

# SOCIOMETRY IN BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY: NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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## Part I

### INTRODUCTION

A. The effective organization is characterized by (a) an organizational structure or social network and (b) a manner of functioning designed to insure that in all interactions the members will, in terms of their socio-psychological groundings, values, expectations, and hopes, perceive and experience the integrations achieved as supportive of and contributive to becoming the type of person they each want to become.

B. Sociometry is the study of selective affiliation.

C. Life can be viewed as an "uninterrupted sequence of choice".

D. After a period of time, this choice-making activity forms a pattern (on both an individual and on a group basis).

E. This pattern sustains us.

F. Once the group member has developed a pattern, he/she will tend to do everything possible to sustain that pattern (network).

G. Networks and the basic choice patterns can both be changed.

H. A social network change technology exists.

I. It behooves the manager to continuously assess this choice pattern and the social network created by the unfoldment of the pattern.

A rather commonplace observation is that when a group of people come together for even a short time, they organize themselves in some way. This organization is one of the most important strategies used by humans in fulfilling their needs and achieving their goals. This organization occurs because the group members are motivated by a desire for appreciation, a need for recognition, a knowledge of accomplishment, and a feeling that the people in their social atom respect and believe in them. The social atom consists of the individual and the configuration of people to whom a person is emotionally tied. The constellation of this social atom functions as a unit. This means that the worker's primary network may occasionally change in membership but that the external structure will tend to remain consistent over a period of time. For those who cherish the primacy of the group concept the social atom, not the individual, is considered the smallest social unit. (Yablonsky, 1976).

The effective modern organization is characterized by:

1. An organizational structure or a social network
  - A. Because of its direct influence and because of the by-products of patterning, this structure is very important
    - (1) It sets limits on performance
    - (2) Different networks cause workers to behave in different ways
    - (3) In terms of corporate health and the achievement of goals and objectives as well as in terms of the emotional well being of the workers, there are what, from a structural view, can be called "bad" and "good" networks.
  - B. Networks can be changed
  - C. We have the technology to bring about these changes. This technology and the construct that goes with it are particularly valuable for those making OD interventions (See Wessman, 1973).
2. A manner of functioning designed to insure that in all interactions each of the members will, in terms of their socio-psychological groundings, values, expectations and hopes, perceive and experience the interactions as supportive of and contributive to their becoming the type of person he/she wants to be. As Haskell (1975) asserts:

The choices of . . . spouse, of a business or professional associate, or of close friends may greatly influence the life experience of the individual, his view of the world, and ultimately his self-image. The healthy person, the winner, chooses others who facilitate his expression and stimulate his spontaneity (p. 59).

To facilitate this process of becoming, each person invents, constructs and maintains a social support system that supposedly will fulfill his/her growth needs. The word "supposedly" is used because the degree to which this human network does, in fact, give the person the support and stimulation required, is determined by the level of social skill of the individual. Workers can recruit members for their support system network who are inadequate as support persons or they can develop (or participate in the development) of patterns of interpersonal interaction that are not maximally supportive. The making and maintaining of such a network is a social skill for any worker to have, but for the person in a managerial situation that requires relative isolation from one's peers, this ability to develop sources of support may become the most important factor in one's day-to-day job functioning and in one's career development. The efficacy of one's choices are important determinants of one's

success or failure, happiness or misery (Haskell, 1975, p. 59). For the future manager or for the person managing the "new generation" possession of this skill is absolutely essential. (Stroh, 1971).

*SOCIOMETRY IS THE STUDY OF SELECTIVE AFFILIATION.* It is concerned with the interpersonal and intergroup relations that are the core subject of the scientific study of all patterns of social behavior (Moreno, 1978). The problem of choice is to be found at the very core of all social science theory. The degree to which a theoretical system attempts to deal with this phenomenon is perhaps one of the most important indicators of the depth and relevance of that system and of the models that are based on its precepts. One of the ways of distinguishing between different theoretical systems is by observing which piece of the choice problem they adopt for their area of emphasis. Sociometry was introduced as a method of study, a therapeutic technique, and as a philosophical position in 1934 with the publication of *Who Shall Survive?* by J. L. Moreno. In that volume, studies dating back into the twenties were reviewed. This means that the sociometrist/manager has access to an accumulation of almost six decades of research using a methodology which makes the study of the choice process, social interaction, group structure and the institutional structure of the organization quantitative, measurable, communicable, verifiable, and generalizable.

