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The Drama of Alienation:
An Interpersonal Examination of
Edward Albee's The Zoo Story and
Sam Shepard's Buried Child

by

Lisa Arnold

Bachelor of Arts, University of North Dakota, 1989

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of


Master of Arts

Grand Forks, North Dakota


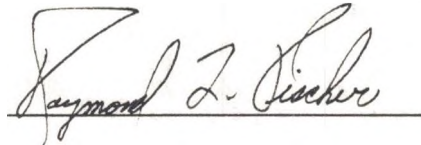
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ABSTRACT

This study examined alienation from an interpersonal communication perspective in order to find a connection between aspects of alienation and interpersonal communication.

Alienation occurs at two levels according to scholars in sociology and psychology. At the social level, one's culture influences behavior in interpersonal relations. At the psychological level, one's perception of self worth influences interpersonal relations. This study used Srole's five aspects of alienation (isolation, estrangement, powerlessness, unpredictability, and meaninglessness) to analyze interpersonal relationships between those alienated on both levels.

Two plays were chosen to exemplify how alienated people need close interpersonal communication. The Zoo Story, by Edward Albee (1959), shows how two strangers, separated by self-actualization and material worth, help one another make a close interpersonal connection. Buried Child, by Sam Shepard (1971), shows a dysfunctional family whose members recognize their alienation from themselves, each other, and society.

CHAPTER I
DESCRIPTION OF STUDY

Introduction

In Western culture today, specifically in the United States, there seems to be a displacement of priorities. Families often suffer because dual incomes are needed. They may also suffer because monetary worth is the criterion by which people are judged, so more time is spent on obtaining belongings than enjoying nature, family, and friends.

The media reinforces this belief that material gain will induce happiness. In this information age, people are bombarded with advertisements, television shows, and movies depicting happiness through external beauty and ownership. However, internal needs may suffer from the search for this external stimulus. People are conditioned by societal norms to behave and communicate according to what the culture deems acceptable. Thus, inner needs, outer expectations, and behaviors are often incompatible. This phenomenon may lead to alienation from both self and society.

People need to recognize their emotions, share them with others, and accept their feelings. In turn, people must accept the other's feelings and emotions. A problem arises with this utopian view: it won't happen. It would

be nearly impossible to get every individual to be happy with oneself while changing the West's value system.

Individuals exist in a society made up of individuals, and society is made up of individuals within a society. A circular view is taken by scholars who look at the problem through different lenses. Do individuals need to change their behaviors and communicative attempts or does the society need to change its rewardable or punishable norms? The answers are numerous.

This paper does not seek to find the panacea to the problem of alienation. It does seek to illuminate a problem that has been overlooked by communication scholars. This study will define interpersonal communication and its relationship to alienation; then it will apply the results to The Zoo Story (Albee, 1959) and Buried Child (Shepard, 1971).

Communication consists of four major contexts: interpersonal communication, group communication, organizational communication and mass communication (Littlejohn, 1989). But instead of thinking of interpersonal communication as separate from the others, it should be thought of as a definite part of all communication (Trenholm & Jensen, 1988).

Many scholars have recognized the importance of interpersonal relations; e.g. Williams (1981) suggests interpersonal relations are " . . . a distinguishing

characteristic of . . . [a person's] . . . existence" (p. 1), while Fromm (1955) indicates that interpersonal communication is a "necessity for sanity" (p. 36). Being able to associate with others, creating close interpersonal bonds, and feeling a sense of belonging is recognized in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. While self-actualization, the apex of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, may be close to impossible to reach, it gives one something for which to strive. Thus, without interpersonal relations, persons may not maintain sanity or reach their potential.

There are times when everyone feels alone or without a sense of belonging. Yet some people almost always feel isolated and have virtually no close interpersonal communication. These people can be said to be alienated, since alienation comes from the lack of interpersonal relationships (DeVito, 1986).

Alienation has two divisions: alienation from society and alienation from self. Those alienated from society feel unable to meet the standards set by the society in which they live. Those alienated from themselves feel that there is something wrong with their behaviors since they cannot achieve or obtain what is valued in their society.

In Western cultures, one can easily become alienated. People of today may be alienated from the world they created, from fellow persons, from things they use and consume, from their government, and/or from themselves

(Fromm, 1955). The West's standards are set so that "the sense of identity rests on the sense of unquestionable belongingness to the crowd" (p. 63). These societies promise "in principle what . . . [is] denied in reality." It is this withdrawal of allegiance from one or another part of prevailing social standards" that is meant by alienation and anomie (Clinard, 1964, p. 218).

The West presents an "untidy paradox" to its people. (Merton, 1964, p. 218). American society values material success but "social origins do variously facilitate or hamper access to the forms of success represented by wealth or recognition or substantial power" (p. 218). Caught within this paradox, alienated persons feel subjected to forces over which they have no control. This sense of normlessness alienates persons from "important aspects of their personality" (Kaplan, 1976, p. 120).

Those alienated from society and/or self may give up part of their individual identities to conform to society's standards since they may believe that "conformity is ensured through 'fitting in' at all costs" (Harman, 1988, p. 54). Yet "pressure toward uniformity . . . [becomes] . . . pressure toward mediocrity" (Walker & Heyns, 1962, p. 2). Again, the paradox is evident: either one can remain unusual and not belong or give up part of oneself and belong. There is a "delicate balance between self-determined activity . . . and activity conforming to

standards set by the society" (p. 2). People are in search of equilibrium (Israel, 1971). While everyone gets a sense of vertigo at times, there are those whose lives are predominantly off balance. There are two clear but polar solutions to the problem of alienation. One solution is that there needs to be a definite societal change. The second solution is personal adjustment to society's standards.

This study will gather and synthesize research on alienation. Then ideas gleaned from existing research will be used to examine the dramatic literature of Edward Albee's (1959) The Zoo Story and Sam Shepard's (1971) Buried Child in order to analyze interpersonal rhetorical choices and the behavior of the alienated.

Justification of Study

Studying alienation from a communication perspective will give insights into the patterns that create or dissipate alienation. To date, alienation has been studied by scholars in the fields of sociology and psychology. However, little focus has been placed on the examination of alienation in the process of communicating interpersonally.

Alienation needs to be studied from a communication perspective for two reasons. First, by examining rhetorical artifacts indicative of interpersonal communication, more can be discovered about the alienated. Second, rhetoric is epistemic, i. e. the way one talks forms

the way one thinks. By studying such rhetorical artifacts, alienation will also be examined. For these two reasons, this paper will analyze the speech of the characters who may be considered alienated. However, this is not an analysis of conversation. Rather the speech of dramatic characters will be analyzed. In addition to looking at the dialogue among characters, the prominent themes and symbols used by the authors will be analyzed.

Dramatic texts serve as an excellent artifacts by which to study alienation and interpersonal communication. Alienation is a common theme in modern drama. Therefore, it is important to note the reason behind choosing The Zoo Story and Buried Child for analysis. First, the communication problems the characters exhibit are very realistic. Second, the plots, which may not be typical, still allow the reader to identify with aspects of the characters' personalities. While Beckett's (1954), Waiting for Godot and Pinter's (1966), The Homecoming clearly exemplify alienation, they are too bizarre for its readers to find a close connection with the story line and/or its characters. In The Zoo Story and Buried Child, the emphasis is on the dialogue instead of an absurd and unrealistic plot. Third, Albee and Shepard are both American playwrights who have expressed their opinions about problems with the Western value system. Since the culture of the United States plays an important role in alienation, the

heightened communication exchanges in The Zoo Story and Buried Child are logical choices. In these two plays, the characters talk about their own alienation and even prescribe their own cures but they are not sure how to resolve their problems. Dialogue from The Zoo Story and Buried Child will be used to study communication and alienation for three reasons. First, it would be difficult to examine those alienated in their natural or contrived settings. Second, the artifacts are available to everyone. Third, both selections serve as dramatic and rhetorical artifacts in which their characters are alienated from both society and self.

The Zoo Story clearly exemplifies alienation through its characters' interpersonal communication. The play is "an exploration of the farce and the agony of human isolation" (Way, 1975, p. 37). There is little stage direction in this one-act play and it requires no scenery change. Due to its simplicity, the play focuses on the verbal exchange of its two characters: Peter and Jerry.

Buried Child also portrays its characters as alienated. As in The Zoo Story, there are no scenery changes and the focus of the play is on the verbal exchange between its characters. While the characters talk about their alienation, Shepard uses symbolism to intensify the characters' isolation.

There are many ways these plays can and have been interpreted. "Focusing on one interpretation . . . does not imply disagreement with others. It is simply that [the] purpose is to illustrate the thesis at hand . . ."

(Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967, p. 150).

Definition of Terms

Terms such as alienation, anomie, Theater of the Absurd, and New Realism need to be defined. The definition of these terms will begin to explain alienation and its relation to the theatrical genres.

There are numerous definitions of alienation, many of which overlap. Kaplan (1976) defines alienation as occurring when individuals perceive an absence of meaningful relationships between their status, their identifications, their social relationships, their style of life, and their work. Schaff (1980) defines self-alienation as the alienation of individuals in relation to a definite system of reference. Giffin (1970) says "social alienation refers to a person who withdraws from or avoids interaction with another person" (p. 347). Seeman (1961) claims that there are five parts to alienation: "powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, [and] estrangement" (p. 753-758). Fromm (1955) asserts that alienation is a mode of experience in which persons experience themselves as alien--they have become estranged

from themselves. These scholars have similiar definitions of alienation. However, Srole's definition is the most operational since he lists five characteristics that can be identified.

Some scholars use the terms alienation and anomie interchangeably. Others argue that anomie is only part of alienation. Seeman (1961), who writes about alienation, and Srole (1956), who writes about anomie, have similiar definitions. Srole (1956) lists five aspects of anomia: estrangement, unpredictability, isolation, powerlessness, and meaninglessness (p. 709-16). Srole's definition of anomie will serve as the operational definition for this study.

From the previous definitions, it can be suggested that there are two types of alienation: society-oriented and individual-oriented. "The aim of the society-oriented hypothesis is to facilitate the necessary social changes which will in turn enable individual 'self-realization' for as many possible" (Israel, 1971. p. 14). Individual-oriented alienation theory emphasizes social change and "assume[s] alienation to be a consequence of the society" (p. 14). Albee and Shepard show both societal and individual alienation in the plays selected for this study.

The Zoo Story fits into the genre of the Theater of the Absurd. This genre expresses the helplessness of people who seem to have no purpose. The play also portrays the human

condition at its worst while creating the desire to correct what is wrong with society (Styan, 1981).

Shepard's (1971) Buried Child fits into the genre of New Realism. This type of theater shows "a cry of anguish over the insufferable state of being human" (Demastes, 1988, p. 29). Dissatisfied with the Realistic Theater portraying social conditions, authors writing in the genre of New Realism are looking for a "new fix" (p. 30). These authors use realistic themes but don't intend to congratulate their audience. Often their plays depict agony.

The next step in studying alienation contained in the aforementioned plays is to review the literature on alienation and anomie in chapter 2. Chapters 3 and 4 will analyze the alienation of the characters in The Zoo Story and Buried Child, respectively. The study will conclude in chapter 5 with a discussion of the implications of the results.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scholars such as Marx (1854), Israel (1971), Galtung (1980), Pilotta (1988), Nietzsche (1972), Srole (1956), Parks (1977), and Giffin (1970) have studied various aspects of alienation, estrangement, and anomie. These authors form the foundation for this study. This chapter will begin by exploring Marxist theories of alienation including the society and individual-oriented perspectives. Second, the aspects of alienation will be discussed. Finally, it will be shown how communication has been studied in relation to alienation.

The term "alienation" is probably best associated with the German philosopher Karl Marx. Marx believed that there were three divisions of alienation: religious, political, and economic. According to Marx, people give their own power to other people and things, thus making themselves powerless.

In his theory of religious alienation, Marx explained that humans created God and not the opposite. In this creation, people imposed superhuman qualities on this higher power. When persons compare themselves to this deity, they see themselves as sinners. Marx argued that the belief in a

higher power released individuals from controlling their own lives. As a philosopher, Marx thought it was his duty to unmask human alienation in its secular form once he had unmasked it in its sacred form (Israel, 1971).

Marx tried to further unmask alienation in his work dealing with political and economic alienation. Marx believed that the concept of the state served the same function as religion. Persons were projecting their power "into an abstract idea which in turn makes . . . [people] . . . feel the more powerless" (Israel, 1971, p. 33).

In economic alienation, Marx believed that people "create themselves" through labor. It is in labor that people create objects which show their ability. In the ability to create objects, people see themselves as active creatures instead of passive objects. However, it is through these objects that people can evaluate themselves. Therefore, through this self-evaluation, people perceive themselves as objects. Thus they yield their power to their creation made during labor (Israel, 1971).

To briefly capsulize these three aspects of Marxist theory: people produce their own lives, spiritually, politically and economically. It is for this reason that Marx favored communism because then, "alienation would no

longer exist... and the self realization of . . .
[people] . . . would be complete" (Altshull, 1984, p. 98).

While Marx found the cause of alienation to be the yielding of power from self to other, he also explained that the way people experience themselves is through their interaction with others. He said that the vehicle of their interaction is language. Therefore, those who control the language control the ideology of its people (Altshull, 1984, p. 98).

Marx was the first to introduce "the concept of alienation into sociological theory" (Israel, 1971, p. 5). However, both sociologists and psychologists have elaborated Marx's theories into two categories. The first category is society-oriented alienation, in which individuals are examined within a group or society. Sociologists tend to look at society-oriented alienation because they feel that alienation is a product of a given society. The second is individual-oriented alienation, in which an individual's ego is involved. Psychologists tend to look at individual-oriented alienation and believe that alienation is a state of mind.

The aim of the society-oriented hypothesis is to facilitate the necessary social changes, which in turn will enable "self realization" for as many possible (Israel, 1971). If emphasis is placed on individuals with suggested

changes in their social adjustment, the view is society-oriented (p. 14).

Kaplan (1976) explained that society-oriented alienation is the difference "between the identification of people in their actual societies" and the obtainment of need within social interaction (p. 120). Those estranged from their society are said to be nonconformists or deviants. These people do not belong in their cultures. Yet this differentiation is a continual process of life. For example, conformity in art is a contradiction in terms. The differentiation is good and accepted (Walker & Heyns, 1962).

The individual-oriented alienation theory "emphasizes social change and assume[s] alienation to be a consequence of the society" (Israel, 1971, p. 14). Individuals become alienated from important aspects of their own identities when they "appear to be subject to social or natural forces over which they have no control" (Kaplan, 1976, p. 120). Unable to control their lives, people become alienated from their own emotions because the "psychic order . . . [they are] . . . attempting to impose on the world" is being threatened (p. 132).

As has been shown, the lack of control and the sense of powerlessness are the primary causes of both society and individual-oriented alienation. Jourard (in Borden & Stone, 1976) believes that individuals "are passive in their relationships with society" and they place their control in

the environment (p. 97). People who are alienated often feel manipulated by society and believe that they have no choice in the way they behave because someone else is controlling their behavior.

Now that a frame of reference has been established, it is important to look at recent studies regarding alienation. The term alienation implies that one is estranged from certain people or things. Most scholars agree that if persons are alienated, they are alienated from societal norms and/or from their own identities. Some scholars say that American values are misplaced (Israel, 1971), that norms are absurd (Laing, 1967), the media influences behavior and beliefs, (Pilotta, Endress, and Jaske, 1988) and that advertisements create separation (May, 1979). Other scholars have studied alienation between close friends (Parks, 1977), its relation to imperviousness, (Giffin, 1970) and nonverbal influence on alienation (Giffin, 1970).

American society highly values the "normal" person. The United States "educates its children to lose themselves and become absurd, and thus be normal" (Laing, 1967, p. 12). What the Western culture labels as normal "is a product of repression, denial, splitting, projection, introjection, and other forms of destructive action or experience. [People are] radically estranged from the structure of being" (p. 11).

The structure of the American capitalistic society is set so that alienation is inevitable. People can often be estranged from societal norms. Societal norms and ideology are "not the fault of consciousness, but rather . . . [they are] . . . built into the social structure itself" (Pilotta, Endress, and Jaske, 1988, p. 19).

Even interaction between strangers involves some minimal normative expectations, and hence some kind of social organization is presumed by participants ignorant of their "actual" statuses and roles (Goode in Cicourel, 1974). Thus there are certain "boundary conditions" that influence interaction (p. 13).

In a capitalistic society, freedom and equality are the foundation. However, one is free and equal only on paper. "It is one's culture that facilitates one with language, customs, beliefs, and habits. These are the first criteria for determining strangeness and familiarity" (Harman, 1987, p. 13).

Alienation develops primarily from powerlessness--a lack of control. In the American culture, according to Galtung (1980), power is based on six values: inequality, injustice, exploitation, penetration, fragmentation, and marginalization (p. 64). Power must be examined at the source, not at the point of impact. In other words, it must be examined through the person giving up power, not through the person receiving power. Inequality comes from three

power bases: innate power refers to ideological influence, resource power refers to control over resource needs of others and structural power refers to people's positions in society.

