

Mutuality and Incongruity in Sociometric Choices by Ann E. Hale, M.A., TEP

Trainer question:

You want to involve your students in an action session exploring mutuality and incongruity in sociometric choice involving the positive choice, the negative choice, the neutral position and the conflicted position. Describe a few of these activities. An answer suggested by Ann E. Hale, M.A., TEP

Introduction

An overall goal of training groups of mine is to stimulate the creativity of trainees in the design of training events which they may eventually use as group leaders and directors. For this subject. I have the training group divide into small groups to discuss and design short action exercises built around the following choice options which result when engaging in sociometric explorations:

- a positive choice
- a negative choice
- a choice to remain neutral (having a positive or negative response but choosing not to act on it).
- declaring oneself to be neutral (no strong feeling one way or the other: indifference)
- declaring oneself to be conflicted (ambivalent with both a positive and negative dominance; higher than neutral intensity)
- choosing not to choose (usually a response to the criterion, the situation, leadership;
- opting out of the exploration)

Exploring Underlying Dynamics of Choice 1

Prior to making a decision how and whether to choose, the person or group may choose to first explore the strength of their underlying pull to choose and not choose, using the sociodynamic diamond of opposites 2 (Carlson-Sabelli, Sabelli, 1994). The template for the diamond of opposites may be taped on the floor of the action space, large enough to permit movement of several group members to stand in the spot which marks their placement of opposing points (the phase space). Stepping outside the diamond and going to the zero point, is a good way for group members to orient and check in regarding the strength of each pull before moving into the phase space. The benefit of using this procedure is participants are able to acknowledge the coexistence of opposites. Sociometric choice is able to hold within its approach non-linearity, and becomes less about either/or dynamics.

Exploring Mutuality

The mutuality categories are:

positive - positive; negative - negative, neutral - neutral, conflicted - conflicted, choose not to choose - choose not to choose.

Enactments exploring mutuality are suggested by the students. By designing the situations for enactments the students call on issues of their own personal history and the kinds of issues their clients face. Here are some examples of the kind of topics:

- Choice of family to visit for a holiday
- Making a donation to a special cause
- Asking for help with transportation or to find a job
- Choice of a partner in business

The enactments can take place in a series of pairings occurring simultaneously. Students are asked to pay attention to body language and ways the various choices are translated into gestures and body stance.

Exploring Incongruity 3

Incongruity may occur between two categories, occur within a choice category and there may also be an incongruity related to motivation of the choices. Two people may both report a positive response with varying degrees of intensity. For example, one person may say, "I really want to go to this restaurant with you." and the other person may respond, "I guess that would be okay." While the response is positive, the tentative response translates into a weak positive met with a strong positive. Two people may both choose one another but have different reasons: "I like being with you. You're fun." "I choose you because others like you and maybe I will get some new friends out of this if I am seen with you."

In the following brief role enactments one person chooses a positive or negative response and the other person plays the role expressing an incongruent response. The situations are planned by the students.

Examples:

- Study with for a test
- share a room in a cottage
- go to a concert together

As a follow-up of this training session, students will benefit from beginning to process psychodramas by identifying mutuality and incongruity in the choices related to the the choices of director, auxiliary egos, and themes explored.. Increasing consciousness of sociometric choice while it is occurring is a great benefit to students in training.

1 Ann E. Hale (2007) from International Sociometry Training Network
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2 Carlson Sabelli, Linnea, Hector Sabelli and Ann E. Hale, (1994)
"Sociometry and sociodynamics" in Psychodrama Since Moreno,
Edited by Marcia Karp, Paul Holmes and Michael Watson. London,
Routledge, p. 150-154.

3 J. L. Moreno referred to these pairings as "incompatible" pairs in
Who Shall Survive? Foundations of Sociometry, Group Psychotherapy and
Sociodrama 3.ed. Beacon, NY, Beacon Press, 1978., p. 265.

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