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Utilizing Adventure Activities With Intact Groups: A Sociodramatic Systems Approach to Consultation

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Mental health counselors who function as consultants to staffs, groups, or other intact work systems will find some new activities to expand their team-building repertoire in this article. The consultant is provided with a rationale for the use of strategic systems and sociodrama techniques as applied to a challenging adventure activity that allows a group to metaphorically enact its common issue. The article concludes with an example of a consultation experience that illustrates the dynamic application of the theoretical constructs discussed.

The physically challenging group-building activities most recently associated with adventure programs such as Outward Bound and Project Adventure (Rohrke, 1977, 1984) may not have been invented or tried by Jacob Moreno (1946), but they certainly seem to fit into his spirit of action and spontaneity. Moreno's way of enacting the drama of individual and group issues ran the gamut of verbal and physical activities. Both psychodrama and sociodrama were seen by Moreno (1946) as "deep action methods," psychodrama focusing more on interpersonal concerns and private beliefs, sociodrama focusing on intergroup concerns and collective beliefs. These action methods, which Moreno developed, share a kinship with the current use of adventure activities.

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By combining the two approaches, mental health counselors (MHCs) can add to their repertoire of effective techniques.

Adventure activities have been shown to be extremely useful in work with groups and families (Gillis & Bonney, 1986). Remer (1986) has also used these "deep action techniques" and metaphorical strategies associated with Erickson (1980), Haley (1973, 1987), and Madanes (1981) for psychodramatic intervention with couples and families. This article combines Moreno's theory and format with adventure activities and metaphorical techniques to present a novel application of psychological principles designed for facilitating the resolution of a problem or issue shared by an intact work group.

As such, this article is of potential interest to MHCs from a variety of work settings who also function as consultants with intact groups, teams, systems, or staffs outside their routine activities. MHCs can benefit from this article by adding techniques to their "tool chest" of skills. This marriage of sociodrama techniques and adventure strategies can enable MHCs to function more productively within the many diverse roles that consultation demands (Weikel & Palmo, 1989). From the brief description of the rationale, format, and techniques used in such a group consulting/team-building experience, any MHC with proper training who is currently involved in group work should find these activities useful. The insights that may be provided from this perspective may also help MHCs to better understand the dynamics of their work situation.

A case example is included to help readers understand the combination of sociodrama and adventure activities. First, a brief explanation is given of the theoretical underpinnings of this approach.

UNDERSTANDING INTACT GROUPS AND SYSTEMS

Systems theory and strategic interventions are well documented in the family therapy literature (Haley, 1987; Madanes, 1981). Strategic therapists (consultants) view relationships as primary to understanding the dynamics of a system. Indeed, work groups and social groups that have existed over time with only minor changes in membership can develop a system of interrelated roles that become relatively fixed (though perhaps without the historical rigidity of a family system).

Madanes (1981) believes that altering the characteristic communication styles of a system will change the structure of the system. One of

the primary features of Madanes's approach to strategic therapy is that the responsibility of planning a strategy that can help to solve the clients' problems is placed on the consultant. In this approach to consultation, the leader will first attempt to create a new problem that will force the system's structure to change. Such structural change can then be applied to a solution for the initial problem. One way Madanes accomplishes this goal is to ask the members of a system to pretend in session to have the problem they have presented at intake. The goal is to have the members of the system gain control over their problem by acting "as if" they had the problem at that moment and in this setting.

This ability of system members to role-play problems is not unique to strategic therapy. The concept of roles is also central to Moreno's (1946) sociodrama and psychodrama work, and indeed, although the initial users of adventure activities did not recognize this "as if" quality of the experiences they presented, the field is also evolving in that direction.

ORIGINS OF SOCIODRAMA

Sociodrama is a form of activity in which group members, under capable leadership, create a drama through which they can act out their feelings in relation to a shared problem. Moreno (1946) is considered the founder of this active approach to dealing with group concerns. His initial sociodrama experiences involved the "living newspaper technique," in which he would combine the spontaneous expression of drama with particular social and cultural events from the newspaper.