Pilotta et al. (1988) agree with Galtung. Americans are destined to have a profession, "a concrete form of activity in which . . . [they] . . . objectify and socialize . . . [themselves]" (Pilotta et al., 1988, p. 19). Professions with high prestige and monetary success create barriers from those jobs of lower regard. Built within this structure is an "inequality between dominant and subordinate groups" (Harman, 1987, p.13). The hierarchal divisions within professions create position power, which can also lead to alienation.

The goods produced by businesses alienate their consumers through resource power. This alienation occurs in two ways. First, the consumer is excluded from choosing what goods will be made. Second, "the consumer is not required to justify choices in the sense that such choices are not subject to discussion of . . . their influence on the context of other consumer choices" (Pilotta et al., 1988, p. 25).

Lack of innate power alienates people because the media influences the creation and maintenance of reality. As television has become the most widely used medium "the self identity of the post-modern subject can only be accessed

through a series of technological transformations by which the individual collects the prescriptive data comprising the preprogrammed experience of daily life" (Pilotta et al., 1988, p. 21).

This innate power has been studied at the mass media level in advertising and how it influences one's perception of self (which in turn influences how one interacts with others). With the growth of technology in the communication fields, "actual personal communication is exceedingly rare and difficult" (May, 1979, p. 105). Pilotta et al. (1988) wrote about the creation of meaning and reality through technological communication. In their study the authors looked at the "mercantilization of knowledge" through modern "sophisticated communications systems" (p. 24).

The media of today distributes learning. "In the post-modern stage of capitalism the issues of access and control of knowledge do point to the centrality of defining" reality (p.24). The media diffuses the reality of the Western culture through "technology which better, faster, and more widely circulates the images and meanings" of reality and creates "the self identities of persons and groups in the absence of genuine culture" (p. 17).

Nietzke (1972) discussed the influences of advertisements on creating and maintaining people's sense of reality. Jacob Horner, a character in John Barth's The End of the Road talks about a state of mind called

"weatherless." "Horner is often . . . nonexistent in his own mind" (p. 430). American "society is so out of touch with [itself] that many advertisers appeal to [its] sense of loss of identity" (Gumpert and Cathcart, 1979, p. 431). Coke and Pepsi jingles help Horner identify with society. The ads allow him to live vicariously through those who have become Horner's friends on the Coke and Pepsi commercials. Through slogans like "The Real Thing" and the "New Generation" advertisers appeal to their consumers' sense of unbelongingness. The ads promise that their products will bring acceptance and friendship.

People often respond to the promises of ads because society encourages finding happiness through external stimuli and being part of the "in group." However, when people give up the power of achieving their own happiness, they also give up the power of changing their unhappiness. People give up control of their lives hoping that someone or something "will . . . assume the responsibility for its fulfillment" (Borden & Stone, 1976, p. 98). "The sense of identity rests on the sense of an unquestionable belongingness to the crowd. That this uniformity and conformity are often recognized as such and are covered by the illusion of individuality, does not alter the facts" (Fromm, 1955, p. 63).

Srole (1956) also studied the effects of advertising and alienation. In his study over 400 persons were

interviewed in response to anti-discrimination and American creed messages in advertisements. Srole found that these persons believed the norms of America were deteriorating in five major ways:

1) estrangement--the belief that those with power are not concerned with the individual 2) unpredictability--the belief that it is impossible to predict the consequences of behavior 3) isolation--a belief that one's social relationships are in the process of disintegration and that one no longer receives support from others 4) powerlessness--the belief that the individual is incapable of obtaining his or her goals; and 5) meaninglessness--a result of the deterioration of norms and the inability to achieve goals (Parks, 1977, p. 48).

These elements were the most common in the population's discussion of alienation and anomie.

Parks (1977) used Srole's definition of anomie to study anomia in close friendship communication networks. Their hypothesis is "the greater the level of interpersonal communication skills possessed by the subject, the lower the level of anomia experienced by the subject" (p. 49). They surveyed 58 persons and asked them to estimate similarities and dissimilarities between themselves and their close friends. They were also asked to estimate how much effort was needed for communication between friends. Parks found

strong support for the hypothesis. Anomia and alienation have been predominantly studied "as a consequence of major macro-sociological forces" (p. 56). Parks's study supports Williams (1951) assertion that basic aspects of interpersonal relationships are integral to studying anomia.

Studied as a social phenomenon and a mental state, alienation and anomie have been linked to interpersonal communication. Yet scholars in the communication field have neglected the area of alienation. To date, Giffin's 1970 study is the only one that has been published in the major communication journals. Giffin (1970), who analyzed "Social Alienation by Communication Denial" found that when friends, acquaintances, and strangers interact they often feel socially alienated by communication denial. The denial of communication can cause alienation because "the initiation of any communicative event carries with it an implied request: 'Please validate me'" (p. 351). The denial of communication also "denies the existence of that person on a functional, interpersonal, communicative level" (p. 351).

Moreover, Giffin looked at nonverbal communication which is said to "ultimately establish the nature of an interpersonal relationship" (p. 350). Nonverbal communication can subtly show communication denial. "The impact of communication denial depends . . . on the value placed on the relationship with the denier" (p. 352).

Giffin says that when people interact with the socially alienated, they must be sincere and caring.

This literature review has provided information regarding alienation and anomie. From Marx to Giffin, it can be seen that alienation stems from power inequality. Moreover, alienation stems from ineffective communication on one or all levels including mass communication, group communication and interpersonal communication. As King (1988) states, "power is a communication act" (p. 4). Scholastic research has shown, on the interpersonal level, that effective communication skills reduce anomia, that imperviousness creates estrangement, and that nonverbal communication creates the nature of relationships. On the mass communication level, the media has been shown to influence people's perceptions of themselves and their belongingness to their culture. On the intrapersonal level, communication networks help form self perceptions and evaluations.

Methodology

As stated earlier, Srole's theory of alienation will provide the basis of this study. The areas of isolation, estrangement, powerlessness, unpredictability, and meaninglessness will be used to analyze the interpersonal communication among the characters in The Zoo Story and Buried Child. In drama, however, authors use symbolism and themes to help convey their messages and these need analysis

as well. This study emphasizes two aspects of alienation: isolation and estrangement. These two areas are of primary concern because the characters' isolation and estrangement have put them in powerless positions. These aspects then lead to unpredictability. Finally, meaningless results from the combination of all the aspects.

In The Zoo Story, isolation will be examined to show how Jerry and Peter are polar opposites in regards to Western values and conformity toward norms. However, the two are very similar because their relationships have deteriorated. Estrangement will then be studied to show how Jerry and Peter have lost control of their lives and how those to whom they have given control are unconcerned with the two. Next, powerlessness and unpredictability will be analyzed conjointly. This section is combined because Albee intertwines the yielding of power with the inability to predict the repercussions of behavior. Finally, meaninglessness will be examined to show the results of being unable to obtain goals.

In Buried Child, the characters' isolation will be shown by the physical and communicative barriers they create. Estrangement will then be demonstrated by showing how the family members and their society are unconcerned with them. Next, the characters' powerlessness will be shown by their inability to obtain their goals. Unpredictability will then be revealed by how the members of

this family cannot foresee inevitable communicative problems they must face. Finally, the meaninglessness of their lives will become evident as they finally see the need to make an interpersonal connection with one another.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF THE ZOO STORY

This chapter will analyze Edward Albee's (1959), The Zoo Story. This text serves as an excellent artifact to examine alienation and communication because he was aware of the dimensions of communication. He said that communication is a major aspect of his works. Interpersonal relationships and "whether people, to the extent that they will or are able to deal honestly and completely with each other" are recurrent themes in his plays (Konlin, 1988, p. 117).

While The Zoo Story fits into the genre of the Theater of the Absurd, Albee believes that this type of theater is the most realistic because the supposed realistic theater "panders to the public need for self-congratulation and reassurance and presents a false picture of ourselves to ourselves" (Esslin, 1975, p. 173).

Albee uses Jerry and Peter to protest the social separation between classes as well as condemn the individuals within the society. Roudane (1987) says that "the sociopolitical dimensions of . . . [The Zoo Story] . . . cast Albee as a consummate civic protester, a playfully demonic social jester . . . blasting social schisms which separate the haves from the have-nots"

(p. 29). However, "Albee focuses much more on the inner reality of Peter and Jerry, on the quality of their respective sensibilities, and on the existentialist choices each person makes. Albee's interest is in fundamental human values as objectified through the individual" (p. 29).

