinforcements.

- **Field Theory**

  Kurt Lewin was one of the pioneers who study the group functioning scientifically. He focused on the forces that influenced the working of groups.

  He and his colleagues tried to study leadership styles by creating groups with different styles of leaderships in order to see their impact on the functioning of the group.

- It is commonly observed that a leader becomes authoritarian when the members are seeking favours,

- Lewin argued that the leadership style is a product of *interaction between Leader and Member interaction* rather than a personality trait of the leader.

- Lewin, while developing his Field Theory, argued that a group has a life space and it has movement. It tries to accomplish goals or group tasks and faces hurdles in its movement (locomotion).

Lewin introduced several concepts to understanding of forces which affect the group

Some of them are as:-

- Roles- Status, Rights and duties of group members;
- Norms – Rules governing the behaviour of group members;
- Power – the ability of members to influence on another;

- Cohesion-The attraction the group members feel towards one another and towards the group.

- Consensus- the degree of agreement regarding goals and other group phenomena.

- Valence – the potency of goals and objects in the life space of the group

Lewin's equation, **B= ƒ (P+E)**

It states that *behavior* is a function of the **person and his or her environment.**

The gp. worker using the Field Theory framework can design their own interventions to achieve gp goal (e.g. t-gp)

Other field theorists have continued to work on the characteristics of group that influence the individual behaivour.

- **Cohesion** has been identified as an important factor, defined as, "the totality of forces acting on individual members to keep them in the group.

- **Cohesion reflects** the agreement on goals and norms, shared understanding and a greater homogeneity in demographic background, as also the productivity, satisfaction and cooperative interaction patterns.

- Lewin developed t-group as a means to observe the effects of group process on group members and as a means to induce changes in behaviour.

- Lewin thus helped in developing a theory that people change when they see their behaviour as others see it, thus leading to development of the feedback method whereby the group members and the group leader provide feedback to the individual as to how his/her behaviour was affecting them.

- Role plays and simulations are also used to highlight the group process. The group workers using the field theory framework can design their own interventions in working with the group for achieving the group goals along with individual development
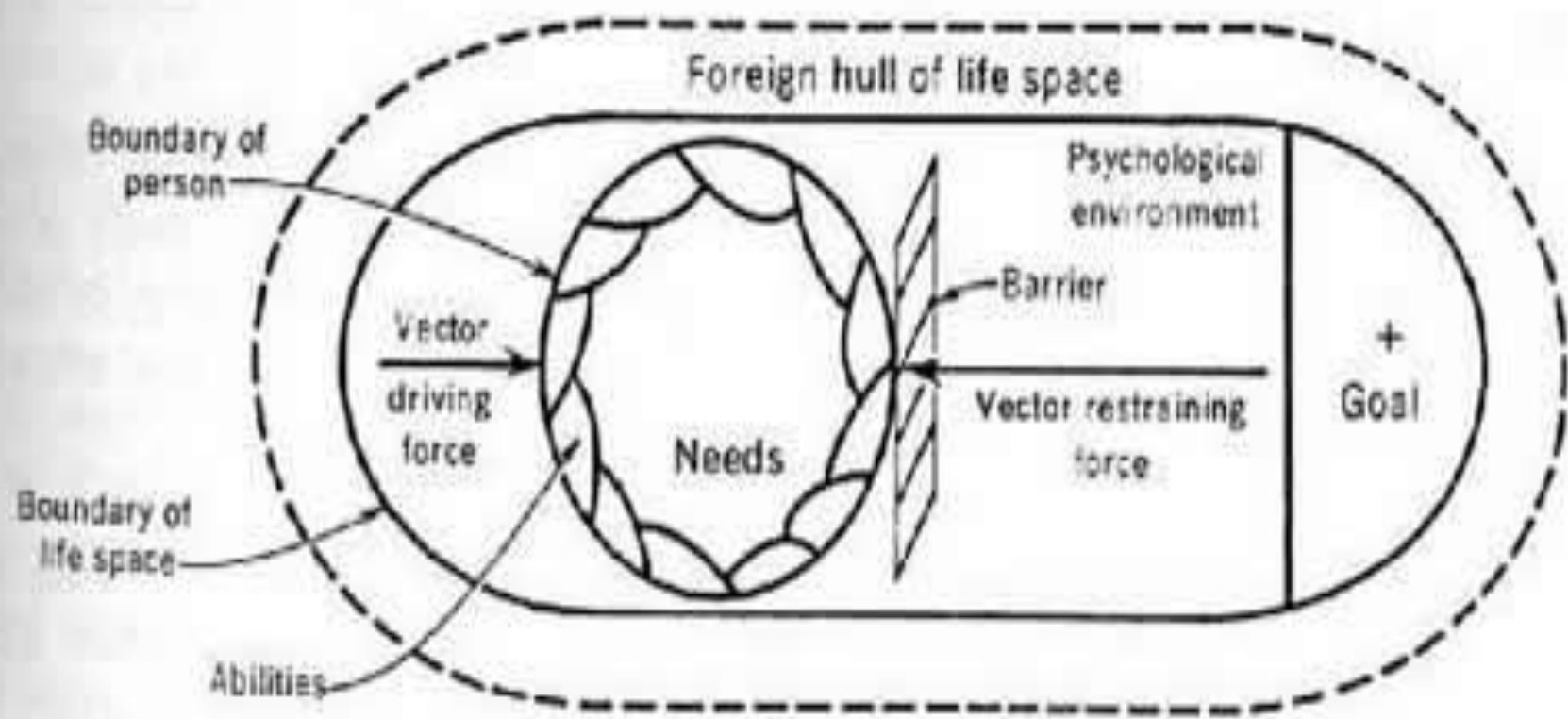
Fig. 3.5. Life space of an individual according to Lewin.

