

The Preparation and Writing of a Social and Cultural Atom Paper

by Max Clayton

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The Purpose of Writing the Social and Cultural Atom Paper

The purpose of writing the social and cultural atom paper is the further development of a positive identity and skill as a psychodramatist. The face to face work with a person and the writing call for the psychodramatist to draw on all of their knowledge of systems theory, sociometry, role theory, family theory, group work and clinical appraisal and all of their life experience. Thus the interpersonal work with the person being discussed in the paper, the analysis of the person's roles and role relations, the planning and execution of the plans, the development of recommendations for further work, and the writing assist the important process of integrating theory and practice.

Those who have completed the paper usually discover that they have learned more than they thought they had. They are able to make adequate role assessments of a person. They become more clear

that their role analyses give guidance to them in the interventions they make and therefore assist them to be effective in the work. Their confidence and motivation generally grows.

Preparation for Writing the Paper

1. Background Knowledge and Ability

Much of the basic background knowledge and ability that is needed for the writing of the social and cultural atom paper may be acquired throughout the first year core training programme. This includes knowledge of systems theory, sociometry, role theory, the structure of a psychodramatic session, psychodramatic techniques, the role of the auxiliary ego, and the function and roles of the director. This knowledge is acquired through teaching, coaching, the making of various diagrams and charts and the study of books and articles. It is expected that there will be supervised practice in auxiliary work

and in the directing of a protagonist during the first year resulting in the development of roles associated with the development of working relations with individual clients and with groups, with the making of effective contracts, and with the production, investigative and therapeutic phases of a protagonist centred drama.

In the second year of training there is a greater integration of sociometry and role theory, the development of knowledge of group process and further development of the roles of a director. This is assisted by the continuing development of diagrams and charts, written descriptions of the functioning of oneself and others, clinical practice and supervision.

During the third year of training a

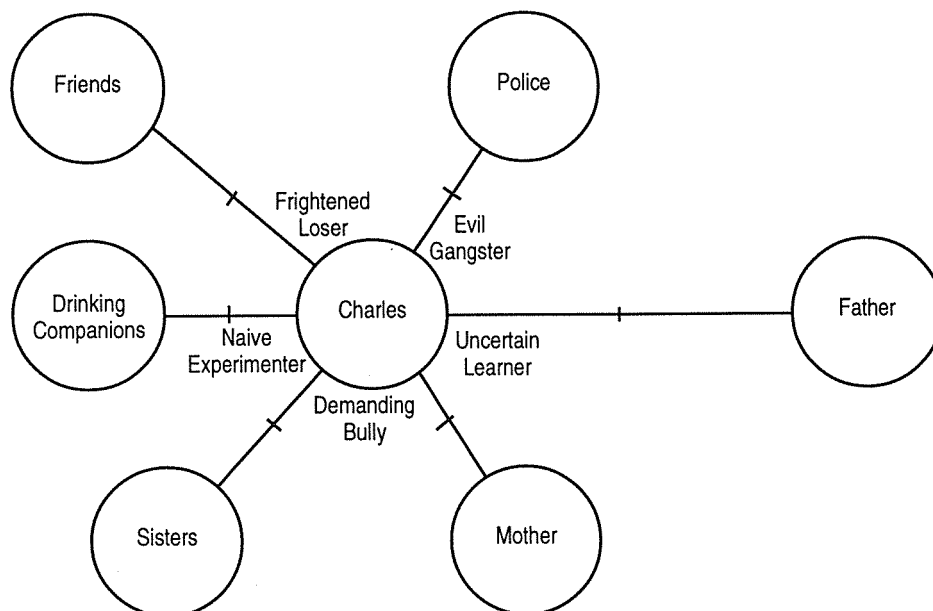
more thorough knowledge of all the areas set out on pages 13-19 of the Training and Standards Manual is called for as well the development of skill and confidence to conduct different types of group sessions and to do psychodramatic work with a range of people.

2. *The Development of Diagrams and Charts*

An ability to describe the psychodramatic work that is done with another person and to develop appropriate diagrams and charts that portray that person's interpersonal relationships and personality functioning is essential for the writing of the social and cultural atom paper.

The following are examples of charts and diagrams:

A) Diagram of Charles' Social Atom After Session One



B) Major Roles in a Family of Three

Wife

Professional sufferer
Demanding, hungry little girl
Fearful, needy controller
Sick, unfulfilled, tragic woman

Husband

Obedient slave
Resentful, spectator of life
Secret rebel
Gentle peace lover
Self deserter

Daughter

Controlled, obedient slave
Resentful, care taker
Eternal sufferer
Confused, dependent little girl
Rebellious colluder

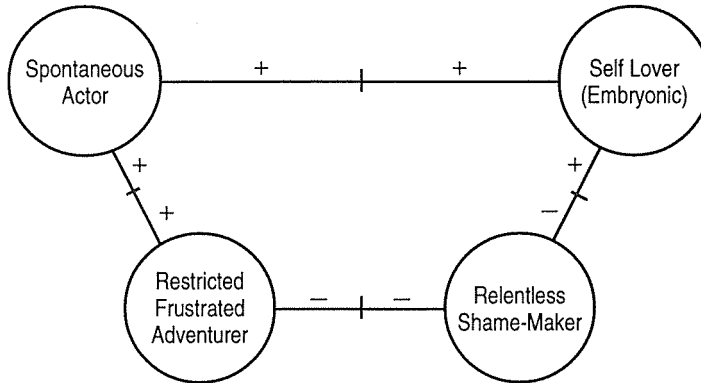
C) Role Assessment of Roles Identified in a Group

(See Clayton, M., Living Pictures of the Self (1993) page 14)

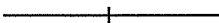


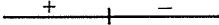

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|-----------------------|---|
| adequate roles | • silent supporter |
| over-developed roles | • self doubter
• anxious learner
• mistrusting politician
• appraisal seeker |
| under-developed roles | • truster of self in an unknown situation
• spontaneous actor |
| conflicted roles | • anxious learner versus spontaneous actor |
| absent roles | • naive enquirer |

D) A Positive Identity Emerging

(See Living Pictures of the Self page 42.)