Way (1975) says The Zoo Story is a savage attack "on the American Way of Life" (p. 75). The author put the phrase in capitals letters "to emphasize that it is not necessarily the way people in America actually live--simply that it is a pattern to which many Americans tend to conform . . . the way in which Americans are assumed and expected to live" (Bigsby, p. 26-27).

Plot Synopsis

On a Sunday afternoon, Peter and Jerry meet in Central Park. Peter, in his early forties, "neither fat nor gaunt, neither handsome nor homely" (Albee, 1959, p. 386) is an average-middle class father and husband. By describing Peter in negatives, "Albee suggests much about Peter's nonparticipatory stance toward any meaningful human encounter" (Roudane, 1987, p. 3). He makes a comfortable salary in an executive position at a small publishing company and resides on 74th Street. He wears a tweed jacket, smokes a pipe, and reads a book every Sunday on the park bench upon which he is seated.

Jerry, in his late thirties, is a self-acknowledged permanent transient who lives in a roominghouse on the upper

west side without family or friends. Jerry is carelessly dressed and has been to the zoo.

As the play opens, Jerry accosts Peter and begins to pour out his feelings and personal history. Peter tries to discourage the conversation and responds to Jerry's openness with trite, impersonal comments. Yet, Jerry continues to use "Peter as an emotional sounding board largely because he senses his pervasive lack of communication and felt sense of estrangement entrapping the individual in a 'zoo,' the shaping metaphor of the play" (Roudane, 1987, p. 38-9).

As they converse, Jerry takes pleasure in exposing Peter's insecurities as similarities arise in their otherwise very different lives. Finally, Jerry provokes Peter into a fight. Jerry throws a knife at Peter's feet which Peter picks up and Jerry impales himself upon it. In all probability, Peter is banished from his bench forever as the curtain falls.

Isolation

Isolation is the belief that one's social relationships are in the process of disintegration and one no longer receives support from others. Jerry's life has been a process of continual dissolved relationships. Because of what happened to his family members, he was conditioned at a young age to believe that relationships don't last. Through continual dissolved relationships, Jerry has come to believe that he will never be able to make close bonds with others.

At the age of ten, Jerry's mother left for "an adulterous turn of our Southern states" (p. 394). She shortly thereafter died. His father became an alcoholic and was killed by a moving bus. Jerry then went to live with his aunt who died on the afternoon of his high school graduation. Throughout his life, Jerry has never been able to maintain relationships. He tells Peter that he has no friends and can make love to a person only once except for the week-and-a-half homosexual affair he had when he was fifteen. Jerry is a self-acknowledged permanent transient who resides with boarders who live very differently than does Peter.

Jerry is well aware of his alienation while Peter is so far removed from himself and the world around him that he does not even recognize his isolation. Even though Peter has a middle-class job and family, he has been escaping interaction with other humans by living vicariously through books read in the park, "I've come here for years. I have hours of great pleasure, great satisfaction, right here. And that's important to a man. I'm a responsible person and I'm a GROWNUP!" (p. 411-412). He has been living in seclusion for so long that he can't carry on a conversation with Jerry. Jerry asks, "Do you mind if we talk?"

Peter. [obviously minding]. Why . . . no, no.

Jerry. Yes you do; you do. (p. 388).

Again Jerry asks, "Do you mind if I ask you questions?" to which Peter replies, "Oh, not really" (p. 390). Jerry begins to question Peter and Peter hesitantly, in an insecure manner, answers the questions. At the end of the questioning Jerry asks, "Now, that wasn't so hard, was it?" Peter answers uneasily, "I didn't mean to seem . . . ah . . . it's that you don't really carry on a conversation; you just ask questions. And I'm . . . I'm normally . . . uh . . . reticent" (p. 391). Since Peter has such difficulty conversing, Jerry spends much of the play in narrative monologues so that Peter will more easily understand.

Jerry's isolation is best described in his own story about his relationship with a dog at the roominghouse. He tells this story to show Peter how indifference is a barrier to interpersonal communication. In this story, Jerry explains the importance of making contact with someone or something and "the paradoxical mixture of love and hate" (Roudane, 1987, p. 27). Each day Jerry must hurry by the landlady's dog who snarls and bites at him. He tells Peter, ". . . animals are indifferent to me . . . like people . . . most of the time. But this dog wasn't indifferent. From the very beginning he'd snarl and then go for me . . ." (p. 400). Jerry is pleased with the animal's anger. While there isn't love, at least there was a connection which he describes as "cozy" (p. 400).

Since Jerry discovered a connection with the "beast," he decided to try to create a friendship with the dog, "First, I'll kill the dog with kindness, and if that doesn't work . . . I'll just kill him" (p. 400). So the next day Jerry bought a bag of hamburgers for the dog. The dog ate the hamburger, Jerry smiled and thought the dog did too but "then, BAM, he snarled and made for me again" (p. 401). Jerry, for five more days, brought hamburger to the dog but no friendship formed. The following day Jerry kneaded "a murderous portion of rat poison" (p.401) into the meat; at this point he felt as much sadness as disgust. The attempt to murder the animal failed "AND IT CAME TO PASS THAT THE BEAST WAS DEATHLY ILL" (p. 402).

Once the dog had recovered, Jerry was "heart-shatteringly anxious to confront . . . [his] . . . friend again" (p. 403). They looked at one another and

We made contact. Now here is what I had wanted to happen: I loved the dog now, and I wanted him to love me. I had tried to love, and I had tried to kill, and both had been unsuccessful by themselves. I hoped

. . . and I don't really don't know why I expected the dog to understand anything, much less my motivations

. . . I hoped the dog would understand (p. 404).

Albee uses the dog in this story as a symbol of humankind and Jerry's struggle for contact with others:

. . . it's just that if you can't deal with people, you have to start somewhere. WITH ANIMALS! [Much faster now, and like a conspirator.] Don't you see? A person has to have some way of dealing with SOMETHING. If not with people . . . if not with people . . . SOMETHING. With a bed, with a cockroach, with a mirror . . . no, that's too hard, that's one of the last steps . . . with love, with vomitting, with crying, with fury because the pretty little ladies aren't pretty little ladies, with making money with your body which is an act of love and I could prove it, with howling because you're alive; with God. How about that? WITH GOD WHO IS A COLORED QUEEN WHO WEARS A KIMONO AND PLUCKS HIS EYEBROWS, WHO IS A WOMAN WHO CRIES WITH DETERMINATION BEHIND HER CLOSED DOOR . . . with God who, I'm told, turned his back on the whole thing some time ago . . . with . . . some day, with people. [Jerry sighs the next word heavily.] People. With an idea; a concept. And where better, where even better in this excuse for a jail, where better to communicate one single, simple-minded idea than in an entrance hall? Where? It would be A START! Where better to make a beginning . . . to understand and just possibly be understood . . . a beginning of an understanding, than with . . . A DOG. Just that; a dog. [Here there is a silence that might be prolonged for a moment or so; then Jerry wearily

finishes his story.] A dog. It seemed like a perfectly sensible idea. Man is dog's best friend, remember (p. 404-405).

In this monologue, Jerry shows his desperation as he describes his failing relationships with God, humans, and now a dog. Perhaps the strongest failure Jerry has felt is in himself as he makes reference to the difficulty of looking in the mirror. Unable to make contact with others, Jerry has taken the view that there must be something wrong with himself, which is why he went to the zoo today. "I went to the zoo to find out more about the way people exist with animals, and the way animals exist with each other, and with people too . . ." (p. 408). Jerry has repeatedly attempted to create relationships with others but believes that he is powerless in a society that disregards the unfortunate.

During the explanation for attending the zoo, Jerry pokes Peter and tells him to move over. Jerry increasingly gets louder and more forceful as he demands that Peter fight for his bench. During the fight which Jerry provokes, it becomes evident that Peter is more alienated than Jerry.

Estrangement

Estrangement is the belief that those with power are unconcerned with the individual. They are not concerned with themselves or each other and society is unconcerned with them as well.

Jerry and Peter have difficulty conversing because of the difference between their social classes and life styles. Jerry lives in a four-story brownstone roominghouse on the Upper West side of New York City. The brownstone houses an amalgamation of America's down and out: a colored queen who plucks his eyebrows and uses the john quite often but never bothers Jerry or brings anyone to his room, an invisible crying woman, a Puerto Rican family with many children, someone Jerry has never seen in the front room, he doesn't know anyone on the second and third floors, and a "fat, ugly, mean, stupid, unwashed, misanthropic, cheap, drunken bag of garbage" landlady who owns a dog (p. 397).

