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ABSTRACT

This paper notes the introduction of roleplaying into the interpersonal communication curriculum, identifies interpersonal communication as the key variable in the maintenance of successful relationships, touches on common problematic areas in interpersonal conflict, and discusses how roleplaying and action methods (any of a variety of methods usually associated with laboratory or experiential learning and the expressive therapies which emphasize that something physically active is done by the participants in the course of learning, change, and personal growth) might be used to address these difficulties. (Contains 3 notes and 38 references; an 8-item lexicon of terms is attached.) (Author/RS)

ACTION METHODS IN RELATIONAL CONFLICT

Alton Barbour

Abstract: This paper notes the introduction of roleplaying into the interpersonal communication curriculum, identifies interpersonal communication as the key variable in the maintenance of successful relationships, touches on common problematic areas in interpersonal conflict and discusses how roleplaying and action methods might be used to address these difficulties. Key terms: interpersonal communication, relational communication, interpersonal conflict, action methods, psychodrama, and roleplaying.

A GOOD OLD IDEA

The first issue to dispose of in dealing with this topic is the notion that using action methods or role playing for educational purposes, including the examination and improvement of interpersonal relations, such as relational conflict, is a new idea. It may be new to some, but J.L. Moreno introduced psychodrama and action methods into the United States in 1927 (Hare & Hare, 1996; Marineau, 1989). There is an article by Bert Hansen twenty years later on "Sociodrama in Speech Communication," in Western Speech in April, 1947. Hansen was a student and colleague of Elwood Murray. Murray had encouraged his study of action methods with J.L. Moreno at the Moreno Institute in Beacon, New York. From that same era is an editorial in Sociatry by J.L. Moreno (1947) describing a summer workshop in communication and interpersonal relations at the University of Denver, conducted by Elwood Murray, in which sociodrama was extensively utilized. Murray is recognized as the originator of the study of interpersonal communication in the communication discipline (Papile, 1979). Murray was a friend and colleague of Moreno and he used both the group and action methods of Moreno in his interpersonal communication classes as early as 1947 (See University of Denver Summer Catalog, 1947 p. 33). Murray perceived sociodrama as a "methodology of communication," and can be credited with introducing role playing into the communication curriculum in his first post WWII interpersonal communication classes. Action methods in the examination and the improvement of interpersonal relationships have been around for over fifty years. They were useful then. They continue to be useful now, but it not a new idea.

RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION

For most of the history of the communication discipline, from classical times to the present day, what we might call "impersonal communication" has been largely what was studied. Formal platform public address was studied. The well conceived and well delivered message was studied. Persuasion was studied. Evidence, logic and proof were studied. The great speakers were studied. How to give speeches was studied. That began slowly to change in the discipline starting in the 1940s when Elwood Murray began to argue that very little of our time was spent giving speeches or listening to them. We spent most of our time in speaking to people informally and interpersonally, and that informal interpersonal communication was worth learning about.

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It is not that Murray thought that rhetoric and persuasion were unimportant; it is just that he had come to believe that interpersonal communication was more important. Interpersonal communication was, after all, how we generated and maintained our relationships with others, our work relationships, our friendships and our intimacies. If these relationships were important then interpersonal communication was important. Campbell et al. (1976) found that people typically identify interpersonal relationships as being the most important variable in making their lives worthwhile and meaningful. The lack of or failure of interpersonal relationships is correlated with psychiatric pathologies (Bloom, Asher & White, 1978), suicide (Stech, 1980), and family instability (Albrecht, 1980). Effective interpersonal communication is what sustains successful relationships (Alexander, 1973; Norton & Glick, 1976; Murstein, 1972). Its absence is the key variable in the failure of such relationships (Alexander, 1973; Norton & Glick, 1976).

A key contributor to our understanding of interpersonal communication was anthropologist Gregory Bateson. Based on his work at a veteran's hospital in Palo Alto, California, he posited that each statement we make to another person has two levels of communication in it simultaneously (Bateson et al., 1956). He called them the object level and the relationship level. The essence of the idea is that no matter what we are talking about at the object level with the other person, we are at the same time in some way communicating to that person about what the relationship is. It might be a statement which reinforces superior-subordinate roles, or language which demonstrates emotional distance.

