

John Rowan

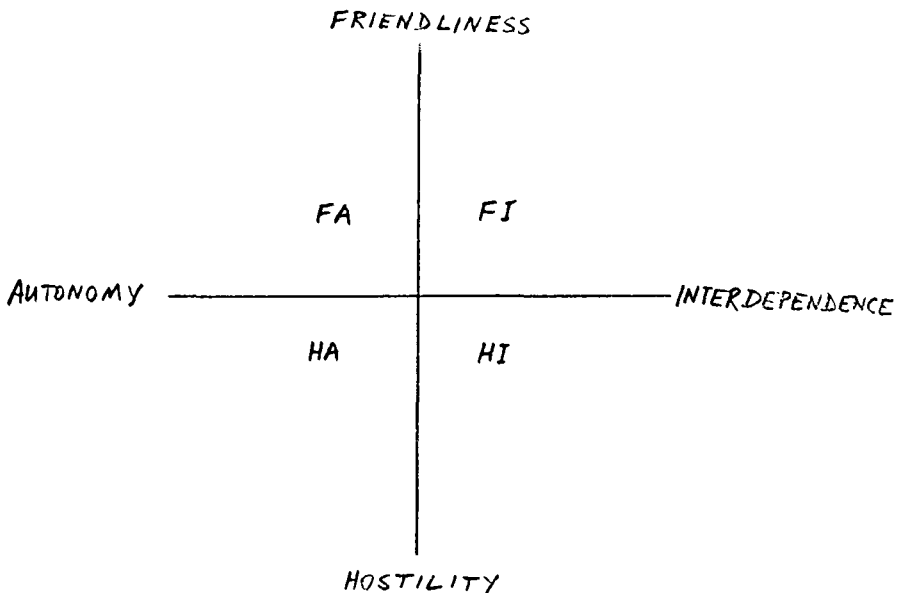
## Do as you would be done by?

Two-person sequences of action.

A mother shouts at her child, and the child cringes and whines. A chimpanzee nurses its baby, and the baby snuggles up. A father tells his son to come back from the edge of the platform, and the boy complies. A boss tells a worker to obey the safety rules, and the worker gets back into the proper routine. These are four examples of two-person action sequences.

One of the developing fields in social psychology is the study of action sequences. What actions by one person tend to evoke what responses by another? One of the first thorough attempts to work through this problem was carried out by Timothy Leary in a mental hospital setting, and published as far back as 1958. Other workers followed (e.g. Shostrom and Carson), and very much followed his lead, without noticing that the mental hospital is a particularly limited and alienated environment, where many normal sequences hardly ever occur.

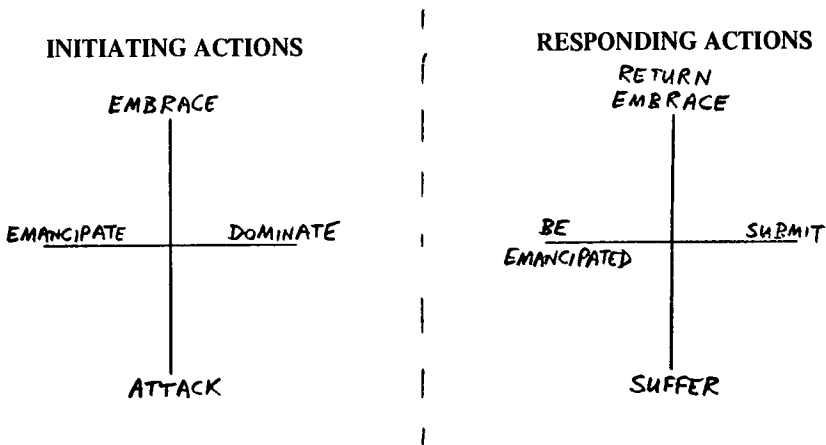
It was not until 1973 that someone took the basic idea, and gave it a simple twist which enabled it to cope with the vast majority of action sequences. That person was Lorna Benjamin, and she introduced two new ideas. The first was to rename one of the two dimensions which Leary and the others had used. This was her version:



This gives us four quadrants: a friendly interdependence quadrant (FI), which includes things like indulging, teaching and protecting another person, and often involves trust in some way; a hostile interdependence (HI) quadrant, which includes things like frightening, treating, attacking and so on, and often involves fear in some way; a hostile autonomy (HA) quadrant, which includes things like neglecting, abandoning or depriving someone, and often involves withdrawal in some form; and a friendly autonomy (FA) quadrant, which includes things like playing, discovering, listening and showing off, and often includes encouragement in some form.