While Jerry is symbolic of all persons represented in the roominghouses, Peter is symbolic of the "normal" American. As stated earlier, Peter lives in a decent neighborhood, has a decent job, a wife, two children, two cats, two parakeets, and two televisions. Meanwhile, Jerry can list all of his belongings:

. . . I have toilet articles, a few clothes, a hot plate that I'm not supposed to have, a can opener, one that works with a key, you know; a knife, two forks, and two spoons, one small, one large; three plates, a cup, a saucer, a drinking glass, two picture frames, both empty, eight or nine books, a pack of pornographic playing cards, regular deck, an old Western Union typewriter that prints nothing but capital letters, and

a small strongbox without a lock which has in it . . .
 what? Rocks! Some rocks . . . searounded rocks I
 picked up on the beach when I was a kid. Under which
 . . . weighed down . . . are some letters . . .
 please letters . . . please why don't you do this, and
 please when will you do that letters, too. When will
 you write? When will you come? When? These letters
 are from more recent years (p. 394).

Peter responds "About those two empty picture frames. . .?"

Jerry. I don't see why they need any explanation at
 all. Isn't it clear? I don't have pictures of anyone
 to put in them.

Peter. Your parents . . . perhaps . . . a
 girlfriend . . .

Jerry. You're a very sweet man, and you're possessed of
 a truly enviable innocence . . . (p. 394).

Jerry is surprised that Peter asked about the picture frames
 instead of the pornographic playing cards. Peter says he's
 seen those cards before but didn't need them when he got
 older. Jerry says, "It's that when you're a kid you use the
 cards as a substitute for a real experience, and when you're
 older you use real experience as a substitute for the
 fantasy" (p. 397). Jerry's estrangement is passive, i. e.,
 he is trying to understand why others are unconcerned yet
 contact is still not obtained. Conversely, Peter's

estrangement is active. Others are unconcerned with Peter so Peter is an unconcerned individual.

Jerry has tried to enter the realities of those outside his world but society has pushed him to plan his death. The division of classes has Jerry wondering if that may be why he is separated from others, "Say, what's the dividing line between upper-middle-middle-class and lower-upper-middle-class?" (p. 391). Jerry has tried to help himself escape from his estrangement and has also tried to help others but again he has no success. The drunken landlady finds Jerry as "the object of her sweaty lust" (p. 398). Peter reacts horrified, "That's disgusting. That's . . . horrible" (p. 398). But Jerry has found a way to keep the drunken landlady at a distance while not humiliating her. He asks if yesterday and the day before weren't enough for her. "Then she puzzles, she makes slits of her tiny eyes, she sways a little, and then Peter . . . and it is at this moment that I think I might be doing some good in that tormented house . . . (p. 398).

Peter, of course, is amazed that such things occur outside the "normalcy" of his life, "It's . . . unthinkable. I find it hard to believe that people such as that really are" (p. 398). Peter has spent most of his time blissfully ignorant, seemingly believing that only the truly happy and terribly sad live in the pages of his books. Jerry mockingly reinforces Peter's passivity, "It's for reading

about, isn't it? . . . And fact is better left to fiction" (p. 398).

Powerlessness and Unpredictability

Jerry and Peter are both isolated from their desires and society's leniency toward revealing and obtaining those goals. They are also estranged from themselves and society. Powerlessness is the belief that one is incapable of obtaining goals and unpredictability is the belief that repercussions of action cannot be foreseen. Jerry's goal is to have a close interpersonal connection with another human but he has yet to reach that goal.

Jerry is described by Roudane (1987) as the "loner who searches for meaning within public issues and private values which seemingly negate themselves (p. 29). Jerry so badly wants to make a connection but his past attempts have been fruitless.

I don't talk to many people-except to say like:

give me a beer, or where's the john, or what time does the feature go on, or keep your hands to yourself, buddy. You know-things like that.

Peter. I must say I don't . . .

Jerry. But every once in a while I like to talk to somebody, really talk; like to get to know somebody.

Peter. [lightly laughing; still a little uncomfortable]. And am I the guinea pig for today? (p. 390).

From this dialogue it can be seen that Jerry desperately needs to have some close interpersonal communication. Peter, on the other hand, feels as though he's part of an experiment and is forced to engage in interpersonal communication. By the end of the play, Jerry has demonstrated that one must be aware of the consequences of behavior. After Jerry poisoned the dog, he couldn't understand why the dog regarded him with imperviousness.

[Jerry] learned that neither kindness nor cruelty by themselves, independent of each other, creates any effect beyond themselves; and I have learned that the two combined, together, at the same time, are the teaching emotion . . . we [he and the dog] neither love nor hurt because we do not try to reach each other. And, was trying to feed the dog an act of love? And, perhaps, was the dog's attempt to bite me not an act of love? If we can so misunderstand, well then why have we invented the word love in the first place? (p. 416).

Even after he poisoned the dog, he wanted to see how their relationship would develop, "Please understand, Peter; that sort of thing is important. We have to know the effect of our actions" (p. 403). Jerry is trying to tell Peter that he must become more aware of his surroundings and that indifference is worse than hate. In essence, Jerry is saying that it is important to try to reach one another.

Peter has become so lost that he does not seem to have any desires to become involved in the world again. But, at the end of the play, Albee does let Peter see that it is not too late to return to his family. Peter has been unaware that his escape to the park is increasing his alienation rather than releasing him from it. Hence, Peter's alienation has resulted from making too many safe choices in his life. He "fails in human intercourse because of a withdrawal into a comfortable, bourgeois life . . . " (Roudane, 1987, p. 35). Even the nonverbal communication that Albee suggests, "the constant turning away during the opening exchanges, the pretending not to hear, raising a hand to object, the wincing, the forced smile--serve as ways of deflecting social engagement" (p. 31). Jerry is aware of Peter's unwillingness to communicate and mocks one of his wincing during the story of Jerry and the dog, "Don't react, Peter, just listen" (p. 400). Albee likens Peter to the dog in Jerry's story. Jerry and the dog no longer love or hurt because they are indifferent to one another. Peter has also chosen this option.

Jerry and Peter both have the power to overcome their alienation but have problems with not knowing what actions will produce the desired effect, or not knowing what effect they're after, or running against the norms of society.

Meaninglessness

By the end of the play, Peter and Jerry have helped each other see the meaninglessness of their lives. Peter helps Jerry make an interpersonal connection and Jerry illuminates the world surrounding Peter. As Jerry shows Peter chaos in the world, Peter becomes distraught,

Peter. I DON'T UNDERSTAND!

Jerry. [furious, but whispering]. That's a lie.

Peter. No. No, it's not.

Jerry. [quietly]. I tried to explain it to you as I went along. I went slowly; it all has to do with . . .

Peter. I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY MORE. I don't understand you, or your landlady, or her dog . . .

Jerry. . . . I don't know what I was thinking about; of course you don't understand. [In a monotone, wearily.] I don't live in your block; I'm not married to two parakeets, or whatever your setup is. I am a permanent transient, and my home is the sickening roominghouses on the West Side of New York City, which is the greatest city in the world. Amen. (p. 406-407).

In this passage Albee seems to be saying three things about alienation. First, Jerry says that he's "not married to two parakeets or whatever the setup is." Here Jerry is trying to point out to Peter that he's so far removed from his familial relations that it wouldn't matter to whom he were married. Second, Jerry states that he lives in the

sickening roominghouses, which is pluralized. Albee is showing how Jerry's character is symbolic of all the dwellers not only on the West Side of New York City but in every city. Third, Jerry says he lives in the greatest city in the world. And if one lives in the greatest city in the world and his or her life has no meaning, there is no place else to go.

But before Jerry ends his life, he spends the afternoon with Peter, trying to make an impact on someone else's life and to make a final interpersonal connection. In order for Peter to help Jerry commit suicide, he had to care. Jerry riles Peter enough to get angry much like the dog was at first. As the conversation becomes heated, Jerry's purpose is not to hurt Peter but force him into human inter-action,

Peter. I've listened to you because you seemed . . . well, because I thought you wanted to talk to somebody.
Jerry. [laughs]. Imbecile! You're slow-witted!

Peter. Stop that.

Jerry. You're a vegetable! Go lie on the ground. (p. 410).

The verbal arguments become more intense and Jerry begins poking Peter in stronger increments, telling Peter that he's crazy and to get off his bench. Peter, instead of stating his own feelings, returns with an adage, "People can't have everything they want. You should know that; it's a rule; people can have some of the things they want, but they can't

have everything" (p. 410). Jerry is repulsed, "You put things well; economically, and, yet . . . oh, what is the word I want to put justice to your . . . JESUS, you make me sick . . . get off here and give me my bench" (410).