As with many psychological techniques, others, including Torrance (1979), have taken the general principles of sociodrama and applied them to group problem solving. The spirit of Torrance's (1979) adaptation of Moreno's work into a method of examining group or social problems utilizing spontaneous interaction provides a basis for this current explanation of sociodramatic procedures and techniques.

The term *spontaneity* is crucial in understanding Moreno's theoretical system of sociodrama. Spontaneity is a self-generated act or expression arising naturally from impulses or desires and only minimally controlled by learned social behavior (Moreno, 1946). Spontaneous behavior is childlike and requires a loosening or shedding of the highly

socialized and protective learned styles of interacting. Young children are typically spontaneous in their reactions (Torrance, 1979). Many adults need help in rediscovering that earlier level of responding.

Moreno (1946) speaks of "spontaneity training," which appears to be a contradiction in terms. The contradiction is resolved through the techniques of sociodramatic warm-up, which are designed to diminish or eliminate standard socially approved modes of reaction. In a warm-up activity, new situations are produced for which the group members have no socially learned response readily available. The group, as such, must establish a new group norm that values spontaneous interaction. The director/leader does not allow the sociodrama to begin until an ambience conducive to spontaneity has been established.

Through the warm-up process, a group problem is determined, roles are assigned or assumed, and the action begins. The process of role taking is crucial to the success of the drama. Whereas group members have no readily available response to the warm-up situation, they may assume their typical roles in relation to the identified problem situation. The director can then construct a situation in such a fashion as to prohibit standard responses and encourage spontaneous reactions. Another approach is for the director to assign roles to the group members that are unfamiliar to them and then allow the situation to develop spontaneously.

The sociodrama is of short duration, usually no more than 5-10 minutes. If the drama lasts much longer, the group members tend to revert to their standard roles (Torrance, 1979). The drama should be terminated at its peak and immediately followed by an open discussion of what members have learned in relation to the problem as originally stated, as well as to themselves and their modes of interacting. Facilitating the discussion following the drama is also a part of leading an adventure activity.

ORIGINS OF ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES

The beginnings of the adventure approach can be traced to Outward Bound, Inc., a wilderness-based challenge program teaching self-discipline and teamwork through activities such as rock climbing, whitewater rafting and canoeing, and sailing (Bacon, 1984). Since 1971, Project Adventure, Inc., has translated many (outward Bound concepts, especially the team-building activities and individual initia-

tives, into an educational and counseling curriculum adapted throughout the United States and around the world (School, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988). Through workshops, textbooks, and "how to" manuals (Rohnke, 1977, 1984; School et al. 1988), Project Adventure has made the construction and implementation of individual and group adventure activities available to both educational and mental health professionals.

Traditional leaders of adventure activities generally rely on the notion that "the experience speaks for itself" (Rohnke, 1977). The traditional leader presents the activity and the goal to be accomplished. Then the leader further explains the rules of the activity and the precautions that should be observed. The intent of the traditional leader is not to form the activity into a psychological construct but is more rationally oriented. Thus, the traditional leadership role has been generally passive and nondirective regarding the meanings and dynamics of the experience.

Bacon (1987), however, has called for a more active, directive role for adventure activity leaders. Here the leader begins the activity by introducing it "as if" it paralleled a particular concept or problem that the group is experiencing. This action by the leader "reframes," in the strategic sense, or constructs a psychological context for the adventure activity such that the experience of the activity takes on psychological meaning (as metaphor) for each group participant. The consultant must find appropriate physical activities that have properties similar to those of an issue or problem facing the group. The activity is then introduced by asking members to act "as if" the physical activity and the psychological construct central to that activity were one and the same.