Sociometry is the study of the patterns, motives and sociopsychological significance of the choices we make when we select companions for various activities. Primarily sociometry is an assessment technique that asks workers who they would like to associate with in terms of various activities and uses the data obtained to restructure the group for the mutual benefit of those affected by the output of the group and by those who are members of the group. If we borrow a more modern and more informal terminology, we can define sociometry as the scientific measurement of "vibes".

*At the level of discussion of personal existence, life can be viewed as an "uninterrupted sequence of choice".* Chief among these choices are our selection of associates for various activities. The freedom to exercise this choice has been described as one of the most fundamental human values. The suppression of this freedom may result in a variety of destructive behaviors for both the individual and for the organization. Acceptance and the opportunity to express one's choices with some anticipation of having these choices accepted (not necessarily returned although this is the goal of the chooser) are, more than any other variable, what releases growth forces in the worker. We must continuously choose because:

- A. We lose contact with certain others and must "replace" them. This can include geographical changes, promotions, etc.

- B. There is a change in our work-social milieu and we need a different set of contacts to provide for our socio-emotional needs.
- C. We grow and in the process "leave behind" some of our friends and associates.
- D. Changes in responsibilities, roles, and duties may necessitate enlarging our circle of associates (workmates, teammates, friends, and colleagues).
- E. Others begin to respond to us differently—they may start choosing, ignoring, or rejecting us and we are "called on" to express our choices.
- F. We are in jobs that require such choice making on a more formal basis.
- G. People change. If one is separated from an associate for a period of time he/she should not expect the other to remain the same. In fact each time we have a new encounter with an associate we are to a slight degree meeting a "new" person.
- H. We may deliberately decide to launch a "self-betterment" program that involves either (a) changing our circle of associates and/or (b) making and concretizing new contacts.

*After a period of time this choice-making activity forms a pattern. The individual and those about him may or may not be fully aware of this pattern. Nevertheless, it does exist and provides meaning and lasting value to the life of the worker. It is the primary motivating force. Usually these choices move us in a consistent direction toward a specific goal—but not always. Our choosing patterns can be self destructive for the chooser and counter productive for the organization. There are three ways in which this can occur:*

- A. All of our choices are not necessarily "wise". We can choose the wrong person at the wrong time for an anticipated specific activity. We may choose only those who, for one reason or another, have no desire to interact with us.
- B. We are not always able to accept choice. The degree to which we can extend ourself to "take in" others and the degree to which we can tolerate the risk involved varies from person to person.
- C. We do not always have the freedom to choose. The openness of the social system of the organization is the factor that in the main sets the morale and motivation of the group. When the worker is able to exercise choice and has the capability to "choose well" he/she will feel like he/she is a part of the ongoing human experience as it is recapitulated in the work place. The basic motivational appeal of all the ages has been to paint a picture of one's vision of the future. This is true for the salesman, the politician, or the lover. In other

words, anticipation of the future is a motivational force to the extent that the member feels he will experience it with desirable companions and projects himself into the situation envisioned.

This pattern sustains us—we become dependent on it and we view the world in terms of the definitions and perceptions taught us by these in our social atom (e.g. that nucleus of significant others in our environment).

Once the individual has developed a pattern that fits his personality and fulfills his needs, and helps him interact with others as they are involved in their own choice pattern-making process he will do everything possible to sustain that pattern:

- A. because the act of making choices and receiving choices and of having one's choices accepted is positively exhilarating. It is the source of one of life's great pleasures and is a most potent motivating force (Cartwright and Zander, 1968, and Julian, 1966), and
- B. the mature self-actualized manager obtains a great deal of his job and professional satisfaction—they fulfill the desire for meaning, accomplishment, and creativity in their work life—through the execution of the organizing function of their role (see Maslow, 1965, pp. 1, 3). They do this when they create a new group that "is their own" that can be viewed as a model or as they work with a collection of individuals of varying abilities, interests, and values and mold them into a group.