Sometimes the relationship level message is a nonverbal one conveyed through paralanguage or facial kinesics. One of my favorite examples of a nonverbal relationship message is from my former student, Anne Mathews, who was trying to explain disconfirmation to a professor who was opening and reading his mail at the same time she was talking to him. Typically it is through this relationship level communication that we know how we stand with the other person. We know how we are being perceived and know how we are being treated. We know that we are being confirmed or disconfirmed. We know if we are valued or discounted. Bateson influenced and inspired a number of people who have further developed and applied this basic idea. People who have studied interpersonal communication are usually familiar with the names Beavin, Haley, Jackson, Satir, Watzlawick, and Weakland and how they filtered into the communication literature (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967; Watzlawick, 1978) and helped to shape what has now come to be called relational communication (Watson & Barker, 1990 p. 200 ff.).

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

Conflict is an inherent aspect of the human experience including human relationships. With every interpersonal relationship no matter how perfect and peaceful, there is always the potential for conflict. In some interpersonal relationships, conflict is a regular feature. Moreover, with every kind conflict which is experienced there is a relational aspect, even that which occurs among nations (Bem, 1972).

I am fond of telling my students that there are different kinds of conflicts. There is, of course, substantive or topical conflict, the kind which is argued or debated in legislatures or courtrooms and sometimes in barrooms or hot tubs. What seem to be important in this kind of conflict are issues, precedent, policies, facts, evidence, and analysis, although sometimes the personalities involved manifest themselves. There is also the kind of conflict that arises between individuals or entities such as political parties, which has

little to do with the topics or facts or evidence, but seems to arise because the people involved have such very different ways of perceiving and understanding the very same issues or events. This we might call epistemic conflict because the participants seem to have such very different ways of knowing about the world that they are prone to disagree about virtually everything. Sometimes these conflicts are semantic and are about what the words mean to the two parties. The meaning, as the old expression goes, is not in the words, but in the people.

Finally there is the kind of conflict which arises between individuals in which there is a topic or issue which is disputed, but that topic is secondary to the relationship which exists between the two people. It is not as if every time two people have two different opinions they find themselves in opposition, but that is usually how a conflict begins. It is surprising how quickly (sometimes with a sentence or a word or a glance) a difference of opinion becomes a conflict. This is because the motive of one person confronts the barrier which is the other person. With two people involved, sometimes there are mutually exclusive motives and barriers. As much as people who are so interdependent would like to avoid it, it is inevitable that eventually there will be disagreements, some of which may be intense.

This is more serious than differences of opinion between strangers because if the relationship is one of emotional attachment, the conflict puts the relationship at risk. Couples who experience frequent and severe interpersonal conflicts tend to be more unhappy and dissatisfied than couples who engage in fewer and less severe conflicts (Cahn, 1990). Unresolved conflicts leave couples unhappy, doubting, and irritated (Duck, 1988; Lloyd & Cate, 1985). How married couples handle the conflict they have determines the quality of their marriage (Wilmot & Hocker, 1997). Ideally what both parties want is to manage the issue and, at the same time, maintain the relationship. There are some relational advantages in learning to handle interpersonal conflicts effectively.

UNPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIORS

What are some of the problems that typically are present in interpersonal or relational conflict which interfere with a satisfactory resolution? Start with the idea that we carry our personal histories along with us in our relationships with others and with them are our styles and strategies for dealing with conflict, including some which are destructive. According to Fitzpatrick (1988, p. 114) and Wilmot and Hocker (1997, p. 41, 82) virtually all unproductive conflict behaviors are a function of power issues and/or self esteem issues. In fact it is logical that these two explanations would be linked as important, because as power issues escalate into anger, threats, manipulation, coercion and punitive tactics, they increasingly have the capacity to become damaging to the esteem of the other and to the relationship. This ego damage may then provoke that person to retaliate. It may become then a cycle of escalation. How do these issues typically manifest themselves?

1. POWER ISSUES

Power issues are inherent in every conflict whether they come to the foreground or not. Often, regardless of what the original disagreement was about, a conflict may end up being a struggle for power and the original issue will be forgotten. Sometimes power is about the control of resources. Sometimes it about being "right." Sometimes it is about "winning." Power and control issues often begin with attribution. As we observe the

behaviors of others, we often try to formulate the reasons for their acts and attribute characteristics to them (Kelley, 1973). This process is one part of the literature on interpersonal perception, which says that we quickly integrate cues about the other person into a total impression, and most often it is done unconsciously. This is innocent enough, but we do this whether our information about the other person is complete or it is sketchy. Sometimes with very little information or faulty information we decide what a person is like, what that person's motives are, and go on to predict what he/she will do in the future. It is possible to view attribution as a form of transference. There are at least a couple of problems with believing in our attributions and acting on them. One is the obvious one that the more we make judgments with incomplete or faulty information, the more wrong we may be.