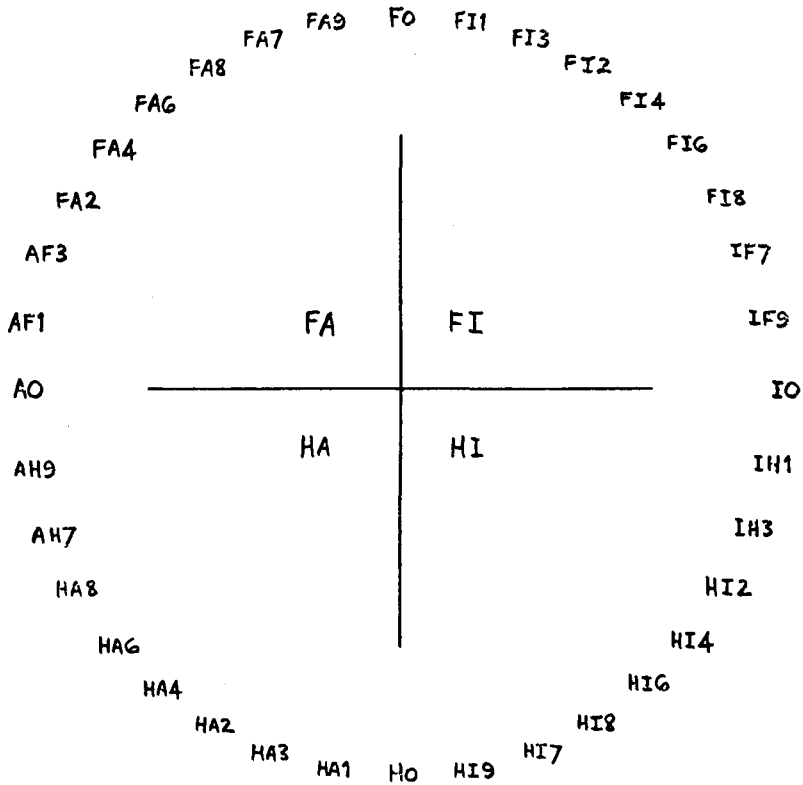
In these terms, friendliness is the *opposite* of hostility, and autonomy is the *opposite* of interdependence; and each point on any quadrant is the opposite of its counterpart in the alternate quadrant.

Now what Lorna Benjamin says is that actions in any one quadrant tend to evoke *complementary* actions in the *same* quadrant. This means that we now want two surfaces, one to represent all the initiating actions, and the other to represent all the responding actions. Let us see what this looks like, with just the four cardinal points filled in:



What we are saying, therefore, is that domination is the *opposite* of emancipation, and the *complement* of submission. So if Lorna Benjamin's first idea was to rename the dimensions, her second was to distinguish between the initiating surface and the responding surface - and therefore between the complement and the opposite. The previous versions were unable to make this distinction, and were therefore muddled and incomplete.

As a result of a good deal of research on mothers and children, and also on apes, Lorna Benjamin filled in a whole clockface of actions all round the quadrants, as follows:



I have altered her numbering, in order to make certain points clearer and easier to remember. For example, we can now say that the even numbers are the more civilized, restrained actions, while the odd numbers and still more the zeros represent more extreme and primitive actions.

We could, if we liked, represent low-energy actions as more towards the centre of the diagram, and high-energy actions as at increasing distances out from the centre.

It would also be possible to say that any of these sequences could either come from neurotic patterns of behaviour, with great rigidity and repetitiveness; or from spontaneous or intentional action (what is sometimes called praxis) which is fresh and not limited by precedent.