LEWIN'S THEORY

× According to Lewin's theory, an individual lives in life space which is actually his environment; there external forces which are acting on the individual such as things, situations, or conditions.

Analysis : Field Theory

- Kurt Lewin (1946) scientifically studied group functioning.
- He focused on the forces that influence the working of the group.
- Studied the leadership style & its Impact.

➤ Result- "Leaders becomes authoritarian when members are seeking favors, rather than questioning the decision or even discussing the issues objectively.

➤ Leadership style is the product of leader member interaction (rather than personality of the leader)

➤ Further, Argued that group has a life space and it has movement (locomotion). An entity of opposing forces which keeps the gp. members in the gp and move them along in achieving the goal

Systems Theory

- Systems theory is also helpful to explain the functioning of a group.

- Talcott Persons defined **social system as a set of interdependent elements trying to function** as a unified whole to maintain order and a stable equilibrium.

- The social systems are constantly facing new challenges as the environment around them and within, is constantly changing. Therefore, they must act to maintain the equilibrium if they have to survive.

This act of survival depends upon four basic functions:
(a) Integration
(b) adaptation;
(c) pattern maintenance; and
(d) goal attainment.

The group viewed as a system would therefore be able to **achieve its objectives. I**f it is able to carry out these four functions effectively.

It is able to integrate members by achieving individual and group goal matching.

It also has the capacity to make changes to adapt itself to outside demands like that of the community and the sponsoring organization and with the internal dynamics as it changes with time
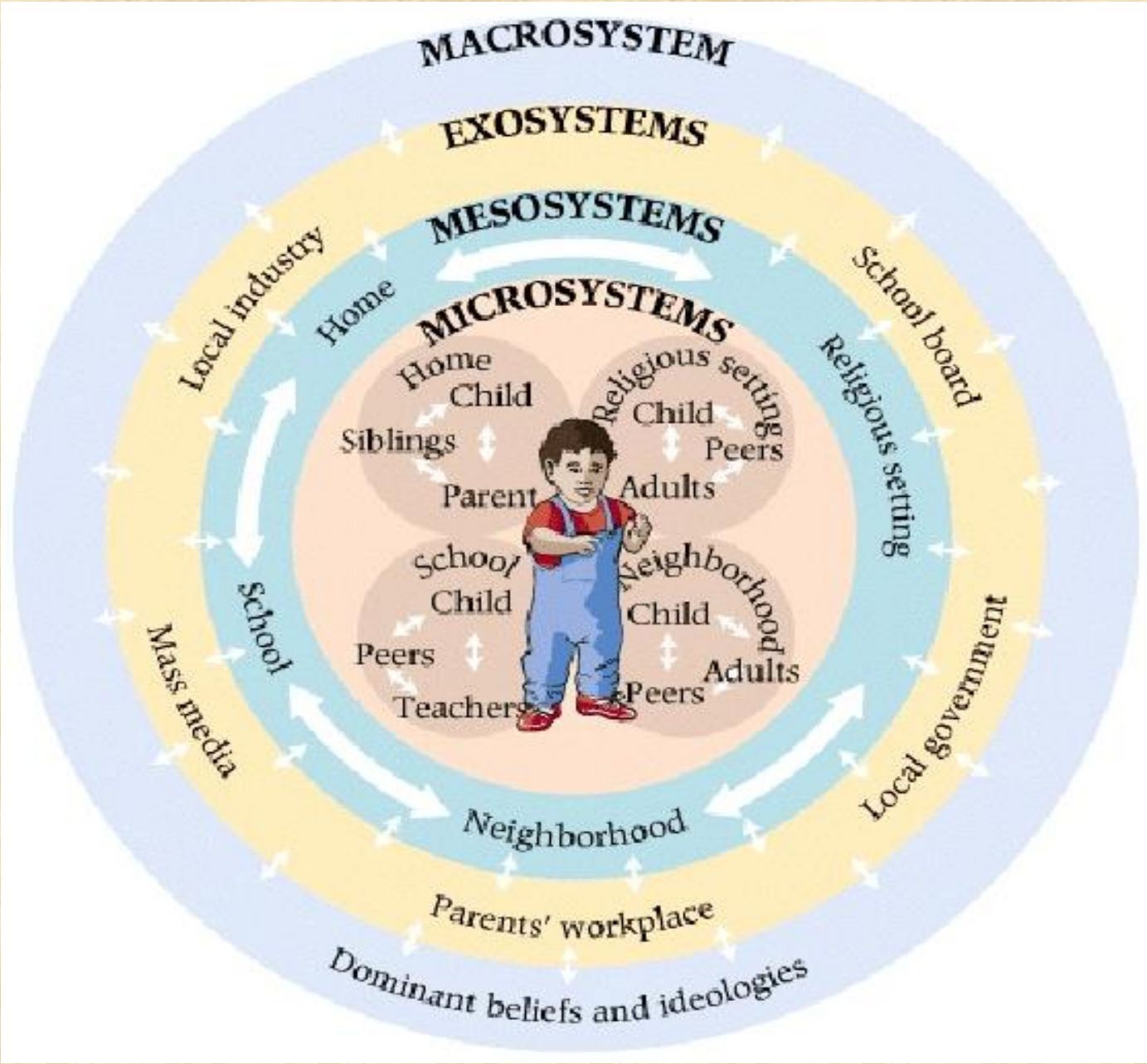
- The pattern maintenance would re quire development of norms and guidelines to regulate its activities and develop well defined objectives, identify and procedures that are able to sustain these over time.