The second problem is that who we are affects how we judge others. If we are of an ignorant, hostile, dogmatic or suspicious nature, that part of who we are will become a part of our appraisal of the other person, no matter what that person is really like. And then we may act on that appraisal (Folger et al., 1997, p. 52; Watson & Barker, 1990, p. 37). It is easy to see how this might operate in a conflict. If we start with a disagreement and then attribute negative character or motives to another person, including the possibility that the other person is threatening to us, it may lead to strategies of blame and threats. We might be aroused by the perceived hostile and dangerous nature of the other person and go on the attack in order to punish the other person (Folger et al., 1997, p. 204) for threatening us. Through the use of power a person attempts to achieve his or her objective with force, control, pressure, or aggression over the resistance of the other.

"You're the one who started this. It's your fault. You did it first. You always start it. Just like last week about the dishes. You're still angry about that and trying to get back at me. I think you are an angry person. You are vicious and bloodthirsty. You can't get along with anyone. No wonder you don't have any close friends. Who could get along with you? Not even your own family. Your sister hates you, you know. Your kids have no respect for you. They told me. How could they? Don't look at me that way. I'll show you you fat ass. I'll get even with you."

2. IDENTITY ISSUES

Face or self esteem issues usually begin with defensiveness. Defensiveness is a concept that has developed in the psychoanalytic literature over the past 100 years. Generally speaking, defensiveness is any mental activity intended to shut out an awareness of something that is anxiety arousing or threatening to the sense of self. It is natural and normal to protect oneself from threats, attacks and dangers. It is an evolutionary advantage. If we can't protect ourselves, we become victims. Most of us have learned to protect ourselves and we do it easily and well. We are instinctively defensive. We are experts at taking care of ourselves and sometimes that works against us. Sometimes we protect ourselves from imagined threats or from no threats at all. In this day and age, we are rarely threatened physically, but physical arousal to threat is still within the primate brain. This means that the fight-flight mechanism still operates when we face psychological threat and we are predisposed to run or to fight. We have a visceral reaction even when we are physically safe, and only psychologically threatened.

One common manifestation of defensiveness is avoidance (Fitzpatrick, 1988; Folger et al., 1997). This is the "flight" mechanism. Most people would like to avoid fights or even arguments because they want to avoid possible personal attack. One way to avoid attack is to keep a low profile and never be noticed. This might be accomplished a number of ways, including changing the subject, avoiding eye contact, leaving the room, never disagreeing, never provoking, or never having an opinion of one's own. Sometimes this might work for the very skillful and practiced, but if one is one half of a couple, it is hard to remain unnoticed. So the person may have to find other ways to avoid. Sometimes avoidance manifests itself in silence. Sometimes it is in psychological withdrawal. Sometimes it is in denial. Sometimes it is in excuses. Sometimes it is in intellectualization. Sometimes it is through illness. Being sick is a very good way to avoid encounters which might damage the ego. All of these are ways of defending oneself.

Threats to the esteem of one party to a conflict typically result in the need for that person to protect who he/she believes he/she is (Folger et al., 1997, p. 53, 142; Wilmot & Hocker, 1997, p. 60) in order to save face. Identity or "facework" issues usually begin with the mental question, "Who am in this particular interaction?" Several schools of psychology say that all humans have a basic dominant need, which is to maintain and enhance a sense of self (Combs & Snygg, 1959). Conflict may put that sense of self at risk. As the conflict intensifies, regardless of what the topic is, both parties may shift to face-saving as a key goal (Rubin, 1996). In conflict, individuals can lose face, damage face or save face (Wilmot & Hocker, 1997, p. 60). People lose face when they are treated in such a way that their identity beliefs are challenged or ignored. That is, the conversation may have started out being about sorting laundry and end up being about one's need to be included, approved of and respected. In order to protect one's face and identity a person may damage the other person's face and identity. Facework includes putting forward a positive face when presenting the self to others and it includes saving face when one is under attack. Face-saving can become central to a conflict and can swamp any legitimate and tangible issues. And it is easy to see how face-saving might make one resort to power strategies and reprisals, sending the conflict spiraling up.

I didn't start it. I never start it. Why are you doing this again? Why are you treating me this way? Is this how you talk to some one you say you care for? I want some respect. And how can you talk about my mother that way? What did she ever do to you? What did I ever do to you? You always treat me like this. Can't you see this hurts me? Why do you want to hurt me this way? You must think I'm stupid and ugly. I'm not that way at all. You have no respect for me. You don't really care about me. I've had as much of this as I can take. I'm not going to take any more. You can't treat me this way.

