

WORKING TOGETHER IN THEATRE: COLLABORATION AND LEADERSHIP

By ROBERT COHEN and JOEL VEENSTRA

Second Edition web resources

CULTURAL MAPPING EXAMPLE (Chapter 1 Activity)

Chapter 1 invites us to consider how our similarities and our differences strengthen our community. One research methodology to explore these in an embodied way is through cultural mapping. Participants are invited (as individuals and within groups) to consider, define, and share (to the level they are comfortable) their identity, past experiences, relationships, strengths, resources, practices, narratives, etc. These concepts were first introduced to Joel Veenstra in the process of exploring community with Cornerstone Theater Company, and expanded upon with his work in a variety of contexts, most significantly with the Applied Improvisation Network and the Medical Improv Collective. The goal is to articulate what defines a community, often to utilize that data as information on how to enhance the needs of that community. In this evolving practice, one can find a wide range of exercises to explore shared culture - here are four possible options:

Cultural Mapping Exploration 1: This is true of me

Have everyone make a list of identifiers that are true about them (i.e. I like dogs) anonymously. Then the facilitator collects everyone's lists. Next the facilitator will read an identifier from a list and if the identifier is true for an individual participant, they should (to the level they feel comfortable to disclose) stand up (alternatives options include raising one's hand, changing seat with another person, or mute/unmute your video on a video conference call). And then another identifier is read, and again those who identify with that fact stand and those who do not, sit. This is a quick, low stakes way to invite individuals to share information about themselves and to visually see who in the room shares that identifier with them.

Cultural Mapping Exploration 2: Quadrants

Identify specific quadrants within a room (like the 4 corners of a room) and then define each of those 4 or more areas with a specific cultural framework (e.g. birth order, geography, life circumstance) and invite individuals to go to the area of the room that they identify with most. Once everyone has chosen a location/identity in the room, invite the groups to try to find 3 other truths about themselves that everyone in the group has in common. After every group has found at least 3 things, have them pick a reporter who can share out to the entire room their discoveries. If a group takes longer than the others, challenges the groups that are complete with 3 shared traits to see how many other shared traits they can identify.

Cultural Mapping Exploration 3: Spectrum

Invite participants to physically line up in a linear line based upon the named traits (this can be done verbally or non-verbally). Some possible linear explorations could include order based upon birthdays (from January as the start of the line and December the end of the line); what time one woke up (from earliest to latest); length of time within one's chosen career path.

Cultural Mapping Exploration 4: Story Swaps

In pairs, invite participants to introduce themselves to their partner and then utilize a prompt, such as a question (e.g. how did you get your name? or what is your favorite food?) Each person has a time to be the focused talker and the other is only a listener; then they switch roles. After the prompt is addressed (or a timer ends), the pairings are invited to find new partners and a new prompt is given.

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