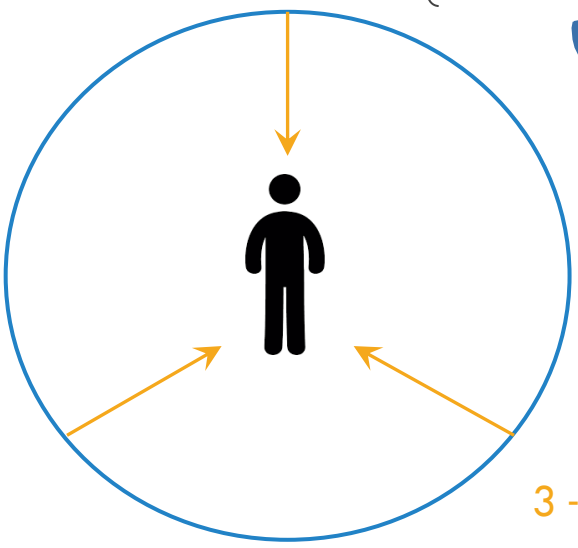
SCHUTZ'S THEORY OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

Source: "The Human Element" by Will Schutz

The three pillars of interpersonal relations according to Schutz are: Inclusion, Control and Openness



2 - Control

- Power
- Contribution

Associated belief: I am competent

Operational outcome: I am in charge & accountable

- Key stake: competence, ability to express one's point of view (top/down)
- Question / belief: am I competent?

1 - Inclusion

- Where are the group's boundaries?
- Does everyone belong to the group?

Associated belief: I am important

Operational outcome: I am alive

- Key stake: importance, ability to exist in the relationship (in/out)
- Question / belief: am I important?

3 - Openness

- Closeness to oneself and then to others
- Confidence in oneself, in others and in the situation

Associated belief: I am likeable and amiable

Operational outcome: I am aware

- Key stake: affection, ability to be close to the other person and to oneself (close / far)
- Question / belief: Am I close/likeable?

1. INCLUSION

- There are two underlying questions behind this term:
  - Sense of belonging to the group (or in the relationship): "I belong to the group that is being constructed"
  - Feeling of being important to the group: "I am important because I have a role to play in the group (or in this relationship)". *I have the right to be given time, I have the right to speak out.*

- The idea is that in order to establish a cooperative relationship each person must:
  - Acknowledge that they are important
  - Feel that they are important to the other person
  - Acknowledge the importance of the other person
  - See that the other person is aware of their own importance

2. CONTROL

- This notion includes:
  - Power (who is in charge?, who is the leader?, how are decisions made?)
  - The contribution of each person (what is each person' contribution, including my own?)

- A cooperative relationship can more easily be established if each person:
  - has acknowledged that they are competent
  - feels competent vis-à-vis the other person
  - has acknowledged that the other person is competent
  - has seen that the other person is aware that he/she is competent

- The operational outcome is a personal awareness of being **responsible and accountable**, i.e. capable of providing an answer.

3. OPENNESS

- This notion comprises the fact of:
  - Feeling at one with oneself and with others (not hiding behind a mask, being close to self)
  - Having confidence and trust in oneself, in the other person, in the situation

- Above and beyond individual importance and competence, openness invites us to:
  - consider the perception that we have of our own amiability and our likeability.
  - acknowledge the most vulnerable parts of our own humanity. A person who is humane is one who is able to recognise that they are contingent upon others and can be hurt.

INCLUSION – IN PRACTICE

Key stake – what is the purpose of inclusion?

- to provide each participant with the opportunity to find fulfilment in the group that is just beginning to form – "I am in" and "I am important".
- to enable each person to find their place and belong to the group as it develops, to "get warmed up".
- to break the ice with others in a fun, recreational way.
- to leave everything that has gone before joining the group behind them so as to be totally focused on the present, and the future.
- to get people physically and mentally involved.
- to work on group inclusion, by taking part in this game.

The process – how to structure inclusion?

The inclusion process comprises the following elements:

- An invitation to reconnect with one's own human self, something that can be done on one of several different ways, for example by stimulating the right-side of the brain, by enabling people to be more in touch with their emotions and with their body or by moving away from a purely mental register.
- In-group exchanges in order to:
  - get to know one another better, nurture relationships,
  - establish a climate of mutual trust,
  - enhance group cohesion.
- Clearly agreed and accepted rules:
  - Open participation, with total self-respect: i.e. I choose what to say about myself and what not to say.
  - Total authenticity – no place for irony or sarcasm or for making fun of what other people say to me.

Contents of inclusion

- The potential range of inclusion activities is almost without limits – much will depend on the creativity of the process lead.
- Here are just a few illustrative examples:
  - Two concentric circles that will enable team members to answer a question in pairs and then to change partners.
  - Brainstorming questions that will enable each person to clarify:
    - Their own requirements vis-à-vis the group,
    - Their own contribution
    - Their own personal obstacles,
    - Other, more offbeat questions & issues.
  - Use of a metaphor, an image, a photograph