ACTION METHODS

Experienced psychodramatists take it as a commonplace that many of the presenting problems they deal with revolve around interpersonal conflicts. They are a very typical theme. At this point, in the interest of simplifying things and saving time, I will make a few quick assumptions. Let us assume that interpersonal conflict is the issue and the person has chosen the psychodramatic method to attempt to resolve the issue. From my

perspective it does not matter whether in enactment there are single or co-protagonists so long as both co-protagonists get equal time. The same issues are likely to emerge. Let us assume also that the reason this concern is being presented for psychodramatic intervention is not to determine who is objectively "right" or "wrong" about some question. Psychodrama is not used to determine the answers to questions of fact. If the conflict is not about a question of fact and the participants in the conflict keep arguing about the same thing, it is likely that what they are arguing about isn't the issue (Wilmot & Hocker, 1997); the issue is probably how they are treating one another. This is particularly so when the issue has cycled and recycled again and again and the participants are saying and doing the same things over and over because they can't find a way out. So, let us assume that the substantive issue is incidental, and that it doesn't matter what the issue is. The relationship is likely to be the main concern, and the protagonist and antagonist may be handling the conflict in a way that is destructive to the relationship. Finally let us assume that there is some validity to the accumulation of data about interpersonal conflict which tells us that unproductive conflict behaviors are likely to revolve around issues of power and/or identity.

After all of these assumptions, let us move to a "given" among psychodramatists that after the drama begins one has no idea where it might go. So even though there are general guidelines, the spontaneity factors associated with the method make the outcome an unknown. Even if that is a given, relational issues are bound to emerge because one of the things each drama does is to identify and examine the relationships between the protagonist and the other central roles in the drama. As the drama evolves and develops, these connections and relations become more and more evident and more available to the director and the other participants. Another given is that there is no "right" resolution of the conflict. How one person resolves a conflict may be very different, and in fact quite opposite, from how someone else does it, and yet both might be "right" for those two people. Accepting those givens, how can a facilitator use the method and this information about conflict? Typically the protagonist will begin to explain the situation and the director will begin to stage it as if it were happening in the here-and-now. The problem will be converted to action. In this case, it would not be unusual for the director to go back to the most recent conflict or to a scene, which seemed to embody the central features of several conflicts.

1. POWER ISSUES

It is through the enactment that the protagonist may begin to re-experience the emotions associated with the other person and with the conflict which puts the relationship at risk. Once the protagonist and antagonist are presented and are known to the group, the director could explore the nature of the relationship, the nature of the conflict, and their typical ways of handling it. Examine how? Consider the Bateson (1956) research which says that relationship messages are constantly being exchanged along with object level messages. Many of these commonplace relationship exchanges are also clues to how the two persons are informing one another about the relationship. If it turns out that this is where the problem is, then this is also where repair might be done. If the director provides a double to offer support and to examine the thinking of the protagonist, the group will come to understand the goals and motives of the protagonist as well as the behavior. His or her normally silent thoughts will become available and known. In this

way, the protagonist can also examine his or her motives and check them out against different perceptions from group members.

By playing both roles in the conflict, the protagonist may begin to experience some perspective taking. This could be a look at "Why are we both behaving this way?" It could be an understanding of what it is like to be the other person in the conflict and to empathize with that person. Personally, I believe that there is nothing which clarifies an interpersonal conflict so quickly and effectively as a role reversal with that other person. If he hits, he will be hit and he won't like it. If the protagonist has a habit of launching abusive attacks, she may find out what it is like to be on the receiving end of such abuse. If he does name-calling he will find out what that is like. If she blames and threatens, she will find out what that is like. If he does attribution and mind-reading, he will have a chance to check the accuracy of his perception of the other person. Typically, if she makes a negative presentation of the other person, the group and the director will question that and keep her honest.

If the director does concretization and maximization in the action, that may add to the perspective taking by making what occurs larger than life and impossible to miss or ignore. Exaggeration may also make it humorous and allow the protagonist to laugh at himself. Through these techniques the protagonist may see that she is doing the same things over and over or that what she is doing is not productive and may see that what is being fought about is not important compared with the relationship. This might also be accomplished with mirroring in which the protagonist is taken out of the action and allowed to see some else portraying him, doing what he does. This provides emotional distance and more objectivity. If her way of dealing with the conflict is not getting the protagonist what she wants, this insight may lead to some problem solving in which she tries other ways of dealing with the disagreements and achieving her goals.