*Networks can be changed.* Managers realize the practical importance of understanding the effects of interpersonal behavior and of the social structure of the management team and of the work group when they attempt to introduce changes and new procedures into the system and encounter resistance or when problems of productivity arise. Unfortunately, the technical planning of work often takes into consideration the best methods to maximize efficiency, minimize cost, keep the union and the EEOC happy and ignores the significance of worker interaction. Altorfer (1977) has studied the development of emotional job fitness in an industrial setting. He observes that there is a need for industrial training to provide assistance and support that goes beyond the distribution of knowledge and skills. Tache' (1978) has made the same point in a discussion of the relationship of stress and human values as these operate in the business world. Knowing more about the social network structure of a work place helps the supervisor make critical judgments that underlie all job performance ratings (Kavanagh, 1972) and places the manager in a much better position to work with the work groups. (Also see discussion by Rothaus, 1965; Meyer, 1965; Thompson, 1970; and Burke, 1972). This is not a suggestion that it is his function or primary function to suppress or

manipulate the group but rather that he may use this information in an effort to integrate the formal and the informal organizations for the benefit of all (Makin, 1962; Haugen, 1964).

*A social network change technology exists.* (Hart, 1969; 1976). This has been the general theme of this manuscript. More specifically the work of Woodard (1971) should be cited. In a study of the sociometric group restructuralization process Woodard found that group interaction with sociometrically chosen leaders can bring about a change in sociometric status and increase the following perceived group characteristics:

- A. Group informality (flexibility)
- B. Mutual acquaintanceship, openness to discussion of matters of concern to the group, and ability to anticipate reaction patterns of group members (intimacy)
- C. Expansiveness of the group in terms of soliciting new members as appropriate (permeability)
- D. Stability of the group
- E. Ability of the group to function as a single unit (viscosity).

It behooves the manager to continuously assess this choice pattern and the social network that comes into existence as a product of each member's choices made in conjunction with those of others.

The importance of the manager's ability to effectively utilize these informal group networks is noted by Mayo (1951) who stated that any external attempts to interfere with this social impulse to form groups would lead in some way to management's defeat.

The manager can determine if his assessment of the network in which he operates is up to date by asking himself the following questions:

- Have you studied your choice patterns?
- Who do you choose and why?
- Are those your best possible choices in terms of your personal and work-related human relations goals?
- Are your choices supportive of your career objectives?
- When we choose we choose someone that we perceive will help us become who we (1) think we ought to be (if we are unaware) or (2) want to be (if we are aware and perceptive and socially skillful). What are you becoming? What can you expect to become if you continue your present pattern of social choices?
- Have you studied your total environment in which you work and live?

Consider the questions above in reference to the significant individuals in your life's arena (work, place, home, leisure and civic organizations, and professional groups)—the choice patterns of your subordinates, your peers, your superiors,

your vendors, your colleagues, your clients/customers, your family.

- What interaction patterns—choice patterns—exist in the various groupings that are important in your life?
- Are you aware of the informal groupings in your work place?

Managers and personnel staff members are becoming more aware of the importance of the informal groups which evolve and operate within the larger structure of the formal organization (Soliman, 1972). The basic foundation of sociometry is the axiom that the official (external) organization is different from the sociometric (internal) organization (Moreno, 1953). Sociometrists study the structure and formation of informal groups in the work place and make interpretations and recommendations based on the configurations identified. In this process they are able to ascertain how the informal groupings resemble and differ from the formal organizational structure and how these two configurations can be coordinated (Sensenbrenner, 1955). If the manager fails to make this assessment, he/she cannot have all of the social data that he will need to possess in order to play technical, professional, and managerial roles properly. Each of us lives out our lives as actors—actors in an arena that is peopled by many other interdependent and independent actors each doing their own thing and each participating in the “casting” process through their positive and negative interpersonal choices. Furthermore, the professional futurists tell us that the social maze brightness to operate spontaneously and effectively in even more dizzying arenas consisting of interlocking and overlapping and ever changing interpersonal patterns of a multitude of coinhabitants of our social life space will be the prime prerequisite of the leader and manager of tomorrow’s business and industrial organization. (Madden, 1971; Barrett, 1971).