For example, a consultant might wish to focus on stress encountered through the process of attitude change. The task is to choose a physical activity that involves movement through a series of obstacles that will work toward a more ideal physical condition. The physical obstacles could be introduced metaphorically to represent aspects of psychological duress associated with stress. The amount of physical or psychological risk associated with the activity could be linked in the introduction to an increased opportunity to improve one's methods of coping with stress. The leader might also wonder aloud whether each participant will ask for help in dealing with stress or will need to go at it alone.

As noted, planned, programmed adventure activities do involve both actual and perceived risk. Whereas the actual danger or risk involved in an activity may appear to be physical, many participants experience psychological risk when asked to trust or depend upon others (Gillis &

Bonney, 1986). What is critical in designing a programmed adventure activity or series of activities is that the leader adequately "warm up" the group such that whatever "risk" is experienced is not greater than the group can manage. The concept of warming up a group for adventure activities is one way this method of leading groups is similar to Moreno's (1946) sociodrama approach. It is not the only similarity.

COMPARISON OF SOCIODRAMA AND ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES

First and foremost, both sociodrama and adventure approaches are active and group oriented (Bacon, 1987; Moreno & Elethery, 1982; Schoel et al., 1988). Both approaches place individuals in an unfamiliar social context for which they have few, if any, conventional role responses. It therefore becomes necessary for group participants to tap into their imaginative resources in order to construct a role or roles that will meet the expectations of the group and the problem situation.

Traditionally, adventure activity programs are more programmed than sociodrama, but both approaches rely on enacting roles in groups. As described above, sociodrama places a prime emphasis on spontaneity in the enactment of social roles. Spontaneity may become lost in some structured adventure activities where the emphasis is on problem solving and completion of the activity according to a prescribed set of rules.

Despite the difference in methods, both sociodrama and adventure activities attempt to generalize the *in vivo* experience of the group to "real life" issues. The relevance of the warm-up experience should be obvious, since "the problem" is generated out of the shared concerns of the group members. And although the "stage" for sociodrama may traditionally be indoors and the adventure activity stage outdoors, neither approach is restricted to these respective environments.

In both sociodrama and adventure activities, the consultant takes charge of the group with whom he or she is working. Leaders of both groups are trained and experienced in the use of techniques and safety procedures. While sociodramatists may be more concerned with psychological safety, adventure activity leaders may place more emphasis on physical safety. Leadership of both groups requires careful planning and skillful implementation in order for the group experience to be successful.

Combining the cognitive and affective treatment methods used in traditional sociodrama experience with a challenging physical/kinesesthetic correlate produces an active, spontaneous method of metaphorically focusing on a shared group issue or problem. Consistent with strategic systems theory, the group is now able to reframe the issue through each member's capacity to respond and enact new roles designed to alter or disturb the contextual field. The structure of the group is thereby altered. Haley (1987) speaks of this type of systems change as "second order" in that it transforms the structure of the system. Thus new ways of relating to one another emerge in the intact group or system. The group has done more than just adjust or refine old ways of relating to make it function more productively.

Persons unfamiliar with either the sociodrama or the adventure approach are not likely to detect any abrupt switch from one to the other. The goals of sociodrama and adventure activities are similar: to loosen and expand each individual's role repertoire and change the structure of the group, thus increasing the group's and each individual's response alternatives.

The following case example highlights the merger of adventure activities and strategic systems theory into a sociodrama format with an intact group.

A CASE EXAMPLE

Many of the activities described here were used for team building with a staff of 16 members. The staff worked within the same organization and at the time of the consultation experience were without a designated person who would listen with empathy to their problems and concerns. The goal of the one-day experience was to help the staff focus on their common concerns and to provide them with skills that would generalize to future problem situations. A brief description of several activities used in this experience is presented within a sociodrama format.

Warm-up

The warm-up is the initial phase of any sociodrama experience. Structured exercises are used to allow group members to encounter one another, to feel more comfortable interacting as a group, and to begin to experience the spontaneity of the sociodramatic process.