If the drama moves in time, the protagonist may go back in time to confront where he learned to handle conflict in this unproductive way (most likely from a parent) and may disassociate himself from this influence in order to do it a better way. It is axiomatic among psychodramatists that one has to give up previous ways of behaving in order to adopt newer and better ways. All of the psychodramatic techniques referred to previously are explained in two publications of Zerka Moreno (1959, 1966).

2. IDENTITY ISSUES

If identity and self esteem issues are problematic in the conflict, that will have to be enacted and examined. If at the start the protagonist is being defensive, he may have to see in action that being defensive is not getting him what he wants in the conflict or the relationship. In the examination of this issue, the protagonist may have to confront who makes her defensive, and what she is defensive about. If the drama moves in time, the protagonist may be able to go to where and when he learned defensiveness as a strategy in conflict and to consider what is was like to have such a model.

She might consider what it would be like if she weren't defensive. What is to be lost and what is to be gained by changing that? He might confront the person who makes him defensive and try out not being defensive with him. What would happen? There may several different ways of not being defensive and each of them might be tried out to see if they "fit." If a person seems to lack the resources to do these things, he may want to pick someone to help him or advise him or back him up. This might be a courageous double,

or a supportive friend. Or this might be mirrored so she can see others being her and being non-defensive in a variety of ways.

Sometimes people are defensive because of some perceived flaws in themselves which no one else notices, but which they exaggerate. A person may be attempting to hide this flaw from the person who makes him/her defensive. So the drama might look at, "What would happened if I admitted to myself and this other person that I was flawed, imperfect, and fallible--which is the normal human condition? It is a curious paradox that by dropping our defenses, and seemingly becoming more vulnerable, we can become less vulnerable because we no longer have anything to hide. This is a way of becoming more self-accepting instead of self–rejecting. When we are in defensive posture we may be safe, but we are unable to grow. So we become less healthy. Once a person can reduce defensiveness, she can look at better ways to handle conflict.

If the relationship has been damaging to the esteem of one of the participants, or if prior life experiences have, then there may need to be some scenes of affirmation and strength bombardment. It is always nice to get these confirmations from others, but ideally we should learn to do them for ourselves. This could start with scenes which acknowledge some achievements. From those achievements some strengths might be identified which are enduring. Usually we don't just talk ourselves into feeling better about ourselves. We need to look at behaviors and actions, what we have done which is worthwhile and to give those achievements power. If we want to feel better about ourselves we need actually to do something to feel good about. Being less defensive and confronting someone who makes us defensive is a good first step. Scenes which are a celebration of achievements would be appropriate. Or a protagonist may want to experience hearing the positive regard of those he respects and admires.

If defensiveness is neutralized and esteem is strengthened, it may be time for role training. Virtually anything which is role practiced in a drama becomes easier to do in one's daily life. If the protagonist typically has run from conflict, she may need to do some practicing of different ways of behaving and some different solutions than flight. A double may be helpful here, or a good role model. In general, conflict is regarded as constructive when both people are satisfied with the outcomes. In this case, if the relationship is intact and the protagonist has new, different and better ways of dealing with the conflict, something worthwhile has been achieved. Another sign of a positive outcome is if they have not only learned to deal more productively with the conflict but have also reintroduced vulnerability (trust, openness, confirmation) back into the relationship (Moorhead, 1991). A final scene might have the couple explaining to one another what they will expect and what they will need from one another if there is a conflict in the future. Paul Watzlawick (1983) has written a book with the intriguing title The Situation is Hopeless, But Not Serious. It is a book about the pursuit of *unhappiness.* In he deals with the question of interpersonal conflicts and how they are often handled, and attempts to place them in a broader more meaningful context. I believe that he has said it well and that a cogent quotation (p. 119-120) from that book is the best way to end this paper:

> "Is human partnership a zero-sum or non-zero-sum game? To answer this question, we shall have to find out whether the "gains" of one partner can be considered the "losses" of the other. And on this point opinions are likely to

differ widely. If the problem were merely a question of who is objectively right (on the object level) and who, therefore, is wrong in a given situation, that could be a zero-sum game. This is what many relationships are mostly about. To get into this hell it is quite sufficient for one partner to see life in general as a zero-sum game, offering *only* the alternative between victory and defeat. From then on, everything else follows with ease. Even if the other did not see life as a constant street fight, he can be converted to this view. The first partner only needs to insist on playing a zero-sum game on the relationship level, and one may rest assured that things will go to hell. For what zero-sum players are likely to overlook, stuck as they are with the idea of having to win so as not to lose, is ... the greatest opponent of all, life and all that life has to offer....*Vis-à-vis* that opponent, both zero-sum players lose. Why is it so difficult for us to realize that life is a non-zero-sum game? That we can *both* win so long as we are not obsessed with the need to defeat the partner so as not to be defeated by him? And why is it totally impossible for the expert zero-sum players among us to imagine that we can live in harmony with that all-embracing partner life?"

