

# A SCENE SETTING EXERCISE WITH A SOCIOMETRIC TWIST

by Ann E. Hale

## *Favorite, important place: the scene setting*

Each person is asked to think of places which hold special significance and choose one place they may be willing to share psychodramatically with this group. The group chooses a person to share his or her scene and that person chooses one of the group members to direct the setting of the scene who then assists with identifying the location, significant objects, colors, lighting, smells, mood and presence of persons. The protagonist is asked to enter the scene, and rather than interact with any person in the scene, to take a place within the scene and to soliloquize.

## *An expansion, with group participation*

The director places two chairs offstage and the director and protagonist take a seat. Any auxiliaries return to their seat. The director asks group members one person at a time to go into the scene and to embody a significant or missing element they wish to make present. Any action portrayal is kept brief, showing or telling only enough to communicate what is being portrayed. The group member makes eye contact with the protagonist and returns to his/her seat. Interactions between group members is limited and monitored by the director.

## *Check-in with the protagonist*

Once all group members who have wanted to participate have finished, the director elicits closing remarks or soliloquy from the protagonist. They may suggest there is no need to agree with or accept any enhancement from the group. The action involvement takes the place of sharing.

## *The purpose, benefits*

During the scene setting portion, group members are engaged in an attentive search for their connection to the scene, and simultaneously, to the protagonist. This process can enrich the projective process and open the protagonist's world momentarily to include other persons and elements. These elements may be embraced, disregarded, or rejected; however, the process of expansiveness has been stimulated. For the group members there is the opportunity to offer something personal from themselves in a mildly threatening way and to leave their own reality position and respond imaginatively to places and scenes which may be foreign to their own life experience. There are benefits to the group life which may stimulate role expansion and role access, especially in heterogeneous and diversely populated groups.

This exercise may be useful as a group building exercise. It also can provide a new director with experience managing group involvement in a limited way while holding a position which is both authoritative and protective.

©) Ann E. Hale, 1/31/87; revised 3/28/05. This exercise draws on my experience designing "training dramas" for new directors. It also uses two elements of Playback Theater, the side by side staging of the teller and conductor as they watch the enhancements provided by the group, and the instruction to make a connection to a scene. The exercise utilizes what Alton Barbour refers to as "Imaginative sociometry", persons we select from a "psychogroup", persons who never get together except in our mind, such as preferred mother or father, an imagined board of directors for a project, or the pallbearers we would choose to have present at our death. For more information contact [annehale@swva.net](mailto:annehale@swva.net)