Social Curiosity as an Episode in Everyday Talk: A Descriptive Study

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Abstract

The Communicate Bond Belong (CBB) theory states that much everyday talk occurs in episodes. CBB theory specifies qualifying criteria for an episode. Frequently undertaking communication episodes is seen as realizing relational satisfaction. Social curiosity is a type of episode. The first paper in the series investigated self-disclosure as a communication episode. (Surana, 2020A) In this second of the three papers comprising the study, I report findings for the extent to which everyday talk occurs in episodes (Surana, 2020A) and then investigate the extent to which social curiosity is an episode of social interaction. The study is conducted using mixed methods; data collection adopts diary record as the tool; and, data analysis is based on frequencies and interpretation. (Surana, 2020A)

Keywords: evaluative content; exploratory strategy;

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Person-A gifts Rs. 100 to person-B on his birthday. This is investment of resource on the part of person-A. Person-B uses this amount for setting-up a pop-corn stall. Person-A recommends the pop-corn stall to his friend who is the principal at a school in the neighbourhood. The school holds talks with person-B for setting-up a pop-corn counter on campus. This meeting allows person-B to connect and interact-- bond within the social network of person-A. The school officially appoints person-B to sell pop-corn on campus. Person-B is able to make a living. Person-B proposes partnership in the pop-corn business to person-A. Person-A instead asks for the commitment that Person-B take care of him during old age.

The amount of Rs. 100 given by person-A is an investment. It is a finite resource. Person-B being able to start a pop-corn stall with the amount is a benefit for person-B. Person-B offering an equal share in the business is an act of reciprocity, and if accepted is a benefit for person-A. The amount likely to realize from the reciprocity is many times more than the investment that is the reciprocation is inequitable albeit a positive one. Also, the partnership is reciprocation in kind as against the investment which is in cash. Person-B reciprocating with Rs. 100 would make their relation an exchange relation. After repaying the amount, persons A and B could terminate their relation. Person-B offering a partnership is an instance of seeking to make

the relationship stable. Person-B is aware first, of person-A's network of individuals from whom he can source more business; and second, person-B's recognition of his own strength of converting person-A's social network into a profitable enterprise. Both the social network and the ability to run an enterprise are resources; but, the benefit realizing from the resources is larger than the sum of parts. Also, the resource of person-A makes him valued. Putting-in a word within his social network by person-A is an action that is, it employs physical behaviours e.g. speech and/or mental behaviours e.g. persuasion. An action is a striving behaviour because it can open-up opportunities for person-B which cannot realize without person-A's act of recommendation. The social network and the entrepreneurial ability together are an instance of individuation or mutual recognition. Person-B choosing to commit to care during old age would be an instance of action based on attention to the need of person-A. If person-B does take-on care of person-A, then they would be in a relation that satiates person-A's need to belong. This relation would be a need satiating behaviour. A need satiating behaviour is immediately linked to belonging, as against a striving behaviour that is remotely linked to belonging. A variety of striving behaviours can realize the same relation of care for person-A; but, it is only a relation of care that will satiate the need for belonging. Stability, interdependence, and individuation are characteristics of a relationship. A relationship that has any/all of these characteristics is a communal relation. Investment of resources in a communal relation is founded on addressing the need of the other, and not on expectation of reciprocity. Investments made in communal relations tend to lead one/both relational partners to survive, flourish, procreate, and/or protect—to well-being. This is why a communal relation tends to be a need satiating behaviour. The fundamental human need for belonging is a need for forging communal relations that are a means to well-being. CBB theory holds that social interaction is a striving behaviour—a means for unleashing relationships that satiate the need for belonging.

The Communicate Bond Belong (CBB) theory looks at the relation of human communication and the human need to belong. (Hall & Davis, 2017) The current paper focuses on describing communication episode; the paper does not investigate the efficacy of communication episode to the formation of relation, the exchange of resources, and so on. Similarly, explanation and/or analysis of outcomes of communication episode is beyond the scope of the current study. The paper is organized as follows--
Section-1 introduces the principles and propositions of CBB theory.
Section-2 reviews literature and defines the concepts of episode, striving behaviour, and social curiosity.
Section-3 presents the research questions and design of the study.
Section-4 presents findings and the discussion.

