

Supplies for sociometric explorations
by Ann E. Hale, M.A., TEP

You are preparing to introduce some basic sociometry in your groups. What sort of supplies are you gathering together? How will you use these supplies?

Here are the supplies I typically bring with me for introductory sociometry training:

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Most basic:

• • • roll of drafting (masking) tape, one-inch wide;

• • • templates for the Sabelli Diamond of Opposites in a variety of sizes;

• • • circle targets on 8 1/2 x 11 " paper for social atom exercises™

• • • a box of colored and pens;

• • • green, red and yellow disc labels for "streetlight sociometry" with cork boards; colored push-pins

• • • flip chart paper;

A few extras:

— cloth sociometric cycle (1) which is about 8' in diameter and written explanation: I developed the sociometric cycle in 1987 to look at the movement of belonging within a group based on sociometric position. The circle is a quadratic one, similar to seasons, the birth process, the medicine wheel and other cyclical processes with which we are familiar.

— handout on Moreno's sociometric system (2); short bibliography with websites added

— small pad of multi-colored arrows (available at office supply stores).

These I use so people can add a direction onto the social atom, move closer, move further away, move in this direction in relation to me, or another group member.

Group familiarity exercise for pre and post look at connections: This uses a line drawn on a half-sheet of paper. Each person selects a placement along the continuum making a dot and then identifying the persons who are most known to least known, using space to indicate closeness or distance here and now. Once this is done, and the sheets of paper are displayed along a wall in a line, each participant uses the other sheet and finds the placement given to him or her on each person's data sheet. Then, the dot is made on the sheet and the person's name is written near the dot. This way each person has a record to refer to when matching changes during a later period in the group's history.

Drum encounter: • • A ten to fourteen-inch flat drum or a single bongo can be used to facilitate a non-verbal exchange between two or more people.

Other instruments may also be included in your kit.

Teaching basic sociometry

I like to begin with Moreno and his vision that we need to participate in creating a world organized in such a way that "all can survive". That this means taking responsibility for the impact of our choices on others, all our choices spiraling out through the universe. (If I want to take time for this I might give out the one-page handout on Moreno's system.) I teach about individual choices, such as my choices for others, and the composite of all these choices becoming group choices, everyone's choices for each other creating a matrix. A good metaphor to describe group sociometry is that of the safety net, placed by circus high wire acts, to catch the performer in case of a misstep causing a fall. I ask the group to imagine lines extending from oneself to all the others and to take a momentary aerial view of all the lines from all the group members. The linkages between people creates a criss-cross of lines which when strengthened form a net, allowing us to take risks.

I introduce the Diamond of Opposites (Carlson-Sabelli and Sabelli) (3) , each person receiving one of the templates. I use the tape to create a large Diamond in the workspace. I talk about inner pulls to choose, and not choose (positive/negative) and ways we embody the choices with degrees of intensity which result in low level charge (neutral) and high level charge (conflictual). Ambivalence is when the charge is experienced as equal. I discuss that there are underlying pulls which we experience and then we make a decision how to choose, or whether to choose. This choice made and revealed is the sociometric choice and the internal dialog is the "sociodynamic".

I have group members interact with the Diamond of Opposites and become familiar with the internal process and the more public choosing process. Next I introduce the social atom templates having three circles, to represent degrees of connection, including outside the circle.

I discuss nearness and distance in relationships. Each person has colored pens which they can use to indicate green (good, growing), yellow (cautious) and red (stopped) as they place persons on their individual social atom. I like to begin with people making a social atom of a group other than the one we are in in this moment. I say that at some time in the future we may explore our own group sociometry, but for this moment it helps to become familiar with the subject first.

On the flip chart paper I draw the same three circles. I give each person three push pins, colored in red, green, and yellow. When the group has assembled, I ask each person to write their name on a disk and using a push pin for how they feel about him/herself (using a criterion) , place their disk on the social atom based on the way they feel here and now about their centrality or peripherality in this group. Once we have done this, people can make changes based on responses from group members. Examples: "I would like for you to be closer to me. Will you move your disk closer?" Or, I am surprised at how distant you feel to the center of the group. In fact I am

surprised about how few people placed themselves there. Are we being modest or something?â€•

Based on the discussion of the group sociometry I will proceed with additional ways to explore the group using methods and exercises which expand their understanding of both group dynamics and the process of choosing.

(1) Hale, Ann E. (1987) â€œSociometric Elements Related to the â€œHealing Circleâ€• as presented by John Mosherâ€• in Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama and Sociometry, Vol. 40, no. 3 pages 115-118

(2) Hale, Ann E â€œThe Interrelationships of Morenoâ€™s Theoriesâ€• in . Conducting Clinical Sociometric Explorations: a Manual for Psychodramatists and Sociometrists. Roanoke, VA: Royal Publishing, 1985, p. 5.

(3) Carlson Sabelli, Linnea, Hector Sabelli and Ann E. Hale, (1994) â€œSociometry and sociodynamicsâ€• in Psychodrama Since Moreno, Edited by Marcia Karp, Paul Holmes and Michael Watson. London, Routledge, p. 150-154.

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