SELF-EVALUATION IN TERMS OF THE ROLE OF THE WORKER IN A PSYCHODRAMA RE-ENTRY GROUP

LYNETTE CLAYTON, B.A.

Psychodrama Department, St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Washington, D.C.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The context of this research.—In the psychodrama program at St. Elizabeths Hospital, the purpose of groups is defined in terms of goals. The goal of re-entry groups is set up in relationship to the eventual rehabilitation of the patients in the community. "The re-entry group attempts to develop coping skills based on an increased specificity of his perception of himself in interaction with others . . ." In more specific terms, three main areas of focus are apparent, coping skills, perception of self and interaction with others.[1]

This research project narrows down the area of role investigation to that of the worker role and is concerned with looking at the individual's perception of his present role capacity as a worker and his ideal role as a worker. This includes his view of himself in interaction with others in a work setting.

The worker role as an aspect of the total personality.—The role of the worker is only one role among many demanded in our society. It is, however, becoming an increasingly important one as it is closely related to the role of the provider in the family system. It is also closely related to the status and prestige of the individual in the larger society. Increased specialization and mechanization in our society have increased the need for adaptability in the individual. Some jobs are taken over by machines, requiring the individual to learn new skills in a new job setting. Other jobs such as highly technical professional jobs require constant adaptation to new discoveries in the technical field. Elliot Liebow writes, "One of the major points of articulation between the inside world and the larger society surrounding it is the area of employment. The way in which the man makes a living and the kind of living he makes have important consequences for how the man sees himself and is seen by others, and these, in turn, importantly shape his relationships with family members, lovers, friends and neighbors."[2]

[1] See Theodore Sarbin: "It is a widely accepted postulate that the more roles in a person's behavior repertory, the 'better his social adjustment—other things being equal . . .'," in "Role Enactment," in Biddle and Thomas, *Role Theory: Concepts and Research*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1960, p. 195.

[2] Elliot Liebow, *Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men*, Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967, p. 210.

The purpose of this study.—A good deal of research has been done using the discrepancy between the present image of the self and the ideal image as a measure of self-evaluation. There has been little attempt to look at the content of this discrepancy. This study focuses on a specific area of the individual's life: his work area and examines his self-evaluation in terms of role theory.

THE QUESTIONS AT ISSUE

1. In what ways does an individual's perceived present role capacity as a worker differ from his ideal role capacity as a worker?
2. What are the implications for working in a psychodrama re-entry group in an institutional setting?

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

The subjects were four female patients from Richardson 1C ward, one male and two female patients on Dix 11 Day Care. Richardson 1C is the ward on Richardson from which most female patients return to the community. Patients live in the hospital. Some patients have industrial therapy assignments of work on the grounds of the hospital; some attend school; but many have been in the hospital for a considerable period. Dix 11 is a day care unit. Patients live at home and attend the program during the day. Most patients have an industrial therapy assignment on the grounds.

Method.—In order that the test situation be relevant to the ongoing life of a re-entry group the individual was asked to:

A. set up a role situation in which he thought he could presently function as a worker;
(1) take his own role in this situation;
(2) take the role of others in the situation to determine characteristics of the social system to which he sees himself relating;
(3) respond to a situation in which greater demands are placed on him by the system in terms of increased work load or change in contract;

B. set up a situation which he thinks would be the ideal work situation. Take his own role and the roles of others as indicated under A.

Recording devices.—A tape recorder was used to record verbal interactions during the sessions which lasted approximately one hour. Two observers recorded non-verbal communications. A summarizing outline was used in analyzing the tape recording.
Personnel involved.—Two student nurses on each ward acted as ob-

servers of non-verbal communication. Two trained auxiliaries from the Psychodrama Department took roles in the sessions. The writer acted as director of all sessions.

As role behavior was analysed, several trends became apparent in the data. These have been drawn together in the following propositions:

Proposition 1: Roles chosen to show ideal work roles do not have less social status than those chosen to show present work capacity.

Subject 1 chose as a job to show her present work capacity that of domestic worker in a private home where both parents work. This fits her present educational background (completion of 6th grade) and her previous experience. By contrast she chose as an ideal role a job which has higher formal requirements. In order to fill the role of filing clerk in a government office, this patient was aware that she would require further education and would need to pass a Civil Service Test. She was aware that there would be greater remuneration for this job. Her choice was appropriate to her present cultural background and would give her higher status.

Subject 2 saw her present work capacity in terms of past experience working in a cafeteria at a Hebrew Home for the Aged. Her choice of an ideal working situation caring for children as a nurses aide in a Children's hospital indicates a desire for more status and training, which she sees as in-service training.

Subject 3 sees a job as beautician as her present work capacity even though she has been trained in the hospital and has no experience or training outside the hospital. Her ideal role of nursery school helper would have similar status and may be more appropriate to her present educational background.

Subject 4 chose as her present job that of a chamber maid in a hotel. Her ideal work role is that of a clerk in the government. This would require more schooling, skills in typing and filing, as well as passing a Civil Service test. There is considerable social status difference between the two jobs.

Subject 5 shows the greatest status differentiation between his present role capacity and ideal. His dissatisfaction with his present capacity has prevented him from fulfilling his industrial therapy assignments on the hospital grounds. In the test situation he saw himself as able to function as a file clerk although his experience has been in the area of messenger boy. His ideal role of stockbroker and newspaper man would give much greater social status but are inappropriate to his present cultural environment.

Subject 6 was very aware of the status difference between the job of saleswoman and manager. She expressed her difficulty with superiors in her role as a saleswoman, a difficulty which she did not have as manager. This patient has had considerable sales experience so that her choice of

a job as saleswoman was appropriate to her training and experience. Her choice of a male role as her ideal role and her seeking out of negative feedback seem to be clear indications of her dissatisfaction with her present role capacity.