Section-1. Introduction

Belonging is a fundamental need of humans (Hall & Davis, 2017). Belonging is realized through the formation and maintenance of close relations. Relations are formed through reciprocity that is the exchange of resources. An individual invests more or invests fewer resources in another based on the value that he/she sees as possible to realize in a given relation. Relations can be either exchange or communal in nature. The need to belong prompts individuals to form close relations. A close relation tends to be communal in nature. In a close that is a communal relation, the basis of investment of resources is the other individual's need as against balance of resources. The focus of CBB theory is on studying the role that human communication plays in the development and/or maintenance of communal relation that gratifies the need to belong.

Facilitating the formation and/or development of a relation into a communal relation is the role an episode plays in realizing belonging. An episode is a definite type of interpersonal communication. For it to facilitate relationship, an episode must be a striving behaviour. (Hall & Davis, 2017)list four propositions (3A-D) for an episode to be a striving behaviour--
An episode must yield physiological and/or psychological benefits for communication actors (3A); The episode must lead to long-term relational bonding between communication actors (3B); A reduction in undertaking striving behaviours that is, fewer instances of undertaking communication episodes purely for psychological and/or physiological benefits is a sign of the need to belong been satiated (3C); and When an episode is seen to function as a striving behaviour that is when an episode is seen as realizing benefits that satiate the need to belong, the communication actor reduces experimenting with alternate episodes (3D). I interpret 3D as incidence of a recurring pattern of a specific episode in interactions. Given the emphasis on the role of episode as a striving behaviour, the next section reviews the concepts of episode, striving behaviour, and of self-disclosure as an episode.

Section-2. Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature

2.1. Episode

The need for belonging prompts everyday talk (Hall & Davis, 2017). But even as everyday talk is directly prompted by the need for belonging, everyday talk does not directly satiate the need for belonging. Instead, everyday talk responds to the prompt from the need for belonging with action that leads to bonding and/or relationship formation or development.

The actions within everyday talk are assortments of physical and/or mental behaviours that communication actors choose to undertake together on incumbent information. The result of this interaction of information and action is the nature of content that realizes. CBB theory categorizes this nature of information into supragenre. The superficial, informal, task or instrumental, deep, and relational are the five broad categories or the supragenre of everyday talk. A supragenre classifies everyday talk by the nature of content. A supragenre may be created within two or more episodes, but a particular episode tends to carry content only of the specific nature. The supragenre specifies the nature of content, and an episode is the type of interaction that realizes this nature of content; that is, an episode sees content of interaction to be of a certain and not some other nature, and the realization of this nature of content tends to be contingent upon application of some and not some other actions. This leads me to operationalizing the episode. An episode is content of a certain nature realized from action/s undertaken on information by communication actors. This nature of information is co-created for a purpose within daily social interaction. Greater the frequency of such episodes, greater the relational satisfaction for communication actors. Bonding is a form that relational satisfaction takes. Developing a social network, and interaction with persons within this network are measures of bonding.

2.2. Striving Behaviour

Everyday talk realizes bonding which episode leads to, as well; episode yields physiological and/or psychological benefit which striving behaviour does, too; but striving behaviour leads to relationship which neither everyday talk nor episode can. And only relationship realizes belonging (Hall & Davis, 2017). Having said this, incidence of a physiological and/or psychological benefit is important because it is antecedent to the formation of a relationship. If the benefit/s realized is formative for exchange relations, then the specific episode may not evolve into a striving behaviour, because communal rather than exchange relations are capable of realizing belonging. And, the focus of CBB theory is on looking at the efficacy of communication for realizing belonging.

A striving behaviour is an action (Hall & Davis, 2017). An action is the application of a mental behaviour, a physical behaviour, or a combination of mental and physical behaviours in a communication situation. Action may realize   benefits that go on to forging exchange relations. The feature of action as striving behaviour is that it realizes something that strengthens the relation. This strength of a relation is measured through the very characteristics of a relation--
1. Stability
2. Interdependence and/or
3. Individuation that is mutual recognition.
When any/all of these characteristics come to describe a relation, the relation becomes a communal relation. A measure of communal relation is that here investments in the relational partner are made on the basis of his need and not on the potential of reciprocity. This makes the striving behaviour valued. This strengthening of relation is the role of striving behaviour in indirectly realizing belonging. CBB theory sees social interaction as a striving behaviour that feeds relationships which in turn satiate the need to belong. Not all social interaction is striving behaviour. This brings me to identifying measures of episode that is a striving behaviour. A striving behaviour--
1. Is an action (application of mental and/or physical behaviours)
2. Yields benefit (other than physiological / psychological)
3. Realizes bonding between interaction partners over a long period of time
4. Occurs in a recurring pattern through particular episode/s.

