

Choice of director in training groups: the underchosen director  
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Sociometry question for the trainer: March 3-16, 2006

There are students in training with you who are never chosen to be the director. You have set up director training structures which facilitate them, and these trainees have their "turn". You facilitate them into the role at other times. Still, their sociometric position within the training group for the role of director does not change. Describe ways you will work with this situation within the training group and what sociometric processes you will use.

An answer suggested by Ann E. Hale, M.A., TEP March 16, 2006

There are at least three issues which surface for me as the trainer: (1) Role readiness - and sociometric factors related to role perception, role expectation and role enactment on the part of all trainees and on the part of protagonists engaged in the selection process.; (2) The sociodynamic effect - and whether or not the training group is in a situation where the highest number of choices for directing go to a few of the trainees and the few remaining choices for the role must be spread over the larger number of trainees; and (3) the wording of criteria for the role of director by members of the training group. I want to examine way they frame their choices for director, the actual criterion on which they make their choices and the degree to which the elements included in the criterion exclude specific trainees from consideration.

On the subject of role readiness

I engage the training group in a brainstorming session where we explore their perception of the role of director. We set up an opinion map and the trainees declare an opinion about the role of director and place the opinion in the action space. I want to have at least five or six opinions. For example: "Directors need to be the most spontaneous person in the group." "Directors follow their protagonist's cues." "Directors do not give advice." "Directors have to get it right the first time." "Directors protect the protagonist and do not allow them to be re-traumatized.", etc. Then, I instruct the trainees to "visit" the opinions and speak aloud their soliloquy (or interact with others also visiting the opinion). Each speaks as if he or she actually holds that opinion. After visiting all the opinions, each trainee takes a position on the map to represent their own opinion in the here and now and speaks the opinion aloud. We follow this with a discussion of ways their perception of the role of director connects to the expectations they have of themselves in the role and others in the role. To conclude this particular aspect of the investigation, I have each trainee produce a short action segment where they place themselves "enacting the role of director and loving it and doing well". After being in this role, they choose someone to represent them in a short enactment. Next, they move to the outer edges of the stage area and to

toss out comments which are ones which they know will interfere with their more positive warmup to being in the role of director: "Don't get so cocky. This is serious business. Someone could get hurt." "You seem to be forgetting that the last time you directed you forgot to role reverse at a critical moment" "You have never studied personality theory. What business do you have trying to direct in a psychotherapeutic modality?" Each director is assigned the homework to identify a social atom of critics who do not want them to succeed as a director. Each student is referred to the Director Role Diagram by Linda C. Frick, "Role Diagram of the Psychodrama Director: producer function, analyst/guide function, social investigator function, and elements of personal style" in Ann E. Hale, Conducting Clinical Sociometric Explorations, Roanoke, VA, Royal, 1985, p. 130-136)

On the subject of "the sociodynamic effect"

Next, I want to offer a teaching session on the sociodynamic effect: "a few people receive most of the available choices and the few remaining choices must be spread over a far larger number of persons". We examine whether the sociodynamic effect exists or not in the training group. We examine our roles of high value and access to the role of director during training sessions. Each trainee completes a form where they identify "These people are likely to be chosen more often than me for the role of director, these people are likely to be chosen about the same as me, and these people are likely to be chosen less often than me." I describe the process of the role accessibility perception test, that it allows the entire group to see the ways these particular perceptions actually influence role choices over time. I stress that there is really no other way to get this information other than have the perceptions available for everyone to know and explore. Each person generates their own data and shares their perceptions with each person one-on-one in time set aside immediately following data generation. Next the group plots their data on a modified sociomatrix.

It can be an exciting event for the trainees to "embody the sociomatrix". Using facilitated action the group can (1) arrange itself in a continuum according to "perceived by others to more likely be chosen more often than them", "perceived by others to be chosen about the same as me" to "perceived by others to be chosen less often than them." (2) If sub-groups within the categories appear these groups can engage in intergroup facilitated exchanges; (3) two people may want facilitated in an exchange which begins like this: "No, you would be chosen more often than me. No way, I think you would be chosen more than me." OR "How can you say I would be chosen about the same as you, if you have directed five times in this training series and I have only been a double one time?" Group members gather for a discussion of "Does this fit with your experience in this group?" We follow this up with role reversals with anyone in the group. Source: J.L. Moreno, Who Shall Survive: Foundations of Sociometry, Group Psychotherapy and Sociodrama Beacon, NY, Beacon House, 1978, p. 639-640.

On the subject of unconscious framing of the criterion of choice for director

and ways this can inhibit choices of some people

Lastly, the group enters a stage in its development when we process the role of director, particularly in regard to performance and the degree to which it encourages future choices or inhibits future choices. For this we use the Diamond of Opposites. It is crucial to trainees who determine they have done a poor job of directing to be able to explore the impact of having done less well on their self esteem as projected out into the group. Also, the person is helped to identify (measure) the loss of status which they perceive exists. The director completes a diagram on the Diamond of Opposites: "My perception of each group member's pull to ask me to direct him/her in the future" and "My perception of each group member's pull not to ask me to direct him/her in the future." The training group can complete a composite diagram of the Diamond of Opposites: "My pull to ask this director to direct me at some point in a future" and "My pull not to ask this director to direct me at some point in the future." The two diagrams are compared and a discussion held in the group which can be facilitated in ways which supports a "mistakes allowed" learning environment of the training group and which acknowledges that trainees develop as directors at different speeds and have different strengths. (Sociometric Processing of Action Events Rev. Ed., by Ann E. Hale and Donna Little Toronto, Toronto Centre for Psychodrama, 2005, p. 25)

As long as persons more highly chosen continue to accept invitations to direct the trainees do not get a clear picture of the degree to which they are a possible choice, unless (1) the more highly chosen director stands alongside the protagonist and assists them in exploring other choices for director; or (2) the group takes time to process the sociometric choice of director following the session. The training group benefits from knowing more about ways their choices impact each other and ways their demeanor and embedded sociometric position effects the outcome of being chosen or not chosen.

Resources: Clayton, Max and Philip Carter The Living Spirit of the Psychodramatic Method Auckland, New Zealand, Resource Books, 2005, p. 115 "A humane approach to learning"

Hale, Ann E. and Donna Little. Sociometric processing of action events 2 rev.ed. Roanoke, VA, 2005.

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