Subject 7 also showed an awareness of difference in social status in her choice of librarian as her present role and occupational therapist as her ideal role. Her present choice was based on past work experience and was appropriate to her background.

Proposition 2: Individuals show marked similarity in the way in which they enact both the present and the ideal role (i.e. individual elements of the roles are similar).

Subject 1 took a consistently pleasing, placating role in both present and ideal situations. She was concerned to meet all the demands of her employers even when these were increased to a point of discomfort for herself. For instance in the role of domestic worker, she was able to cope with caring for three children, preparing a dinner for unexpected guests, as well as meeting the immediate demands of a talkative, interfering employer such as "my mother and father want the children to eat with us, so would you set three more places?" just as she is serving the dinner. In employer roles or with subordinates, such as the children, this subject became dominant whereas her usual role is a recessive one avoiding conflict. In both employer roles she praised her work.

Subject 3 is an ebullient, volatile person who requires considerable self-control to maintain a worker role. Despite this, in both roles she consistently reacted to others in the appropriate worker role. However, the group response of laughter at her indicated that roles were not fully embraced. In Moreno's terms she was role taking rather than role playing. The worker role is one which she tries out but has not accepted as part of her cultural atom.[2] This is in contrast to the role which she takes with her husband when he demands that she come home from her job after hours at the Beauty Shop to mind the children. She responds with intense anger, screaming at him, ordering him around and blaming him. In her ideal role as helper at a nursery school, she argued with one of the parents about the policy of the school and he withdrew his child. In both situations where disagreement was expressed she felt she would have to leave the job.

Subject 7 is a quiet, self-effacing person. She responded in both work

Proposition 5: Individuals appear to have habitual reactions to increased demands.

2 The term "cultural atom" is here used to describe the range of roles with which a person interacts. J. L. Moreno writes "Every individual—just as he has at all times a set of friends and a set of enemies—has a range of roles in which he sees himself and faces a range of counter-roles in which he sees others around him. They are in various stages of development. The tangible aspects of what is known as 'ego' are the roles in which he operates, with the pattern of role-relations around the individual as their focus." *Psychodrama*, vol. 1, pp. v–vi.

situations by wanting to withdraw. In doing this she usually jumped out of the role and said something like "I've said enough now, I'd better sit down." She became confused and anxious when greater demands were made and appeared generally tense since she showed a great deal of restless non-verbal communication. Her hands, face and body were in constant movement. She rocked back and forth, rubbed her ears, picked her fingernails, pulled at her skirt, twisted her mouth etc.

Proposition 3: Individuals accepted the formal requirements of the worker role but found difficulty in performing the informal components of the role.

Subject 2 fulfilled the physical needs of her patients but responded in her role as cafeteria worker with embarrassment and coyness to a suggestion by a fellow worker that she have coffee with him. Common warm-ups with fellow workers involved information exchange only.

As a beautician, subject 3 responded to her customers only in terms of the task. In reply to a customer's comment "I am going to a party tonight with my husband," she replies "Good, would you like a facial?" When another customer said "I feel lonesome," she replied "I always do a good job."

Subject 5 accepted a lunch invitation from other employees but was unable to relate adequately in this role. His behavior was slow, deliberate and controlled and showed no affect.

Proposition 4: All subjects were able to enact the present work capacity roles adequately. There were individual differences in ability to play the ideal worker role.

Subject 3 was able to set up both work situations describing physical surroundings and job specifications. She looked for more directions from her superviser in the second situation as nursery school helper but this was probably a function of the job situation. In both roles the level of warm-ups was at a comic rather than a tragic level.

Subject 6 was able to control herself sufficiently to enact the role of saleswoman with customers who came into her shop. With her floor manager she was unable to enact the role because of her anger. In her role as manager she enjoyed the prestige and power component of the role but was inappropriate in other areas. She elicited anxious laughter from the group.

Proposition 5: Individuals appear to have habitual reactions to increased demands.

Subject 1 consistently complied with increased demands. At the same time her non-verbal behavior increased and showed anxiety.

In her first situation, subject 2 saw the Rabbi as unreasonably demanding and displeased. In response she complained to the boss who tried to

subject. It can also provide an opportunity for looking at needs which are not being met in the present situation.

SUMMARY

This study of seven patients in a psychodrama re-entry group looks at the difference between present work capacity and ideal work capacity as a measure of self esteem. Findings are tentative because the population is small but indications are that self-esteem is related to perceived social status of work roles. Other findings are looked at in terms of the role of the director in a re-entry group.

APPENDIX

Dimensions of interaction in worker role

a) *Office held by role player*
   General description
   Collective (social) elements of the role
     Formal
     Informal
   Individual elements of the role
   Role set: complement of role relationships which a person has by virtue of a position
b) *Task specification*
   noted by whom and whether responded to by star
c) *Power relationship*
   star dominant/recessive in what situations
d) *Liking relationship*
   common warm-ups
   behavior sanctioned positively
   behavior sanctioned negatively
     by whom
     response from other
e) *Communication relationship*
   role conflict
   reciprocity
   symetrical/asymetrical
   complementary
   pseudo-mutual: appearance of mutuality without supporting affect.
   Avoidance of divergence from role
f) *Characteristics of role enactment*
   content and action
   congruence of verbal and non-verbal behavior
   showing the role in action
   need for prompting by asking "What else does . . . . do?"
   telling about role instead of acting

   characteristics of enactment
     adequate enactment: inclusion of all significant phases of role
     distorted enactment: bizarre formations of role
     partial enactment: one or two recognizable phases of role
     below level of recognition
   warm-up
     comic: in and out of role
     tragic: living and being in role
g) *Response to increased demands in situation*

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