

For Group Leaders: Action Sociometric on Interpersonal Attraction
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FOR GROUP LEADERS ACTION SOCIOMETRIC ON INTERPERSONAL
ATTRACTION

To read or hear about sociometry is one thing, but to see it in action is something entirely different. The purpose of this exercise is to move the study of sociometry from the purely cognitive to the experiential. If people are able to put sociometry into action and participate in a sociometric group experience, it begins to make more sense to them, and it is more likely to stay with them as enduring knowledge. All of the following criteria are grounded in the academic research on attraction. The exercise begins with a class or with group members all standing. You explain that you are going to provide them with a number of criteria which are significant determiners of who is attracted to whom and for what reasons. What you are going to ask them to do is to make a number of choices of the other people in the room based on these criteria.

INSTRUCTIONS: Once the criterion is announced, they will look around the room and pick the person who most fits that criterion, not just pick the closest person. They will move to that person and place a hand on that person's shoulder. While this is in action, it is quite likely that the person they are choosing will also be choosing someone based on the same criterion. However, they can expect that some of the choices will be mutual because of the tele effect. If no one fits the criterion, then they should choose no one, but someone might still choose them. Because choices can be expected to be unequally distributed, each choice might lead to the formation of a small group, or to a chain of choices. But their discussion should be mostly with the person they have chosen or with the person who has chosen them. Once the choice has been made, they will be asked to talk with that person about why that person fits that particular criterion of attraction. With different criteria, naturally, there will be different persons chosen. Each discussion should last from five to ten minutes, or until the pairs or groups seem to begin to run out of things to say to each other.

IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT AT THE BEGINNING FOR EVERYONE TO UNDERSTAND THAT BY CHOOSING ONE PERSON THEY ARE NOT REJECTING OTHERS. PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE THIS BECOME IMMOBILIZED AND UNABLE TO CHOOSE. A CHOICE IS A CHOICE AND NOT A REJECTION. EQUALLY, IF YOU ARE NOT CHOSEN, YOU ARE NOT BEING REJECTED. IT IS LIKELY THAT IF PERSONS WERE ALLOWED SECOND AND THIRD CHOICES, YOU WOULD BE CHOSEN. INSTEAD, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT PEOPLE ARE OFTEN ATTRACTED TO OTHERS, BUT RARELY HAVE THE LICENSE OR THE OPPORTUNITY TO TELL THEM ABOUT IT. THIS IS THAT RARE OPPORTUNITY. AND IN THAT SENSE, EACH CHOICE IS AN INTERPERSONAL GIFT TO THAT OTHER PERSON. Ready for the criteria? Turn the page over.

INTERPERSONAL ATTRACTION CRITERIA

Who here is the person you see most often and have the most contact with? Identify that person and go to that person. Who here do you believe is most similar to you in attitudes beliefs and values? Who do you think has the same world view? Go to that person. Who do you think that you would most benefit from being a friend or acquaintance of? Who would you most gain from personally (the economic principle)? Go to that person. Who here do you believe to be the most successful or to have the most potential for success? In essence, who do you believe to be a "winner"? Go to that person. Who here do you believe to be the most physically attractive? Who most fits your or society's standards of a physically attractive person? Go to that person. Who here seems to have qualities or traits that you would like to see in yourself? (This is the "alienated parts of self" criterion.) Who would you want to be more like? Go to that person. Who here do you think reciprocates (tele) your feelings about them. Who do you feel most in tune with? With whom do you have the most "mutuality" or empathy? Go to that person. Now, of all of those criteria mentioned earlier, (most contact, similar attitudes, physical attractiveness, perceived success, most benefit from, qualities you would like to see in yourself, reciprocated feelings) which one of those criteria seems to be the most important in determining your attractions. Pick that criterion. Sit comfortably and be ready to discuss that criterion with the entire group.

Based on time available and the interest of the group members, you may want to have additional criteria to add to expand the dimensions of the exercise and the length of time for exploring and examining. Following are a few more which you might use.

A. Who is the person here whom you would most like to get to know better. Who do you see as the best potential, but as yet unrealized, friend? Go to that person. B. Who is the person you feel most comfortable with. Who is most approachable? Who could you put your guard down with? Go to that person. C. Who is the person you would most like to be attracted to you? (This is a projective meta perception level item.) If it were possible, whom would you like to take an interest in you and to make an effort at acquaintanceship? Go to that person.

Throughout the exercise, remind the group occasionally that they need to pay attention to who else chooses the person they have chosen, and who has chosen them according to what criteria. That can play a part in the discussion about the application of sociometry to attraction at the end.

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