Peter believes the symbol is the thing, that fighting for the bench is fighting for his honor. Jerry again shows Peter that the bench and his honor are two separate things,

. . . you have everything in the world you want; you've told me about your home, and your family, and your own little zoo. you have everything, and now you want this bench. Are these the things men fight for? Tell me, Peter, is this bench, this iron and this wood, is this your honor? Is this the thing in the world you'd fight for? Can you think of anything more absurd? Peter. Absurd? Look, I'm not going to talk to you about honor, or even try to explain it to you. Besides, it isn't a question of honor; but even if it were, you wouldn't understand.

Jerry. [contemptuously]. You don't even know what you're saying, do you? This is probably the first time in you life you've had anything more trying to face than changing your cat's toilet box. Stupid! Don't you have any idea, not even the slightest, what other people need? (p. 411-412).

Peter is finally pushed, "Get up and fight" (p. 412) but Jerry takes out a knife. In horror Peter yells, "You're

going to kill me" (p. 412). Jerry throws the knife to the ground and demands Peter to pick it up and fight for his self-respect. After more physical and verbal violence Peter finally picks it up and Jerry impales himself on it. Jerry thanks Peter and says he was afraid he was going to frighten him away. Albee calls Jerry the hero of the play (Roudane, 1987, p. 29) because he has deposed Peter from the bench, "You've lost your bench, but you've defended your honor. And Peter, I'll tell you something now; you're not really a vegetable; it's all right, you're an animal. You're an animal, too" (p. 415).

Albee shows through The Zoo Story's and Jerry's ending how meaninglessness (the result of not obtaining one's goals, in life, without the hope of close interpersonal communication) can lead to the search for a final escape where there is no love, no hurt, and no indifference: death.

The conclusion of The Zoo Story may be viewed as dismal but Albee shows a ray of hope as Jerry and Peter finally reach their goals. Jerry is a prime example of being alienated in a culture that won't allow close interpersonal communication between strangers, as norms of appropriate self-disclosure and social interaction govern such communication. Even though Jerry was aware of his alienation, the Western culture of the United States does not allow for intermingling between the haves and have-nots.

Peter reacts differently than Jerry since he appears totally unaware of his alienation. He has everything the citizens of the United States believe are happiness-inducing, yet he retreats from society. He is disturbed by Jerry and feels threatened by the pressure to engage in human interaction.

Jerry's life has ended in Act III but it ended after making an interpersonal connection. Before his death, Jerry thanks Peter,

Thank you, Peter. I mean that, now; thank you very much Oh, Peter, I was so afraid I'd drive you away and leave me. . . . I think that while I was at the zoo I decided that I would walk north . . . until I found you . . . or somebody . . . and I decided that I would talk to you . . . I would tell you things . . . and things that I would tell you would. . . . Well, here we are. You see? Here we are (p. 414).

Through his death Jerry forced Peter to realize the importance of maintaining interpersonal communication. It may be too late for Jerry but Peter can begin again. In The Zoo Story, Albee has shown that through maintenance of interpersonal communication, one's sanity and happiness can be achieved.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF BURIED CHILD

Shepard's Buried Child, like Albee's The Zoo Story, portrays Srole's aspects of alienation. However, Buried Child deals with a degenerating familial relationship and Shepard relies more heavily on symbolism, than does Albee, to enhance the characters' communicative alienation.

The characters in this play have no sense of place. Shepard's plays "often derive from a sense that the cultural values of America are no longer adequate for emotional survival" (Patraka, 1985, p. 13).

Plot Synopsis

Buried Child is a play about a disintegrating family, unable to create close bonds due to lack of effective interpersonal communication. The play takes place in the living room of Dodge and Halie's farm.

Dodge, ailing in his late seventies, had three sons with Halie, who is in her late sixties. Tilden, their oldest spent twenty years away from the family and has returned after an unknown mishap in New Mexico. Tilden is in his late forties yet dependent upon his parents because of his slow-witted and child-like manner. Ansel, according to Halie, was an All-American basketball player. She

considered him a hero but he died in a hotel room on his honeymoon. Bradley, their youngest, has a wooden leg after cutting it off with a chainsaw. He can barely take care of himself and also acts child-like since he tattles on the others and lies to get affection from his mother. Father Dewis and Halie appear briefly in the first and third acts.

The climax of the play occurs in the second and third acts. In Act II, Vince, Tilden's son, arrives after a six year absence. Along with him is Shelly, Vince's girlfriend. No one recognizes Vince and Shelly is frightened. Vince leaves to buy Dodge some whiskey while Shelly talks to Tilden. She no longer is afraid and begins to feel like this is her home. But soon she discovers that Tilden had a baby and that Dodge killed it.

In Act III, the reader is led to believe that the child Dodge drowned and buried was a result of the incest between Halie and Tilden. Also in this act, Dodge wills his belongings to Vince who has returned drunk and as bitter as Dodge. He is now recognized by the others and Shelly is told to leave. Dodge dies unnoticed and Tilden returns from the field (which the others claim is bare but bears vegetables for him throughout the play) with the bones of the dead child in his arms.

The play ends with a ray of hope for this family. Throughout the play, the characters' alienation is equated with death but through Dodge's death and the uncovering of

the Buried Child, the family finds connections between themselves. The sun is shining as the last curtain falls and hidden problems and secrets have been allowed to be uncovered as well.

Isolation

The isolation these characters create is expressed through the physical and communicative barriers they use to distance themselves emotionally from one another. The relationships among these characters are disintegrating in two major ways. First, the barriers work. The members are secluded in their own little worlds. Second, the members don't support one another. They do not try to break down their own barriers or anyone else's. However, they are aware of the need for contact as they beg one another for help, but no one seems to care or know how to help the others.

The first physical barrier is evident as the play opens. The rain claims its territory on this particular household, trying to lock its characters inside the structure. According to Dodge, "This is the only place it's raining. All over the rest of the world it's bright golden sunshine" (p. 75). The physical barriers made by the characters help them to remain isolated.

When Dodge is introduced to the reader, he is in the livingroom and spends virtually the entire play on the couch. He says he barely leaves the house, thus hiding in the confines of his own little world. He is also covered by a hat, blanket, rabbit coat, and vegetables. Dodge knows that he needs interpersonal relationships but he also pushes people away. He demands that Halie stay out of his territory, "Don't come down. Don't come down! (p. 66). He warns others to keep their distance, claims he's invisible, and has given up hope. He is so removed from society that he doesn't even know who the neighbors are. He states, "And I don't wanna know" even though he has lived in his home for 57 years (p. 70). Even though Dodge is brash and blocks himself from the others, he is desperate for a connection. For example,

Tilden. What do you need?

Dodge. I don't need anything! But I might. I might need something any second. Any second now. I can't be left alone for a minute (p. 79).

Dodge, as well as the others, have a paradoxical fight with themselves during the entire play.

Halie's world is cut off from Dodge and the others as she spends a large part of Act I in the safety of her own little upstairs world. Once she arrives on stage, she is hidden by a hat and veil. She soon leaves for her other shelter away from the family. Upon returning, in the third

act, she quickly finds seclusion upstairs again. Halie remains isolated by living in her perception of the past and tuning out those who provide contrary perceptions, e. g., "I'm not listening to this" (p. 127). Dodge tells her, "Things keep happening while you're upstairs, ya know. The world doesn't stop just because you're upstairs" (p. 75). Halie tries to act self-fulfilled and efficient but she recognizes the need for a sense of closeness to her family. She remembers a time when "Everything was dancing with life" (p. 66). Now, she sees herself as alone, with no one to take care of her. "When Ansel died that left us all alone. Same as being alone. No different. Same as if they'd all died" (p. 73). Now she believes, "Nobody's going to look after us . . . that's why we have to stay healthy" (p. 72).

Tilden is the third character introduced. Although Dodge and Halie demand that Tilden stay out of the back yard, he makes this area his territory. He finds comfort away from the family and says, "I didn't feel like coming inside" (p. 75). As Tilden enters, he is covered with mud and laden with corn. Later Tilden seeks shelter under Shelly's coat. Tilden, although finding seclusion outdoors, tells Dodge that he needs his support:

Tilden. You're not worried about me, are you?

Dodge. I'm not worried about you.

Tilden. You shoulda worried about me when I wasn't here

Dodge. No, I wasn't worried about you then either.

Tilden. You shoulda worried about me then.

Dodge. Why's that? You didn't do anything down there, did you?

Tilden. I didn't do anything.

Dodge. Then why should I have worried about you?

Tilden. Because I was lonely.

Dodge. Because you were lonely?