Several adventure activities are useful as warm-ups. A seemingly "fail safe" way to begin a session is with "moon ball" (Rohrke, 1984). The object of "moon ball" is to see how many times a group can keep a beach ball (approximately 20 inches in diameter) aloft without any one person hitting it twice in a row. The leader throws the ball among the group members and counts the consecutive hits before the ball hits the floor/ground or someone hits it twice in a row. Several rounds of "moon ball" are a good loosening-up activity.

A quick follow-up to moon ball is "count off" (Rohrke, 1984). Be sure the group is not standing or sitting in a circle before you begin this activity. The object of "count off" is to have the group count consecutively from 1 to the total number of persons in the group. The catch is that no two (or more) persons are allowed to say the same number at the same time. If (or when) this happens, the leader starts the group over at 1.

"Line-up" is another activity that helps the group warm up, and it also provides good assessment for the leader. The objective of "line-up" is to have group members form a single file line following a given criterion such as birthdate, numbers of years at the institution, or distance driven to work each day (Rohrke, 1984). This information is often conveyed nonverbally.

For this particular group, which shared numerous years of history, the line-up by birthdate (month and date) was followed with a challenge to the group to line up by the number of years as a member of that group. The instruction to communicate nonverbally was then added as the group performed the activity. This particular line-up allowed the consultant to see how well the group knew their history and how comfortable members were in communicating their particular historical position within the group.

The preceding activity is similar to what Moreno (1946) called the "warm-up" in sociodrama and psychodrama, and it represents, at least partially, what he referred to as spontaneity training. As mentioned earlier, "training" in spontaneity appears to be a contradiction, but the use of this warm-up activity is an attempt to set the stage where spontaneity may emerge. The first step in this process is to break down usual or socially approved models of responding and relating.

Line-up and other warm-up activities helped the group to begin to work together. The next warm-up activity introduced the element of group problem solving. The physically challenging element of adven-

ture activities presented the group with an opportunity to focus on a particular problem that required a physical solution.

The "spider web" (Rohrke, 1984) is set up vertically either inside or outside, using twine, an old soccer net, or bungee cords. Whatever materials are used, enough vertical holes are created, in a weblike fashion, large enough for each individual member to pass through. The web should extend from the floor or ground to about 8 feet. Jingle bells are attached to several of the web's lines so that they will jingle when jolted. The objective of the activity is to have each member pass through a hole without the bells ringing. The web may not be held by group members. If a group member does cause the bells to jingle, the member must retreat and start over. Once a hole has been successfully passed through, it becomes "sealed" and cannot be used again. This activity requires group members to help one another through a hole that the group has agreed is appropriate for that member. Note that members cannot just pick a hole and pass through; they must consult with the group so that all members can successfully complete the activity.

This activity can help communicate to the group the importance of the uniqueness of group members and how this uniqueness can contribute to the overall strength of the group. Since each member has his or her unique hole/role and since all members must pass through the web before the group can successfully complete the activity, both individual and group dynamics are addressed. In addition, the spontaneous nature of this activity requires the members to perform and interact in unaccustomed ways. This spontaneous, "unfamiliar" behavior begins the process of changing the structure of the group. In systems terms, second-order change is taking place. New roles and different behaviors require a new structure to emerge. The group members have become aware of their group as a "system" and the "locked in" nature of their previous role relationships.

Following this series of warm-up activities, a group discussion is held to allow members to comment on their perceptions of the activities as well as their feelings about their own progress and that of the group. In these discussions, members often talk about their feelings concerning trust, interdependence, and communication. The particular staff described in this illustration were amazed that they could conquer the "spider web," because they had perceived it as an impossible activity when it was first presented. Following the activity, the group shared the idea that together they could conquer almost anything. It was in the vein of this shared group feeling that the consultant moved toward

definition of a shared group problem/issue for use in the next socio-drama experience.