Endnotes:

1. The topic of this paper provided me with an opportunity to provide a juncture for the work of two giants with whom I studied. Both of them were ahead of their times, and both of them in their primes were seen as disreputable by their professional colleagues. Elwood Murray, Director of the School of Speech at the University of Denver from 1931-1962, was the originator of the study of interpersonal communication and the founder of the International Communication Association. J.L. Moreno was the originator of psychodrama, sociometry, group psychotherapy, and the founder of The American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama. Murray believed that Moreno's work was a methodology for understanding and improving the interpersonal communication process. Moreno believed that his work would be accepted first by people in education before it was finally accepted by the psychotherapeutic community. Murray was one of the first academics to invite Moreno to lecture at a university as a distinguished scholar and to treat him with respect. They were friends and colleagues. Emma Murray told me that on the occasions when Moreno stayed with them he helped her wash the dishes after dinner. I mention this item just to boggle minds of Moreno devotees who think that Moreno lived in some abstract theoretical world and never did anything ordinary or mundane.
2. Gregory Bateson was also a colleague of Murray. Bateson lectured on an occasional basis to communication classes at the University of Denver in the 1960s and 1970s.
3. Those who want to know more about interpersonal communication may want to read Mark Redmond's Interpersonal Communication: Readings in Theory and Research. Those who want to know more about interpersonal conflict may want to read Between Husbands and Wives by Mary Anne Fitzpatrick, Working Through Conflict by Joseph Folger, Marshall Scott Poole, and Randall Stutman, and the classic text on the topic, Interpersonal Conflict by William Wilmot and Joyce Hocker. Those who want to know more about psychodrama or action methods may want to read Foundations of Psychodrama by Adam Blatner and Allee Blatner, Acting-In also by Adam Blatner, Roleplaying in Psychotherapy: A Manual, by Raymond Corsini,

Psychotherapy Through Clinical Roleplaying by David Kipper, Sociodrama, Who's in Your Shoes by Patricia Sternberg and Antonina Garcia, and The Passionate Technique by Antony Williams.

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LEXICON OF TERMS

ACTION METHODS: Any of a variety of methods usually associated with laboratory or experiential learning and the expressive therapies which emphasize that something physically active is done by the participants in the course of learning, change, and personal growth.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION: The dynamic process of the cumulative transactional exchange of person-specific psychological information between two people (See Redmond 1995).

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT: An acknowledged problematic interaction between persons expressing opposing interests, views, or opinions (Bell & Blakeney 1977). This definition identifies interpersonal conflict as a normal form of human communication. The most important feature of interpersonal conflict is that it is based on interaction. In some cases, it may involve aspects of competitiveness.

PSYCHODRAMA: A form of group therapy originated by J.L. Moreno which uses methods of spontaneous dramatic enactment, sociometry, group dynamics, role theory and social systems to facilitate constructive change in individuals and groups through the development of new perceptions or the reorganization of old cognitive patterns. Typically, during a psychodrama, the protagonist experiences abreaction in the spontaneous enactment of central life issues.

RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION: The ongoing coordinated management of meanings or understandings between two people about how they are associated with one another, through verbal and/or nonverbal interaction (See Watson & Barker 1990).

ROLE: A meaningful pattern of learned behaviors appropriate to someone occupying a position in society. Roles are usually described as being "taken" or "occupied." A role in society may involve status and expected or preconditioned interactions and is considered essential to personal identity and a sense of self. According to Moreno, self emerges from role. The concept of role is based on role theory and a dramaturgic explanation for human behavior.

ROLEPLAYING: The enactment, portrayal, or rendering of a role in a psychodrama or sociodrama (Sternberg & Garcia, 1989).

SOCIODRAMA: A group action method in which the participants act out agreed upon social situations spontaneously. Sociodrama has as its goals catharsis (the expression of feelings), insight (new perceptions), and role training (behavioral practice) (Sternberg & Garcia, 1989).

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