



The Duke and the Duchess

SPECIFIC ISSUE/S: Power

PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES: To develop participants' awareness of own assumptions about social structures

LENGTH: 30 - 60 minutes

GROUP SIZE: Any

GROUP CHARACTERISTICS: Any

FACILITATOR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS NEEDED: Low level of knowledge required; high level facilitation skills are required as some people become distressed in the debrief while reflecting on their own behaviour

RESOURCES NEEDED: None

INSTRUCTIONS:

Step 1:

Inform the group that you are going to tell them a story, and ask a question about it afterwards; so they might want to take some notes.

Step 2:

Tell the story from the script.

Step 3:

Ask everyone individually to rank all the characters in the story in terms of how much they were to blame for the Duchess' death – put 1 by the person most responsible and 8 by the person least responsible, etc . List the characters on the board or a piece of newsprint, in a grid format so that you can record people's responses after everyone has finished the ranking. Below is an example of how the grid might look after people have shared their responses.

| | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Duke | 8 | 1 | | | | | | |
| Duchess | 1 | 8 | | | | | | |
| Guard | 7 | 2 | | | | | | |
| Boyfriend | 2 | 4 | | | | | | |
| Boatman | 6 | 5 | | | | | | |
| Doctor | 3 | 3 | | | | | | |
| Priest | 4 | 6 | | | | | | |
| Friend | 5 | 7 | | | | | | |

Step 4:

Firstly, emphasise that there are no 'right' answers as to who is most and least responsible, but the discussion about different rankings will contribute to self-awareness by the participants about their own assumptions. The discussion could begin with a focus on areas of agreement within the group, and the reasons for those rankings (e.g., 'I see that most people ranked the friend as 6, 7, or 8; why did you think she had little responsibility). After the similarities have been explored discuss the differences (e.g., several people ranked the Duke as most to blame and others ranked him near the bottom – what are the reasons for putting him at the top? at the bottom?)

Step 5:

Explain that the characters in the story are meant to represent various roles in society that have an effect on social problems (in this case, the Duchess' death): the Duke is the state, the Duchess is the victim, the guard is the state's enforcement system, the boatman is the economy, the boyfriend is the kind of person pre-occupied with his own interests, the doctor is the 'helping' professions, the priest is the church, and the friend is the kind of person who cares about the welfare of others.

In that context, it's worth exploring the implications of how people ranked the various roles. For example,

- blaming the Duchess/not blaming the Guard reflect the view that rules should be followed no matter how unfair or unreasonable they are
- not/blaming the boatman reflects views about whether economic institutions have underlying moral obligations for people's well-being
- not/blaming the Duke reflects views about whether the state is entitled to make unfair rules
- not/blaming the doctor raises questions about whether the helping professions should stay within their defined roles or go outside them when it is necessary to meet the needs of the person
- if some participants were inclined to blame the Duchess because of 'immorality' of spending the night with her ex-boyfriend, it could be pointed out that no mention was made of why the Duke went away – would their view change if they had known he was going to visit his lover? which raises other questions about the legitimacy of rules

FACILITATION TIPS: When recording results use letters rather than the participants' names as the rankings are to promote general discussion, NOT to make people feel they need to defend their own ranking

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