Choice of a Common Issue

What separates a traditional adventure experience from a socio-dramatic adventure experience is the next phase. The consultant asks the group to brainstorm issues or problems that they feel are common to everyone in the group. The consultant allows the group enough time to explore numerous issues and looks for an issue that all members share. It is important to inform the group that all members need not feel the same way about the issue but that all members must consider the issue or problem to be of some degree of concern.

The staff in the current example brainstormed a number of issues, including (a) the need for specific techniques for providing service to a particular problem group (e.g., clients, patients, students), (b) a method for working together as a system that allowed the group to maximize individual members' strengths, and (c) a concern that they had "had too much to do and too little time to do it." When this last concern was mentioned, nearly all the staff members acknowledged their agreement to working on this issue verbally or nonverbally by nodding their heads. With such agreement, this issue of "too much to do" became superordinate for the group. The consultant was then challenged with designing an activity that metaphorically allowed the members to experience significant aspects of this issue. Such an activity came to mind.

"Balloon frantic" (Rohrke, 1984) is an activity that presents group members, both individually and collectively, with more than they can handle. Each group member is given an inflated balloon (12-inch size). The consultant also has 6-10 extra balloons blown up. The objective of the activity is for the group to keep all balloons aloft as long as possible. On the start command, each member is asked to throw/hit his or her balloon into the air, thus beginning the "frenzy." After 15 seconds, and at additional 15-second intervals, the consultant adds another balloon to the action. Rohrke (1984) gives appropriate names to several procedures in this activity. If/when a balloon hits the floor, the referee/leader designates it a "hectic" (downed balloon) by issuing a "berserk" (screaming loudly at the downed balloon). When six "berserks" are reached, the "frenzy" is over. The objective is to extend the "frenzy" for as long as possible. Several "frenzies" can be attempted to allow the

group an opportunity to work together and become more efficient at preventing "berserks."

With the group in the current example, the leader reframed the referee's role as representing all the staff members' superiors (management). The balloons metaphorically became the clients whom the staff members were trying to work with more effectively. The staff members were particularly sensitive to the amount of stress (the sound of a "berserk") produced when someone slipped through the cracks (became a "hectic").

Following the activity, the group discussed the similarity of their behaviors in "balloon frantic" and in their current work situation. They then talked about several ways they could work together to prevent any one group member from being overworked with clients who might slip through the cracks.

Thus, the enactment of this common group problem led to insights among group members into how they might work together and serve as a "collective problem solver" in their organization. In addition, the group learned how they might help prevent any one group member from going "berserk" with "too much to do and too little time to do it."

What resulted from the warm-up experience and the resulting round of balloon frantic as an enactment of their common problem was a change in the overall group structure. The group went beyond a change in how they had previously operated, which would have been to designate *one* group member to be their "problem solver." Instead, the structure of this system changed such that all members could serve in the role of "problem solver" for one another, and they learned that together they were more effective at solving problems than any one person could be working alone.

The group's success with the challenging physical activities and the spontaneous way they responded to the challenges served to break their mind set of being stuck and defeated. Use of the sociodramatic adventure approach allowed the group to actively experience success in one area of working together, which could then generalize to other problems they might face. However, this type of experience is not always easy to produce.

One of the most taxing challenges of the combined sociodrama/adventure activity approach is for the consultant to come up with a suitable activity after the group has focused on a common issue. Consequently, it is imperative that the consultant be familiar with a variety of activities that might be useful in a number of sociodrama contexts. Books by

Fluegelman (1976, 1981), Rohmke (1977, 1984, 1988), and Weinstein and Goodman (1980) are all useful in this regard. Rohmke (1984) is perhaps the best source of useful adventure/sociodrama activities to date. The MHC has the burden of seeing the symbolic uses of activities. Perhaps this case example can prove useful in this regard.