## Part II

### EARLY STUDIES OF THE USE OF SOCIOMETRY IN BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

Jacobs (1945) is credited with making one of the first applications of sociometry in industry. He found that sociometric methods had value in a business setting in several ways. They were described as being useful in:

1. measuring morale
2. selecting supervisors, foremen and managers
3. determining informal groups
4. locating social factors influencing production

5. determining how well workers are (socially) adjusting to the work place and to their specific assignments
6. measuring cooperation
7. measuring factors of value in determining merit ratings and bonuses.

Other early studies follow. Browne (1951) used a sociometry-like questionnaire\* and other independent measures to study the relationships existing among a group of 24 executives. The data were used to graphically depict (1) the formal organization of the company and (2) interaction patterns. Further analysis of the data on a divisional basis revealed marked differences in the relations existing between the executives in these units. How frequently an executive interacted with others seemed to be correlated with (1) responsibility, (2) authority, (3) delegation of authority.

The author suggested several possible uses of sociometry in industry:

1. in the study of interpersonal relations
2. in the study of communication channels
3. in the study of "methods of performing leadership functions"
4. to identify/suggest needed modifications in personnel relations.

Criswell (1960) examined the use of sociometric choice data in the performance of two functions of personnel administration:

1. placing workers in appropriate jobs
2. placing workers in congenial work groups.

She suggested that the sociometric status an individual achieves in various situations should be viewed by the personnel department as an indication of that persons' social skills and insights needed in (1) administration, (2) liaison, (3) public relations work.\*\*

In a series of three studies of military units plus a sociometric study, Fielder and various associates (1963, 1955, 1958, 1961, 1960) studied the conditions under which efficient utilization of both leader's and members' talents are most likely to occur. They found that:

1. While groups at times may be less efficient than single members

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\* The basic premise of the sociometric investigation is that by asking subjects who they would prefer to work with in the future, the investigator is allowing them to participate in a most meaningful way. In expressing their preferences they are participating in the design of the social structure of their future. Obviously, this involvement increases their motivation. We refer to Browne's technique as a sociometry-like test because subjects were asked to indicate the persons they actually DID associate with not who they would LIKE to associate with in the process of carrying out their jobs.

\*\* Criswell's suggestion has been proven to have been a harbinger of the use of group emotional experiences (sociometric, T-Group, and sensitivity training, psycho-dramatic techniques, encounter, TA, and other action approaches) as a major ingredient in in-service training and in the on-going personal and professional development of managers.

working alone "teamwork is essential when the task precludes individuals from independent action."

2. The leader's ability to influence a group and contribute to its productivity and effectiveness depends to a large extent on the cohesiveness of the group.
3. In the uncohesive group, the leader must work harder and spend more time on group maintenance; therefore, little time is left for more direct task-related activity.

Sociometric data can provide important information concerning the determinants and possible approaches to the control of industrial accidents. This is evidenced in two studies—one of school children by Fuller and Baune (1952) and one of steel mill workers by Speroff and Kerr (1952). Both research teams found accident proneness to be negatively related to sociometric status. In the industrial study it was recommended that the frequency of industrial accidents could be reduced through a program designed for the sociometrically unchosen. Such a program would consist of two elements, sociometric reassignment and active counselling.

Herringa (1951) studied group formation in industry and recommended the following "blueprint" for a sociological study of an industry:

1. a general orientation through the personnel and social services departments
2. a written questionnaire for individual workers for the detection of frictions among them
3. systematic sociometric interviews yielding the pattern of sympathies and antipathies in a department
4. report not only to the management, but also to the personnel.

Rogers (1946) studied human problems in industry and was convinced that the most significant contributions to the understanding of the psychological problems of the worker has been made by: (1) J. L. Moreno in the form of sociometric measures, and (2) The Harvard Business School group (Roethlisberger, Dickson, et. al.).