2.3. Social curiosity

To know is a basic human drive. (Hartung & Renner, 2013) The need to know underlies curiosity which is acquiring of information. Information may be about people or about things in general. (Hartung & Renner, 2013) measures information about things in general in terms of--
1. How things work
2. Novelty
3. Challenge
Information about people may further be about particular individuals or may be social information. When curiosity is about particular individuals, it is called social curiosity which is a sub-set of curiosity. Social curiosity may be undertaken for any/all of the three motives--
1. Acquiring information that goes on to realizing learning and development. (Berg & Sternberg, 1985) (Truedwind, 2000).
2. Building relationships that realize belonging. (Renner, 2006)
3. Collecting detailed information about a person or thing for creating a controllable and predictable social environment. (Hartung & Renner, 2013)
As stated above, common to all the three functions is curiosity or the drive to know. (Hartung & Renner, 2013) The gathering of information uses action that is a combination of physical and mental behaviours. (Hall & Davis, 2017) These actions are called exploratory behaviours.
This leads up to the conceptualization of social curiosity as the general interest in gaining new social information motivating exploratory behaviors. (Renner, 2006) (Hartung & Renner, Social curiosity and interpersonal perception: A judge x trait interaction., 2011)
This conceptualization has two aspects--
A. Acquisition of information about how other people act, behave, feel; and
B. Use of exploratory behaviours for acquiring information about other people's behaviour, action, and feelings.
but, the exploratory strategies used for gathering information can vary greatly. (Hartung & Renner, Social Curiosity and Gossip: Related but Different Drives of Social Functioning., 2013)clusters these various exploratory strategies into three broad categories--
1. Active information gathering e.g. asking probing questions of the target individual
2. Covert and/or surreptitious observation for gathering information about the target individual and
3. Indirect collection of information about the target individual also called gossip e.g. from third-parties.

I see the interest in information in general as curiosity as against information about people as social curiosity. Based on theory on curiosity and social curiosity as its sub-set, I ask the following research questions-- RQ-A. To what extent does the need for belonging underlie social curiosity? RQ-B. What is the relation of belonging and curiosity about things in general?

Section-3. Research Design

As stated earlier, this work is part of a larger study of communication episodes in everyday talk. For comparing findings from each of these episodes, it is important that there be methodological consistency. The design decisions presented below are similar to the ones taken for studying self-disclosure as a communication episode. (Surana, 2020A)

Social anthropology studies evolution of social groups in the broadest sense; ethnography studies smaller groups and/or communities; gossip is the sharing of cultural norms and knowledge. Given the similarities, it is logical to choose from methods for data collection that have been successfully used by social anthropology and ethnography. (Foster, 2004) Participant observation was used by the early researchers. These researchers used field notes as the tool for collecting data. Field notes is where the researcher is in close proximity to the time and place of where the events occur; he immerses himself in the culture

of the study group for observing and recording events. This combination of method and tool yields rich primary data but is time consuming. An alternative is video and audio recordings of subjects. While it eases the task of recording events, (Eder & Enke, 1991; Planalp, 1993) (Mettetal, 1982)the challenge of time remains. Additionally, it has been found to even if marginally make subjects less natural in their conversations. The researcher must invest the time needed for becoming accepted within the group to be studied. (Nicolopoulou, 1997)Eavesdropping is an alternate method used by researchers to preserve the spontaneity of conversations and of interpersonal relationships. (Levin & Arluke, 1987) (Dunbar, Marriott, & Duncan, 1997) (McCormick & McCormick, 1992)eavesdropped on Emails for studying incidence of gossip. While eavesdropping does preserve authenticity of data, it clearly poses ethical questions.