- The functioning of a system depends to a great extent on the carrying out the **role assigned** to them. The goal attainment is the final task to ensure the smooth functioning of the system.

- The members will lose interest and the functioning of the group will be affected if the goals are not attainable is an important attribute of group stability and functioning.

- Parsons pointed out that problems will arise during the functioning of the group; the group, including its leadership must make use of its resources effectively to tackle the problems to maintain the equilibrium of the group

Analysis of System Theory:

- Dynamic & Interacting system

- Aim of the theory – To maintain equilibrium.

- The interaction among the gp. Member may sometime not positive & leads the gp. In disequilibrium.

- System always tries to be in equilibrium.

- They must act to maintain the equilibrium if they have to survive.

- **Task:** Integration, Adaptation, Maintenance, Goal Attainment

System Approach: Focus on the Social System whose complex elements and component directly or indirectly relative to subsystem.

Features:-

1. It seeks equilibrium of elements
2. System has its own boundaries – rigid, open, close
3. System involve – subsystem & supra system
4. System seek goal attainment.
5. System has Epistasis

System Approach have Ingredients :

- System has an environment
- Goal attainment
- Energy
- Hierarchy
- Leadership
- Cohesiveness
- Reinforcement
- Circular Causality

- Reinforcement

- Boundaries
- Subsystem & Supra-system
- Communication Channel
- Equilibrium State

Conflict Theory

Although sociologists differ in their understanding of conflict as a social phenomenon in society, yet some of the explanations of conflicts are helpful in understanding the conflicts in groups and in dealing with them

Sociologists have identified two broad categories of conflict:

1. Endogenous conflict: This refers to sources of changes from within a society

2. Exogenous conflict: This refers to changes from without or between systems

Endogenous conflict highlights the following sources of conflict

1. Inherent predilection to change
2. Conflict over the differential distribution of resources such as wealth, power and prestige
3. Conflict of values
4. Conflict of authority
5. Conflict between individual and collectivity

The exogenous conflict identifies three sources:
- a. Wars
- b. Cultural invasions
- c. Conflict of ideology

Lewis Coser (1973) distinguishes between realistic and non realistic conflicts. Realistic conflicts are conflicts arising on account of non-fulfillment of specific of specific demands, whereas non –realistic conflicts are rooted in the need for release of tension and are not oriented towards achievement of any specific demand.

Brief Analysis: Conflict Theory-

Two Broad categories of conflict

1. Endogenous conflict- changes within inside
2. Exogenous conflict- changes outside

1. Eg. Wealth, power, prestige, values, authority, etc.

2. Eg. Wars, cultural invasions, conflict of ideology.

=>Realistic & Non-Realistic demands

Lewis Coser (1973)

Functions of Social conflict theory

- Conflict is obvious, why???
- => resource, prestige, power...........

- But social structure differ in the way the group allows expression to these claims.
- Closely built groups are likely to suppress conflict.
- "the feeling of hostility tends to accumulate & grow"

This is because of two factors -

1. It will not aim to resolve the immediate issue / problem as all accumulated grievances will come to fore.
2. It is because of total personality involvement of the group member.

⇒ **Gp. Worker should remember that hostility should not be permitted to accumulate**

⇒ Conflict should be allowed to occur wherever a resolution of tension seems to be indicated.

⇒ May help to form new norms or to reform the old one.

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Thank you