Skibbell (1952) reports the results of two investigations completed in a successful effort to demonstrate the application of sociometric analysis. One of the contributions of this study was the first use of the hierarchy and locometric sociograms. It was concluded that the structure of the human relations in an organization are shaped primarily by the likes and dislikes of persons for other persons. Levels of sociometric status were described as:

1. Supporters (stars): Their influence was felt in all departments and on all floors of the organization they . . . served as subrosa channels of communication, both upward and downward, in the authority

hierarchy of the organization. It can be inferred that management, by constructive interviewing, can use supporters as a focus point of control; as terminals for sounding out established store policies, as informers concerning innovations (p. 116).

2. Outcasts (rejects): It was ascertained that they were predominant in producing conflict with the organization (p. 116).
3. Isolates: . . . need aid in integrating themselves into the organizations. Job satisfaction *not work satisfaction* aids the cause of efficient operation. An isolated individual cannot achieve the same degree of job satisfaction as an individual who is well integrated into the group. Should management institute a program to aid isolates in their integration, a follow-up sociometric study can be used to check the effectiveness of the program (p. 116).
4. Fringers: Fringers were referred to by the personnel department as the "questionables".

Strauss (1952) conducted a study of a local union to determine the effectiveness of direct observation as a source of quasi-sociometric data. He found that such a process could be used to: (1) Measure the consistency in contact and interaction between members and leaders over a series of meetings and (2) Identify cliques, isolates, and other social phenomena.

Van Zelst (1952) described the following as being applications of sociometry that may be usable in the industrial situation:

1. Supervisory selection
2. Buddy work teams
3. Individual therapy
4. Combating race and group prejudices
5. Studies of informal organizations
6. Studies of accident proneness

For success in using this technique it is essential that:

1. Management have a democratic approach to its workers
2. Management recognize the importance of group relations and
3. Management manifest an interest in worker preferences.

Further, it was noted that the sociometric approach must allow social situations to define themselves and allow the participants in the situation to define the nature of their own needs and problems.

The work of Weshler and Associates (1960, 1952) should be noted. They were able to develop multi-relational indices as composite ratios utilizing data on various types of relationships applicable to both individuals and groups: normative, perceived, action, positive, negative.

When workers attempt to conform to the external and internal system of a group when these are in normative opposition, personal conflict is the

result. In a study of life insurance personnel by Wispe (1955) a set of six sociometric questions were used to provide data hopefully usable in the further examination of this phenomenon as it applies to that industry. Salesmen were asked to choose:

1. "an assistant for the day on the debit",
2. a person to present a new sales plan,
3. a house guest for a social evening,
4. persons to whom they would turn for insurance information,
5. the most aggressive man in the district, and
6. the man with the most technical insurance information.

Other studies of interest are included in the reference section of this article.

### **Part III**

## **VALUES OF THE SOCIOMETRIC TECHNIQUES FOR USE IN BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY**

### **What Does a Sociometric Technique Measure? (Major Variables)**

Lindzey (1954) in a classic review of sociometric literature examined "empirical concepts definable in sociometric operations" i.e. ". . . the major variables of psychological interest that sociometry measures have been used to assess or appraise." The variables listed are: Leadership, Minority group prejudice, Social adjustment, Social sensitivity, Social status, Morale, Group structure.

### **What Does the Sociometric Technique Measure? (Other Variables)**

The sociometric technique can be used to measure the following:

1. Role integration
2. Need competence
3. Personal and interpersonal effectiveness
4. Employee task orientation
5. Identification of community/political power structures
6. Leadership ability
7. Importance of various value configurations as status determinants in a given setting
8. Dependence behavior
9. Need autonomy