This chart shows the actual content of the 36 points on the diagram. From this chart answers to the questions - 'What do I do to get cooperation?', 'How do I avoid getting neglected?', 'How do I encourage autonomy?', 'Why does teaching produce dependence?' - and so on, can be derived. One can also see from the chart how people can easily get stuck in one quadrant of the chart, and how this can then seem to be

their 'personality'. Getting out of such a fixed position in one quadrant is one of the aims of personal growth. Of course the most tempting quadrant is FI - friendly interdependence - and most of the folk wisdom about personal relationships has to do with handling this quadrant. But there are other things in life than this very restrictive set of actions and responses. It is worth noticing in particular how if one stays in this quadrant, autonomy becomes impossible to achieve or encourage. Social workers and teachers are particularly prone, it seems, to work within the FI quadrant and then be frustrated because their role partners do not achieve autonomy. They tend to move to the HI quadrant when frustrated, instead of moving to the FA quadrant which would be more effective in achieving their aims. But of course a good deal of personal growth work is necessary to be able to move into the FA quadrant at all.

**A A A A A A A A A A**  
**INITIATING ACTION**

COMPLEMENT TO B.  
 OPPOSITE TO C.  
 ANTIDOTE TO D.

**QUADRANT FA**  
**FRIENDLY AUTONOMY**

- FO Embrace, tender touch
- FA9 Kiss, heal, groom
- FA7 Smile, greet warmly
- FA8 Play, allow peer play
- FA6 Confirm, praise
- FA4 Explore, let discover
- FA2 Listen, equalitarian
- AF3 Encourage divergence
- AF1 You can do it

**QUADRANT HA**  
**HOSTILE AUTONOMY**

- AO Emancipate
- AH9 Go away now
- AH7 Exclude
- HA8 Isolate
- HA6 Neglect, ignore
- HA4 Bluff, illogical
- HA2 Abandon, reject
- HA3 Deprive
- HA1 Starve, poison

**B B B B B B B B B B**  
**RESPONDING ACTION**

COMPLEMENT TO A.  
 OPPOSITE TO D.  
 ANTIDOTE TO C.

**QUADRANT FA**  
**FRIENDLY AUTONOMY**

- Hug, Affiliate
- Accept, groom, heal
- Approach, smile, understand
- Play, peer play
- Display, court
- Reveal, discover
- Cooperative
- Individualistic
- Unassaultive assert

**QUADRANT HA**  
**HOSTILE AUTONOMY**

- Be emancipated
- Flee, withdraw
- Compete, try one-up
- No input, no response
- Stimulate self
- Defy, suspect
- Distrust, grieve
- Temper tantrum
- Distrust, refuse, spit

**CCCCCCCCC  
INITIATING ACTION**

COMPLEMENT TO D.  
OPPOSITE TO A.  
ANTIDOTE TO B.

**QUADRANT HI  
HOSTILE INTERDEPENDENCE**

HO Murderous attack  
H19 Injure  
H17 Frighten  
H18 Restrain, overprotect  
IH16 Shout, criticise  
H14 Threaten  
H12 Exploit  
H3 Authoritarian  
IH1 Shame, guilt control

**QUADRANT FI  
FRIENDLY INTERDEPENDENCE**

IO Dominate  
IF9 Possessive  
IF7 Intrude  
F18 Overindulge  
F16 Stimulate, teach  
F14 Reasoned persuasion  
F12 Protect, keep company  
F13 Indulge, T.L.C.  
GI1 Support, cradle, nurse

**DDDDDDDDDD  
RESPONDING ACTION**

COMPLEMENT TO C.  
OPPOSITE TO B.  
ANTIDOTE TO A.

**QUADRANT HI  
HOSTILE INTERDEPENDENCE**

Do not touch me  
Rigid, hide, grimace  
Cling, annoy  
Cringe, defend, whine  
Present, yield, appease  
Resentful comply  
Obey routines  
Waxy comply

**QUADRANT FI  
FRIENDLY INTERDEPENDENCE**

Be mounted, submit  
Satellite .  
Overconform, defer  
Incompetent  
Absorb, imitate  
Comply willingly  
Trust  
Flower child  
Accept, nurse, sleep

Now how does this schema relate to other theories of interpersonal action? One of the best-known is Karen Horney's view that human action can be toward other people, against other people or away from other people. It seems quite easy to fit this in and show it to be quite compatible with Benjamin's version: the FI quadrant is all about moving towards other people; the HI quadrant is all about moving against other people (though Horney seems to say little about the *responses* to this movement); The HA quadrant is all about moving away from other people; and the FA quadrant represents the behaviour of Karen Horney herself, in encouraging patients in therapy to believe that they can be well, and that the cure is in their own hands.