Tilden. Yeah. I was more lonely than I've ever been before (p. 71).

Bradley is next to enter the scene. He uses his wooden leg to create his barrier. He is also seen under a newspaper and Dodge's blanket. Bradley, like Dodge, remains isolated by pushing people away, "You stay out of our lives! You have no business interfering!" (p. 122). He, like Halie, lives in his illusion of the past, "I'm not telling her anything! Nothing's wrong here! Nothing's ever been wrong! Everything's the way it's supposed to be! Nothing ever happened that's bad! Everything is all right here! We're all good people" (p. 122). While Bradley is most often abrasive, he recognizes the need for help when Shelly takes his leg and says, "Mom! Mom! She's got my leg! She's taken my leg! I never did anything to her! She's stolen my leg!" (p. 120).

Shelly and Vince arrive at Dodge and Halie's protected by a raincoat. Shelly is the first of the characters to

wear the shelter of the rabbit coat. Then she puts on Dodge's hat and later forms a boundary with the carrots Tilden brings in from the back yard. Shelly recognizes the deterioration of the family and wants to leave. "I'd just as soon be a thousand miles from here. I'd rather be anywhere but here" (p. 94). But as the play continues, she begins to believe she's a part of the family and demands, "Don't ignore me!" (p. 119).

Vince enters the "taboo territory" in an overcoat (p. 83). He leaves the house for a while and upon returning, stays on the porch until he enters again to create a blockade under Dodge's blanket. While on the porch he demands, "Don't come out here! I'm warning you" (p. 128) "I devour whole families in a single gulp" (p. 126). Vince has become bitter and sadistic after a planned friendly little visit to a family he hadn't seen in a long time. He is distressed when he arrives to find a family that doesn't recognize him and doesn't care.

Vince. Boy! This is amazing. This is truly amazing. What is this anyway? Am I in a time warp or something? Have I committed an unpardonable offense? . . . Shelly. Vince, what are you doing that for? They don't care about any of that. They don't recognize you, that's all.

Vince. How could they not recognize me! How in the hell could they not recognize me! I'm their son (p. 97).

Although Father Dewis is only in a small portion of the play, he creates a barrier with the roses he holds. He also wants to get away from the family as he asks Halie if they can go upstairs until things blow over (p. 128). He also states his discomfort outside of his territory, "I don't know what my position is exactly. This is outside my parish anyway" (p. 126). While Father Dewis does not prescribe how own cure to breaking down his barriers, he does give advice that all the characters can use, ". . . wouldn't it be better to try to talk things out?" (p. 121).

The characters in Buried Child are isolated since they blockade themselves both physically and communicatively. Yet they know they need contact but don't take the steps necessary to destroy their barriers.

As shown through their dialogue, the characters tell the others how to alleviate their isolation. They all have the power to help themselves and each other but no one will. They all yield their power to other people or things.

Estrangement

The characters' alienation is strenghtened by their estrangement. Shepard seems to be saying that American society is unconcerned with its individuals.

As explained in the literature review, societal pressures often tend to make individuals feel the need to conform, especially in the United States where people are often judged by what they have or what they represent rather

than who they are on the inside. Shepard equates the characters' home to the American value system through Vince and Shelly's conversation,

Vince: This is the house.

Shelly: I don't believe it!

Vince: How come?

Shelly: It's like a Norman Rockwell cover or something.

Vince: What's the matter with that? It's American.

Shelly: Where's the milkman and the little dog? What's the little dog's name? Spot. Spot and Jane. Dick and Jane and Spot. (p. 83).

While the exterior of the house is beautiful, to their surprise, it contains a deteriorating family that cannot make contact with one another. Perhaps Shepard is saying that America's facade is one of freedom which hides a deteriorating society that cannot interpersonally communicate.

As stated in the literature review, those who control the ideology of the people also control the people. The family members in this play have been influenced by those who have created and enforced societal norms. They accept the Western value system, but they do not seem to belong.

Since Halie finds comfort within society, she is concerned with putting up a front. She has arranged a haircut for Dodge because Father Dewis is coming over. However, Dodge is aware of her conformity, ". . . time to

dress up the corpse for company! Lower the ears a little! Put up a little front! Surprised you didn't take a pipe to my mouth while you were at it! That woulda' looked nice! Huh? A pipe? Maybe a bowler hat! Maybe a copy of the Wall Street Journal casually placed on my lap!" (p. 68).

Vince is also concerned with putting up a front. He asks Shelly to give up part of her identity to please his family.

Vince. I don't wanna go in there with you acting like an idiot.

Shelly. Thanks.

Vince. Well, I don't.

Shelly. I won't embarrass you. Don't worry . . .

Vince. Shelly, look, I just don't wanna go in there with you giggling your head off. They might think something's wrong with you. . . . I just don't want to have them think that I've suddenly arrived out of the middle of nowhere completely deranged (p. 84-85).

Nonetheless, the two do enter the house and find themselves and the others behaving differently than expected. Instead of finding a family like Norman Rockwell would create, they found a family in chaos.

In the third act, Dodge tells the others why he killed the child,

See, we were a well established family once. Well established. . . . The farm was producing enough milk

to fill Lake Michigan twice over. Me and Halie were pointed toward what looked like the middle part of our life. Everything was settled with us. All we had to do was ride it out (p. 123).

He continues,

Halie had this kid. This baby boy. She had it. . . . It wanted to grow up in this family. It wanted to be just like us. It wanted to pretend that I was its father. She wanted me to believe in it. Even when everyone around us knew. Everyone. All our boys knew. Tilden knew. . . . Tilden was the one who knew. Better than any of us. . . . We couldn't allow that to grow up right in the middle of our lives. It made everything we'd accomplished look like it was nothin'. Everything was cancelled out by this one mistake. This one weakness (p. 124).

The circumstances surrounding the birth of this child are very far from the norm of American society. But Dodge chose murder over the risk of looking like they had worked all those years for nothing.

Powerlessness

The problem with this family is that they yield their power to other forces. Through their isolation and estrangement it can be seen that they are aware of their inability to make an interpersonal connection with the others. They beg the others for help but they don't use

their own power to find happiness. For example, Dodge tells Halie, "I don't enjoy anything" (p. 68). But instead of trying to find a solution, he focuses on the problem. Halie could ask him what he needs to start enjoying his life but instead she tells him,

That's a terrible thing to say . . . That's the kind of statement that leads people right to the end of their rope . . . It's no wonder people turn to Christ (p. 68).

As Marx wrote, God was created by humans to fulfill their happiness and take control of their lives. Shepard recognizes this displacement of power through Dodge,

Full of faith. Hope. Faith and Hope. You're all alike you hopers. If it's not God then its man. If it's not man then it's a woman. If it's not a woman then it's the land . . . (p. 109).

Hope is what this family needs in conjunction with action. Without action, the characters remain in unhappy situations. They have displaced their power, expecting someone or something to fulfill their lives.

Halie seems unsure of her religion but still turns to Father Dewis for guidance. Her uncertainty is shown in Act I when Dodge is coughing and she suggests that he take a pill,

It's not Christian, but it works. It's not necessarily Christian, that is. We don't know. There's some things

the ministers can't even answer. I, personally, can't see anything wrong with it. Pain is pain. Pure and simple. Suffering is a different matter. That's entirely different. A pill seems as good an answer as any (p. 65).

In the third act, Halie asks Father Dewis to take control, "Father why are you just standing around here when everything's falling apart? Can't you rectify the situation?" (p. 126). She even blames the trouble in her home on the Devil and Ansel's death on the Catholics. "Of course, he'd still be alive today if he hadn't married into the Catholics. The Mob . . . Catholic women are the Devil incarnate" (p.74). Halie believes all women are bad and that our youth is deteriorating,

. . . of course, nowadays they play a different brand of basketball. More vicious. . . . They don't train like they used to. Not at all. They allow themselves to run amuck. Drugs and women. Women mostly . . . Mostly women. Girls. Sad pathetic little girls. It's just a reflection of the times, don't you think Father? An indication of where we stand? . . . Our youth becoming monsters. When you see the way things deteriorate before your very eyes. Everything running down hill. It's kind of silly to even think about youth (p. 117).

Again, rhetoric is epistemic. The characters talk about their unhappiness and the impossibility of finding

happiness. Thus, this forms their ideology: the belief that there is no action that will reduce their alienation.

Unpredictability

It may be impossible to predict all of the consequences of one's behavior. However, possible situations and repercussions should be analyzed before choosing to behave or communicate in a certain manner.