10. Expression of aggressiveness and assertiveness
11. Degree of group internalization of official norms
12. Functions of slang in shaping group reaction patterns
13. Alienation
14. Race, sex, age or other cleavages
15. Rejection patterns based on race, sex, age or other factors
16. Conformity
17. Intimacy level of the group
18. Balance between peer orientation and self orientation
19. Incidences of scapegoating (second hand rejection)
20. Altruism
21. Overt achievement behavior
22. Determining level of cooperativeness in a group
23. Identification of accident prone workers
24. Effects of rejection
25. Fear of success and fear of failure
26. Selection of the unprejudiced
27. Causes of depression
28. Ego functioning
29. Personal effectiveness
30. Group flexibility
31. Group integration
32. Basis of orientations and self concepts
33. Dissemination patterns of rumors
34. Relationship of shame and self esteem
35. Stages of group/team development
36. Behavior of marginal groups
37. Social responsibility
38. Personal success patterns
39. Social effectiveness
40. Trust
41. Spontaneity and barriers to spontaneity
42. Identification of creative potential
43. Identification of ulterior motives
44. Influence of spatial distribution of workers on various behaviors
45. Tentative identification of alcoholics
46. Tentative identification of violent and suicidal individuals
47. The function of pain in the inner life of the chronic pain patient
48. Public attitudes and opinions (at an incredibly high level of acceptability)
49. Identification of "real neighborhoods" in the community
50. Decision making styles of a group.

**What Does A Sociometric Test Measure? (Special Aids for Management)**

Sensenbrenner (1955) made an analysis of the feasibility of applying sociometry to industry and concluded sociometry could aid management in accomplishing a variety of tasks. Quoting her (Ibid., pp. 104–5) these are:

1. Effecting a better integration of the informal groups' objectives with those of the formal organization.
2. Introducing change to the work group in such a manner that old relationships are not destroyed.
3. Placing emphasis on those motivational drives which are truly significant to workers reacting as members of a group.
4. Selecting foremen that have displayed leadership qualities on the informal level by being chosen as informal leaders.
5. Helping new supervisors adjust to their jobs in a minimum of time by allowing them to study the informal interpersonal relationships of their new department even before they take active charge.
6. Providing a means whereby minority groups may be peacefully and orderly assimilated into work groups.
7. Increasing the cooperation that gets the job done when the formal organization fails or is faulty.
8. Increasing the teamwork that raises productivity.
9. Allowing individuals to better understand their own working relationships.
10. Accomplishing a more complete tying together of the informal groups to the formal organization.
11. Building more compatible work groups and teams, by fitting the worker to a group just as he is fitted to a job.
12. Permitting a closer analysis of the social situation of the working environment to determine whether the worker is well adjusted to his job.
13. Understanding and using the underground communication system to better put across its messages to the workers.
14. Determining better the state of morale of the groups in the organization.
15. Making possible the partial measurement and control of an individual's morale.
16. Controlling the interactions between individuals and groups in order that social and working harmony is encouraged.
17. Performing the job of managing better by permitting management to have a better fix on how things really are at the informal operative level.

**Reliability and Validity of Sociometric Data\****Reliability*

Although many sociometrists (Jennings, 1959; Northway, 1952; Lindzey and Borgatta, 1954, 1968; Gronlund, 1959; Bonney, 1960; Bonney and Hampleman, 1962; and Pepinsky, 1949) have questioned whether typical methods used in "determining the reliability" of sociometric techniques apply, certain methods have been employed and have generally indicated reliability until better procedures have been developed to overcome the limitations of utilizing methods developed by psychometric—not sociometric measurement. These have been outlined by Davis (1965), who in the process of completing a more comprehensive study, made a survey of studies to determine the reliability of sociometric instruments. She surveyed four methods for testing the reliability of sociometric devices. They were: (1) Interpretive "reliability", (2) Internal consistency (split half), (3) Equivalent or alternate forms reliability, (4) Test—Retest reliability.

The following points seem to summarize what we know about the reliability of sociometric techniques and sociometric data.

1. The sociometric pattern of a group will stay about the same even though the number of choices specific individuals may give or receive may vary greatly.
2. Reliability is greater with adults than with children.
3. When first, second, and third choices are used, the first choices are more stable than the second choices, the second more stable than the third.
4. The longer the group has been in existence, the more stable the choice pattern.

