

Group Leaders and their sociometric set
by Ann E. Hale, M.A.TEP

Sociometry question for the practitioner: March 17-30, 2006

Practitioner question

Your co-leader in a therapy group is not trained in psychodrama or sociometry. She asked you to join her practice because you have these strengths. The group is going well. After several months you realize she appears to you to have "favorites". This impacts the overall satisfaction you have in working together. Since you meet monthly to discuss the group, what sociometric tools might you use to illustrate this concern and open the discussion.

An answer suggested by Ann E. Hale, MA, TEP: March 30, 2006

Your training in sociometry has helped you to develop a "large picture" view of groups, and to be sensitized to inclusion and group building. Also, you have learned about each person having a "sociometric set", that certain number and quality of relationships he/she can hold in their consciousness at any given point in time. One way to operate in groups which are larger than that number is to unconsciously drop certain people from your awareness. Since this is primarily unconscious we can become more aware of it happening and either exert some effort to stay more inclusive or consciously decide to let who makes up the "number" vary from time to time thereby including everyone overall. Discuss with your colleague this topic and each of you speak about what might be your individual "number". Get an agreement that if either of you becomes aware that someone in your client group may be "overlooked" that you will either intervene to include that person, or signal your co-leader in some agreed upon way.

Next, you can also suggest that you each do a hypothetical social atom designed to bring out into the open actual feelings you each have about the members of the client group. You use the diamond of opposites, and choose a criterion. Example: If I were meeting these people for the first time at a workshop on parenting, what would be the strength of my pull to talk to this person during the coffee break, and the strength of my pull not to talk to this person during the coffee break. (On the diamond both pulls are plotted and the intersecting point in the "phase space" is identified. You draw a line from that intersecting point out to the margin and write the clients name.) Once you and your co-leader have the completed diamonds before you, compare your diamonds. Speak about whom each of you is more likely to overlook based on this data. Having shared this information between you increases the likelihood that you will continue to strengthen your working relationship and that you each share the responsibility for all the clients in

your group.

Resources: Carlson-Sabelli, Linnea, Sabelli, Hector and Hale, Ann E. (1994) "Sociometry and sociodynamics" in, P. Holmes, M. Karp and M. Watson, Eds, Psychodrama Since Moreno: Innovations in Theory and Practice. London, Routledge. p 147-185..

Hale, Ann E. (1985) "Exploring your sociometric set", in Conducting Clinical Sociometric Explorations Roanoke, VA, Royal. p.78-84.

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