Participant observation as method for data collection is efficacious, but eavesdropping and video-audio recording of conversations is not. Diary records is thought to be a suitable alternative for gathering qualitative data of social interactions. (Duke, 2012) It makes the participant a co-researcher in that the participant himself creates the diary record of his social interactions. An advantage of the diary record is that it addresses the challenge of time commitment that the researcher needs to make for gathering data. The diary record maintained by the diarist is the simultaneous gathering of rich data as events unfold, which is to say that there is minimization of loss of richness of data because the subject is the observer and knows what aspect of data must not be missed for this data to be meaningful. (Duke, 2012)has proved useful in confirming the issues I have anticipated and/or encountered in enrolling participants for the study. In adopting participant observation and diary record, I acknowledge the challenge of the study's need for records of social interactions that are not restricted to the work context.

The need to note incidence of content of a certain nature and of frequency lead me to adopting the quantitative technique to data collection and analysis. The survey questionnaire as a data collection tool assumes the respondent to be adequately aware of his use of information as driven by interest in the phenomenon as such, or by something about the person/s within the phenomenon. Interview as tool for collection of data assumes recall. It has to be one-on-one and conducted by the researcher. The costs of time and effort out-weigh the quality of data that is expected to be generated because these interviews would require the respondent to share details of their conversations; a face-to-face situation like interview can cause respondents to withhold details. Diary record has its weaknesses but has been an established tool for collecting conversation data, particularly over an extended period of time. Tracking frequency of interactions implies data collected over an extended period of time. For these reasons, I adopt diary record as the tool for data collection.

 I established contact with persons within my professional network to see if they would consent to being respondents for the study. I provided prospective respondents with a brief of the study, assured confidentiality, shared a specimen diary entry, and even solicited suggestions on preferred alternatives to a physical diary entry. But, enrolling respondents was a failed attempt. In the meantime, I started maintaining a diary record of my own conversations. At this stage, there are no empirical works known to the researcher that provide a ready research design to adopt. The series of current papers will show the efficacy of the design decisions made for future work to carry forward and/or to modify. Data in the form of diary records has a low success rate, and to collect such data at this stage could lead to the data getting wasted if data analysis shows-up flaw/s at any stage of the study's design. The current paper is based on the twelve conversations that formed the diary entries over a seven days' period. A key weakness of the study because of the small data-set is that findings from the study will not be robust enough for arriving at conclusions. So, I will end this study with discussion of findings and scope for future research.

3.1. The Episode

An episode is social interaction over information that communication actors undertake. This interaction is co-created; is undertaken for a purpose; and occurs within daily social interaction. Greater the frequency of such episodes, greater the relational satisfaction for communication actors. (Hall & Davis, 2017) CBB theory's definition of episode sees information as transformed into something different through application of action. While social curiosity literature does look at action, it is for the strategies these actions make-up for gathering information and not for transforming information. I see this to affect the extent to which a conversation episode is co-constructed. For instance, use of covert strategies can lead the subject to gather information with limited interaction with the interaction partner.

The list of variables and associated measures

Variable		Measure
Information		
	About things in general	
		Novelty
		How things work
		Challenge
	People	
		Behaviour
		Action
		Characteristics
Action		
		Overt
		Covert
		Indirect (third party)
Purpose		
	Belonging	
		Frequency (Relational satisfaction)

I code conversations for the variables and associated measures as culled from literature. Frequencies for each of these criterion as seen in data is presented first. These frequencies are bases for subsequent analyses and interpretations.

CBB Episode	SB QT A PB	SB QT A MB	E QT C CC	E QT C DSI	E QT C P
Code	PHYSICAL BEHAVIOUR	MENTAL BEHAVIOUR	COCREATE	DAILY SOCIAL INTERACTION	PURPOSEFUL
Frequency	12	5	6	10	8
%	100	41.6666666667	50	83.3333333333	66.6666666667
Frequency (1A 2A 3B 5A 5B)	5	4	3	5	3
%	100	80	60	100	60

1. Six (6) 50.00 per cent of all the twelve (12) conversations are co-created by communication actors; ten (10) 83.33 per cent of the conversations occur within daily social interaction; and, eight (8) 66.66 per cent of all conversations are purposeful.
2. The alphanumeric codes (1A 2A 3B 5A and 5B) represent the sub-set of conversations that are undertaken by the diarist with the same communication actor. These five (5) conversations are 41.33 per cent of the twelve (12) conversations in the data-set.
3. Of these five (5) conversations, three (3) 60.00 per cent are co-created; five (5) 100.00 per cent occur within daily social interaction; and, three (3) 60.00 per cent of the conversations are purposeful. 4. The share of 41.33 per cent that the sub-set of the five conversations has in the overall data leads to the interpretation that the conversations fulfill the criterion of

relational satisfaction. This analysis of data finds that the conversation data fulfills the qualifying criteria for an episode—purpose, co-construction, occurrence within daily social interaction, and relational satisfaction. Analysis of data hereafter is focused on looking at the conversations as episodes of social curiosity.