CONCLUSION

As discussed in this article, it is possible for adventure activities to be combined with Moreno's (1946) sociodrama format and strategic systems theory to enable group members to enact issues they all share. Such an enactment can produce second-order, structural change that enables working systems to function more efficiently and effectively. The MHC who is interested in employing the techniques described here needs to have a working knowledge of the elements of adventure activities, especially methods of protecting the physical safety of group members as well as an understanding of the basic principles of sociodrama. These techniques, when used appropriately, can provide an impetus for changing the structure of an intact group, and they can also promote insights into shared problems and alternatives for their resolution.

There are also broader theoretical implications that may be derived from this article. The integration of adventure activities, sociodrama, and strategic therapy is rather smoothly achieved, because they are based on common assumptions even though they have very different origins. Each of these approaches accepts that interpersonal relations and group identification are a major source of individual identity and a sense of personal worth. The converse is also implied. Identity and personal worth can be lost or submerged through identification with a system in which conformity to group norms has become of such paramount value that spontaneous expression has been discouraged.

Strategic therapy is a form of field theory which maintains that all parts of a system affect all other parts. Each member of a group holds a position in relation to all other members. Strategic therapy intentionally disrupts the system in order to force a new alignment of positions (interpersonal relations). Adventure activities place members of a group in novel situations wherein established modes of relating and behaving are no longer valid. Sociodrama provides the members with an opportunity

to recognize and discuss the alterations that have taken place and the alternatives for reorganization and purpose that are now open to them. The authors believe that an individual's mental health is largely determined by the quality of his or her interpersonal relations. No one ever becomes completely individualized. We never stop needing supportive relations with significant others.

The strategies and techniques explicated in this article have as a primary goal the alteration of intact work groups/systems to allow for healthier, more creative interactions. They fit well within any MHC's theoretical system that places primary emphasis on interpersonal relations. They also begin the task of developing a mental health consulting model that includes system approaches (Weikel & Palmo, 1989). Certainly research is needed that can test the ideas presented here. It is not clear whether these activities, originally performed outdoors, translate well to the traditional group or conference room inside. It is also not clear whether activities conducted in a sociodrama context are any more effective in producing systems change than activities conducted for pure recreation. An abundance of questions remain unanswered. We call on MHCs to join us in attempting to build a testable model of systems-based consultation that is both active and effective.

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A Family Systems Perspective on Wife Battering

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In recent years, wife battering has become a more visible and focal treatment topic for mental health counselors. However, formal theorizing about and treatment of wife battering from a couple perspective, as opposed to an individual perspective, have been minimal in the professional literature. This article presents a family systems perspective on wife battering, followed by treatment implications for mental health counselors. The focus of this discussion is on the processes and interrelatedness between events and people in a battering relationship. The author also discusses some of the salient literature from an individual perspective on wife battering and suggests that future models and theories on wife battering incorporate elements from both systems and individual models.

In recent years the topic of wife battering has received considerable attention in the professional literature (Hale, Zimostrod, Duckworth, & Nicholas, 1988; Margolin & Fernandez, 1987; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980; Walker, 1979). The incidence of spouse battering, and particularly wife battering, is frequently difficult to determine accurately because of family loyalty issues that often perpetuate protection of the batterer and, thus, nondisclosure of spousal abuse (Gelles, 1976). Nevertheless, statistics indicate that as many as 50% of all women will be battered by their husbands during their marriage (Roy, 1982).

Formal and coherent theorizing about and treatment of battering from a couple perspective, as opposed to an individual perspective, has been minimal and inconclusive (Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1986). In particular, a focus on wife battering from a family systems viewpoint has received only minimal attention in the literature (Cook & Cook, 1984). The purpose of this article is to present a family systems perspective on wife battering and then to address several treatment implications for mental health counselors.

A major portion of the literature on wife battering posits explanations and intervention models that are primarily intrapersonally, rather

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