Key to Symbols Used in Diagrams

- 
two-way relationship
- 
mutual attraction
- 
mutual rejection
- 
attraction vs. rejection
- 
one-way feeling

E) Role System of One Person

(See Living Pictures of the Self page 50.)

Role System of Jane

Progressive Roles		Coping Roles				Fragmenting Roles	
WELL DEVELOPED	DEVELOPING	MOVING TOWARD	MOVING AWAY	MOVING AGAINST	DIMINISHING	OVER DEVELOPED & UNCHANGING	
Problem Solver	Tentative Risk Taker	Protective Advice Giver (little used)	Withdrawing Ostrich	Indignant Truth Speaker	Withdrawing Ostrich	Jealous Lover	
Thoughtful Reflector	Firm Limit Setter Celebrator of the New		Panicky Baulker (both roles frequently used)	Angry Volcano	Hurt Martyr	Helpless Manipulator	
					Critical Self Doubter	Thwarted Advice Giver	
					Resentful Protector		

F) Initial Role Assessment

(The language used in this assessment to describe the three categories of roles is that suggested by Lynette Clayton in her paper The Use of the Cultural Atom to Record Personality Change in Individual Psychotherapy in Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama and Sociometry. 1982, 35, 3:111-117.)

Initial Role Assessment

Dysfunctional Roles	Coping Roles	Individuated Roles
Shamed Despairer	Cynical Battle Zone Correspondent	Wise Pilgrim
Numbed Refugee	Weary Atlas	
Terrified Abject Beggar		
Vicious Tyrant		

G) Role Analysis of Session Two

Progressive	Coping	Fragmenting
Clear Recipient of Love		Evil Gangster
Open Griever		Shamed Pleader
Lonely Self Acknowledger		Abandoned Waif

Guidelines For Writing

1. The Formal Requirement

This is a paper in which you present a diagram of a person whom you have given a specific clinical diagnosis, discuss the meaning and significance of the diagram, and how you have used the psychodramatic method with that person. The paper will be at least 2000 words in length and is passed by your primary

trainer at least six months prior to making an application for assessment.

2. Beginning the Paper

Commencing the paper with a presentation of the concept of social and cultural atom assists the reader to warm up to your discussion of work with a particular person and demonstrates that you have a comprehension of the concept and

its place in human development work. Reference to Moreno's writing showing appreciation of the historical origin of the concept is expected. You may wish to refer to other writings about the concept and its application in work with individuals and groups. The inclusion of a paragraph presenting the concept of social and cultural atom using your own words helps to show that you have integrated the concept and such a paragraph is expected.

3. Description of the Initial Meeting

The description of the work you have done with a particular person is to be easily readable and free of jargon and normally commences with the initial meeting. The following is an example of such a description:

When I met Don he presented as a bright eyed young man, fifteen years of age (*Bright Eyed Adventurer*). He acted a little timid with a glint of humour and excitement in his eyes (*Shy Clown*) and dressed casually in a current fashion of baggy clothes. He was accompanied by his mother Dawn who was also casually dressed. My immediate response to Don's *Bright* versus *Shy* presence was to warm up to the role of naive enquirer and ask him "Why do you think you're here?"

At this point I am attempting to make contact with Don in a way that will warm him up to self interest. I am acting in the capacity of authority merely by being there for Don to come to and it is my intention to mirror and model a form of Good Authority from the outset of our

contact. I am asking him to think, and at the same time am warming myself up to being his double.

He looked at his mother who non-verbally encouraged him to respond (*Compassionate Guide*).

An advantage of this description is that it shows an awareness of the two-way role relationship of the psychodramatist and the client and a valuing of identifying the roles enacted in this relationship.

4. Developing a Description of the Work

The on-going description of the work focuses on key moments. If the client is a participant in group sessions such a key moment could include a description of interaction with one or more group members before, during, or after the group session. Other key moments may include a description of an incident involving interaction between yourself and the client, the earliest memory, a scene around the family dining table, the school classroom or playground in primary school, a secondary school class, a social relationship during adolescence or first date, an intimate relationship in early adulthood, a situation at work, or a search for meaning. The description of the work will normally involve brief description of the methods used including any use of the psychodramatic method.

5. Use of Charts and Diagrams

The description of the ongoing work with the client will normally be interspersed with charts and diagrams presenting the nature of the social and cultural atom and any significant role development, and the description and diagrams are aimed at the reader gaining a flesh and

blood picture of the client. Any role diagrams are to be associated with a discussion in which you make your own comments on the significance of the roles and role relationships for the person and, where applicable, identify the central organising role in any role system. Recommendations and plans for further work with the person that are based on the assessment of different role systems are to be included at appropriate points throughout the paper and at the conclusion of the work you are describing.

6. Study of the Paper by Other Trainees

Please ensure that names and other factual details are altered so that a reader will not identify the people involved. It is preferable if the paper may be made available for study by other trainees. These papers are a valuable learning resource.

Conclusion

This paper is an expression of your unique self. The development of a strong warm-up to the writing and maintaining awareness of your warm-up will ensure that your abilities find expression in the paper and that you will end up with the satisfaction of having achieved significant learning.