(Hartung & Renner, Social Curiosity and Gossip: Related but Different Drives of Social Functioning., 2013)distinguish information as information about things in general and information about people. Similarly, purpose for social interaction is classified into learning, belonging, and control over social environment. And, there is emphasis on the act of gathering information which is called exploratory strategies. (Hartung & Renner, Social Curiosity and Gossip: Related but Different Drives of Social Functioning., 2013)These specifics are shown in the table below, and are discussed later in the paper.

Social Curiosity: :	1.1. SC QT AIN Novelty	1.2. SC QT AIW Workings	1.3. SC QT AIC Challenge	2.1. SC QT APB Behaviour	2.2. SC QT APA Action	2.3. SC QT APF Feelings	I. SC QT PLND Learning	II. SC QT PRFB Belonging	III. SC QT PCSE Control	A SC QT ESATI Overt
Frequency	7	2	6	4	9	3	4	4	5	6
Per cent	58.33	16.66	50.00	33.33	75.00	25.00	33.33	33.33	41.66	50.00

I now answer the research questions raised by the study.

RQ-A. To what extent does the need for belonging underlie social curiosity
Data in the table below shows the following--
1. Belonging as purpose for social interaction has a frequency of four (4) 33.33 per cent in the data-set.
2. Where belonging is the purpose of social interaction, interest in behaviour of people, characteristics of people, and feelings of/for/about people all have an identical frequency of two (2) 50.00 per cent.
3. Where belonging is the purpose of social interaction, both the overt and indirect exploratory strategies for information gathering have an identical frequency of two (2) 50.00 per cent.

RQ-A. To what extent does the need for belonging underlie social curiosity

Social Curiosity: :	1.1. SC QT AIN Novelty	1.2. SC QT AIW Workings	1.3. SC QT AIC Challenge	2.1. SC QT AP B Behaviour	2.2. SC QT APA Action	2.3. SC QT APF Feelings	I. SC QT PLND Learning	II. SC QT PRFB Belonging	III. SC QT PCSE Control	A SC QT ES ATI Overt	B SC QT ES OS Covert	C SC QT ES A3P Indirect
7B	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1
5A	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
3B	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
3A	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0

RQ-B. What is the relation of belonging and curiosity about things in general?

Novelty	Workings	Challenge	Behaviour	Characteristics	Feelings	Learning	Belonging	Control	Overt	Covert	Indirect
3	1	2	2	2	2	1	4	1	2	1	2

To answer the research question (B) 'What is the relation of belonging and curiosity about things in general', data shows the following--

1. Belonging as a purpose for social interaction has a frequency of four (4) 33.33 per cent in the data-set.
2. Within these four instances, novelty about things in general has the highest frequency of three (3) 75.00 per cent as the stuff of conversation.
3. When belonging is the purpose and there is curiosity about things in general, both overt and indirect exploratory strategies have an equal frequency of two (2) 50.00 per cent.

Section-4. Discussion

Social interaction is undertaken with a purpose in ten (10) 83.33 per cent of the cases; but, belonging is a purpose for social interaction in four (4) 40.00 per cent of the ten cases where interaction is purposeful. So although the small dataset does not warrant conclusions, there is a finding that belonging as purpose for social interaction has a fair but not a large share in social interaction.

When the distinction among what prompts curiosity is relaxed, curiosity has a frequency of ten (10) 83.33 per cent. On relaxing the distinction among what aspect of people information is collected, social curiosity has a frequency of eleven (11) 91.66 per cent. It appears that there is a blurring of the line between information about things in general and about people.

Data on exploratory strategies must be treated with caution. The high incidence of indirect strategies 66.66 per cent and the low incidence of covert strategies 8.33 per cent may be a substitution of indirect strategies with covert strategies that are inaccessible to the diarist even as these may be more effective.

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