Shelly was expecting a family and home that looked familiar to her. What she found was a family who hid behind secrets. Dewis tells Shelly, "Well you can hardly blame others for not fulfilling your hallucination" (p. 121). Shelly replies, "It was no hallucination! It was more like a prophecy" (p. 122). Shepard seems to be using Shelly to say that the deterioration of relationships are inevitable when there is a lack of interpersonal communication. Yet, the others still cling to secrecy. Bradley tells her, "You don't know what we've been through. You don't know anything." She answers, "I know you've got a secret. You've all got a secret. It's so secret in fact, you're all convinced it never happened" (p. 122).

People act and communicate logically. This family probably believed that making a pact to never talk about the murder of a child would be a good thing, enabling them to continue as a family. Shelly, as an outsider is trying to show the family that their secrecy would only lead to disharmony which should have been recognized by the members.

The family needed to learn sooner that consequences of behavior should be analyzed.

Meaninglessness

Meaninglessness is an apparent characteristic belonging to the members of this family. Throughout the play Shepard equates the characters' alienation with death. Dodge and Ansel are referred to as corpses, Shelly tells the others, "I'm not dead" (p. 118), Tilden tells Dodge, "I was alone. I thought I was dead" (p. 78), Halie says she used to lie in bed thinking it was all right if she died, and Vince says he's a murderer.

However, in the third act the characters' lives begin to change with Vince's line, "Maybe I should come in there and usurp your territory" (p. 126). It soon becomes evident that the barriers are coming down and territorial lines are being erased. He continues, "our lines have been penetrated!" (p. 127). Dodge has finally told the family secrets and dies unnoticed. Seemingly tragic, his death allows for new life. Halie looks outside and sees a paradise, "A miracle" (p. 131). Her final lines close the play.

Good hard rain. Takes everything straight down deep to the roots. The rest takes care of itself. You can't force a thing to grow. You can't interfere with it. It's all hidden. It's all unseen. You just gotta wait til it pops up out of the ground (p. 132).

During this passage which Halie delivers from upstairs, Tilden enters downstairs with the unearthed child. Not only does this passage relate directly to the child being unearthed but also to the digging up of old secrets and pain. The unearthing allows their relationships out of the dark into the sun to be nourished and grow.

Shepard, through the characters in Buried Child, shows how family relationships can disintegrate when interpersonal communication is discouraged. Shepard, like Albee, also shows that it is never too late to open or reopen the lines of communication. Even after years of alienation, this family is starting over again. Through the parallelism between alienation and death, the importance of close interpersonal communication and quality of life is evident. This is clear in Tilden's words to Dodge, "Well, you gotta talk or you'll die" (p. 78).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to look at alienation from an interpersonal communication perspective in order to find a relationship between alienation and communication. First, two plays, The Zoo Story and Buried Child, were chosen to exemplify alienation and its characteristics. Second, the importance of interpersonal communication and aspects of alienation were examined. Finally, Srole's (1956) five aspects of alienation were used as a lens by which to view the dialogue of the characters in the aforementioned plays. In this chapter, conclusions regarding the study will be drawn and recommendations for further research will be offered.

By using Srole's (1956) five aspects of alienation (isolation, estrangement, powerlessness, unpredictability, and meaninglessness) to analyze the interpersonal communication among the characters in The Zoo Story and Buried Child, conclusions were arrived at in three major areas.

First, Albee and Shepard's works both show how alienation is caused by the inability to communicate interpersonally because of lack of self-worth and the

pressure to conform. Moreover, they show how the loss of one's identity in conjunction with ineffective interpersonal communication can lead to alienation.

In The Zoo Story and Buried Child, three of Srole's (1956) concepts were demonstrated frequently: isolation, estrangement, and powerlessness. Unpredictability and meaninglessness were less frequent because they occur internally and can be expressed rhetorically less easily than the others.

It can be concluded from The Zoo Story that it is not only the oppressed who are isolated. Isolation occurs in all social classes. Jerry and Peter, separated by social classes, meet and reveal how they have become isolated. Jerry is aware of his isolation but society won't let him make a connection with others. Peter is unaware of his isolation because society says he should be happy with his lifestyle.

It can also be concluded that monetary worth has no bearing on isolation. Jerry lives in a "sickening" roominghouse and can list his belongings; still he remains isolated. Peter lives in a nice neighborhood and makes a decent salary yet he is also isolated.

It can be concluded from Buried Child that secrecy creates barriers between individuals which can lead to isolation. In Buried Child, the characters have a secret. In order to keep that secret, they have established

unwritten rules governing appropriate topics of conversation. The breaking of these rules leads to punishment. Rather than risk being punished, they no longer communicate interpersonally.

From examples in both plays, it can be concluded that estrangement comes from the displacement of power. Peter lives vicariously through his books. He is unhappy with his "normal" life but doesn't take any actions that will help him find happiness. Jerry, conversely, wants to interact with others but no one will reciprocate. In Buried Child, the characters want to recreate the close interpersonal relationships they once had, but they don't have the power to accomplish their goals. Instead of searching for ways to regain their intimacy, they expect someone else to take control of their lives.

Powerlessness comes from conforming to standards that go against one's own beliefs. Jerry personifies the powerlessness one may feel because of the conflict between internal values and external issues that makes it difficult to obtain goals. This conflict may push people to escape from their reality or to give up part of their identities in order to belong. Peter has conformed so much that he appears unaware of who he is and what he wants.

It is also evident that rhetorical choices can help or hinder a person's power. If people talk as though they have control of their lives, they may gain control. The

characters in Buried Child show how rhetoric is epistemic. They equate their lives with death; thus their relationships are dying.

While isolation, estrangement, and powerlessness can be expressed rhetorically, unpredictability and meaninglessness seem to be internal aspects. It can be concluded that unpredictability comes from the lack of analyzing behavioral and rhetorical choices. As shown in The Zoo Story, Peter escaped from his family and business life in order to deflect interpersonal communication. Instead of finding happiness through indifference toward others, he found himself alone in the world. He was unable to predict that his behavior would lead to alienation. In Buried Child, the characters chose to cut themselves off from interpersonal communication to avoid pain that sometimes accompanies the joy of relationships. This family failed to foresee the repercussions of their actions.

Both authors show how the lack of interpersonal communication can lead to meaninglessness in one's life. It can be concluded that meaningless is derived from the inability to create and/or maintain close interpersonal relationships through communication. Jerry's inability to make close interpersonal relationships with others has led him to suicide. Peter's inability has led him to a state of unconsciousness. Dodge and Halie's family equates their

lives with death; thus their relationships have died. As a result, their lives are meaningless.

Second, the analysis of The Zoo Story and Buried Child demonstrates that individuals' communication and behavior and society's norms need adjustment. Albee and Shepard's works exemplify the deterioration of relationships because interpersonal communication is ineffective. As stated earlier, it is nearly impossible to abolish alienation. The very foundation upon which the United States of America was created has alienation as an inevitable characteristic, i. e., those who are free to excel leave behind those who stagnate. An entire revamping would need to occur in all areas of the American way of life. A balance needs to be found between individualism and membership in society. The best advice to alleviate alienation is to start with oneself and then encourage others to improve their interpersonal communication. It may be difficult to remain an individual in a society that rewards conformity but by changing an ideology, alienation may be lessened.

Third, the methodology proved effective. By breaking alienation into five clear categories, Srole's definition helped specify how the characters have become alienated and how they convey their alienation to others. The dramatic texts served as excellent tools to learn more about communication and alienation. The plays use heightened yet realistic communication exchanges to exemplify the

paradoxical struggle to grow intrapersonally and interact interpersonally.

Further Research

This study shows a connection between alienation and interpersonal communication. Additional studies could examine alienation in four major ways:

First, it would be interesting to find other authors who focus on alienation and communication in their dramatic literature. By analyzing other works, the theory of alienation could be expanded.

Second, a study focused on implementing plays as a teaching tool in the interpersonal classroom would be beneficial to both teachers and students. Research concerning alienation and communication in the interpersonal classroom would help students understand the theory of alienation and the importance of effective interpersonal communication.

Third, the theories represented in this paper need to be taken into a natural or contrived setting. If a study examined the dialogue between persons as they described times when they felt alienated, the theory of alienation might be broadened.

Finally, the definitions of the aspects of alienation need more refining. By finding clearer definitions, it would be easier to pinpoint displays of alienation. In the search for clarity, the theory might also be expanded. This

would only help in finding prescriptions for times at which we all feel alienated.

Albee and Shepard's plays exemplify the theory that alienation comes from the struggle to remain an individual while interacting in society. Their focus on problems with communicating interpersonally are still applicable today. One can learn about alienation and communication from drama, especially, "You gotta talk or you'll die" (Shepard, 1971, p. 78).

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