Similarly, Jim Elliott has suggested that there are three types of leader - the tender, the tough and the self-sufficient. The tender leader operates in the FI quadrant, wants to be liked and wants people to like each other (maybe even love each other) and get on

well together; the tough leader operates in the HI quadrant, drives people hard, wants to win and be successful in the task in hand, is not afraid to use direct power plays; the self-sufficient leader operates in the HA quadrant, needs a lot of privacy, and often depends on a warmer second-in-command to relate to people on his behalf; and again the FA quadrant represents Jim Elliott himself (though he does not say so, any more than Karen Horney did) with a warm encouragement of the efforts of others.

So this seems to be a way of looking at human interaction which has a lot to recommend it. It covers all that a number of other theories do, and adds some important extra insights.

It enables us to see that much of the work in personal growth is an attempt to move people from right to left - gaining increased autonomy and the ability to find oneself. It would seem that a better effort might be to enable us to move easily into all four of the quadrants, so that we could have a more genuine choice as to how to react in various situations.

Lorna Benjamin says that if we want to move out of a situation we do not like - a situation where people are treating us in a certain way and we would like it to change - the most effective thing we can do is to start behaving in terms of the *antidote* to that action. The antidote is defined as the complement of the opposite. This is not always easy in fact, and it leads to a set-up where each person is trying to re-frame the situation to suit themselves; but it is an interesting thought, and worth pondering.

Because the dimensions are defined in terms of opposites, the dialectical laws apply, and it may be of interest to give examples. One such law says that when an opposite is taken to extremes and then idealised, it turns into its opposite. If friendliness is taken to its extreme it becomes fusion; and if fusion with another person is idealized it becomes what Karen Horney calls 'morbid dependency', expressed in such phrases as 'never, never leave me', 'I'd be lost without you', 'I've invested all I've got in him', 'I give everything but I can't ask for anything', and so on. What about the opposite extreme? If hostility is taken to its extreme, it becomes explosion; and if explosion against another person is idealised it becomes morbid counterdependency, expressed in phrases such as 'I oppose you and everything you stand for', 'everything you say is false', 'my life is devoted to your destruction', 'I give everything but I can't ask for anything', and so on. In other words, the person at this extreme is just as dependent as the person at the opposite extreme. *One's whole identity is created by the other.* And so one becomes extremely predictable: one's behaviour is either the same as (or complementary to) the other, or just the opposite of the other.

Pursuing the same argument with autonomy and interdependence, we find that autonomy taken to its extreme becomes isolation; and if isolation is idealised it becomes the feeling that one doesn't belong and is not really part of society. This is what is usually called alienation. If interdependence is taken to its extreme, it becomes total immersion in relationships with other people; and if this is idealised it becomes universal commitment - the feeling that one has no life of one's own, but is completely

at the disposal of other people. But this is of course just another form of alienation. In neither case does one control one's social life or find oneself in one's two-person action sequences. And again, this is just the opposite of what one intended.

It seems, then, that Lorna Benjamin's theory is richer and deeper than it might appear at first sight, and deserves some consideration from anyone involved in social action.

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## About the **AP**

As I write this we are on the eve of our first European Conference and everything is humming. From a very slow and nervous start we are now rushing up beyond our target figures of 150 and towards our maximum standing-room-only figure of 200. So its going to be a good event and a lot of healthy, creative, life-enriching vibrations will be radiating from University College. Already our monthly total of new members has doubled and with a little bit of luck and a lot of positive thinking we could now really be on our way.

Where to? First of all to getting big enough to generate our own future growth. Big enough to have full time paid organisers (I was going to write agitators) and communicators. So far a few of us have been pushing very hard to get the thing rolling . . . we're hoping the momentum is now going to carry us along. One exciting thing about the list of conference delegates is that more than half of them are non members. So we are already reaching out.

Our autumn programme is now finalised and the first event will be September 24th at Acacia House, The Vale, Acton. This will be a presentation by Will Grossman of his new approach to peer counselling and group work which he has called Prema. In October we shall have a general exhibition-type introduction to humanistic psychology; this will be at Bedford College. Then in November, Biodynamic massage, at Acacia House and then on December 10th a Creative Dance Therapy event put on by June Marsh and followed by an AHP party - also at Acacia House.

Although our monthly workshop events are aimed at very specific subject areas, they are good opportunities for members to meet each other. A sense of community and belonging is a good thing to have, and, failing a permanent centre, this seems to be a good way of fostering it. There are usually two or three committee members there and