**Validity**

In the study mentioned above, Davis, (1965) also surveyed studies to determine the validity of sociometric instruments and discovered that

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\* It is felt that to give a complete analysis of the factors involved in the reliability and validity of sociometric data was beyond the scope of this article. Therefore, this section is limited to a very brief comment with regard to this subject. Hopefully the reader with a more specific interest in this area will find the references mentioned valuable as a starting point for any investigation he/she may wish to undertake. The authors also recommend the works of Schaeffer, 1959; Jennings, 1948; McDermott, 1964; Gronlund, 1955, 1958; Gronlund and Holmlund, 1958; Moreno, 1956; Criswell, 1939; Forland and Wrightstone, 1951; Naja, 1959, and Werdelin, 1969.

three different approaches have been made to validate sociometric instruments. They are:

1. To declare the test valid by definition (face validity) if the subjects appear to have been well motivated
2. Compare the sociometric results with the results obtained from measures of related personal and social factors
3. Compare sociometric results with measures of successful group performance.

It was reported that when the last two methods were used there appeared to be "relationships between sociometric status and psychological and sociological factors which might be logically related such as personal and social adjustment, social acceptance and successful performance in groups . . ." and that ". . . relationships between the sociometric status result and the result from personal-social adjustment or social acceptance test . . . usually are indicated by low and positive correlations . . ." and that ". . . when extreme sociometric status groups . . . are compared, the high sociometric status groups generally are rated significantly higher scores than the low group on measures of personality traits which are interpreted as indicating more effective social and personal functioning. (Ibid., pp. 41-42).

#### Part IV

### THE PROMISE OF ACTION SOCIOMETRY AS AN AID TO MANAGEMENT

Action sociometry is a new development,\* and may be defined as an actional and experiential method that has as its objective the use of "derived sociometry" (active intervention techniques suggested by sociometric theory and research, but not actually utilizing the original sociometric measuring techniques) as well as more traditional sociometric methods used in a more dynamic-actional way to help group members (1) develop skills in making and maintaining interpersonal relationships, and (2) become more capable of directing their own lives through better understanding of (an application of) the concepts of choice. Action sociometry focuses on helping the group member personally utilize the principles derived from sociometric research. In the words of Haskell (1975):

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\* This technique was formally introduced by one of the authors while he was serving as organizer and leader of the sociometry symposium of the 6th International Congress of Group Psychotherapy, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July, 1977.

sociometry can provide an instrument which each individual can employ to gain better understanding of his position in the groups in which he functions, his relationship to other people in them, how they relate to each other, and ultimately, whether to stay in them, take the steps necessary to improve his position in them, or abandon them for others in which his needs can be better satisfied (p. 58).

Characteristics of action sociometry are:

1. It is an actional process.
2. The basic sociological/psychological conditions of aloneness and physical isolation are regarded as entry devices into the psyche of the individual and thereby a starting point in making an intervention into the appropriate larger system.
3. Emphasis is placed on anticipation and motivation as the primary forces in change, educational, and therapeutic processes. Anticipating the future in which one is chosen and has one's choices accepted is always motivational to the extent that a person projects oneself into the situation envisioned.
4. Multi-faceted and multi-level choosing are taken into account. An exciting new technique and research tool called hypnosociometry (conducting sociometric investigations of a group while members are in a state of relaxation) is being developed to improve our abilities to work with these phenomena.
5. Is interested in the study of group-to-group choosing.
6. Regards sequential growth as "power" building.
7. Holds as a basic postulate that choosing itself is therapeutic, learning facilitative, and change inductive.

The future development of action sociometry will widen the range of application of sociometric processes in business and other settings. The purpose of this section is to call attention to several provocative possibilities. The reader is asked to withhold judgment and let his imagination soar as he/she examines these suggestions. An invitation is extended to the reader to pursue the leads offered here in the conduction of his/her own affairs and is encouraged to add to what we have done. He/she is urged to use the concepts gained for individual benefit in those ways that will accelerate both personal and professional success. These possibilities are:

1. Tarrab (1977) is involved in a series of projects designed to study *functional leadership*. Inspired by the basic (cultural) systems approach of Levi-Strauss, he has designed a research approach that combines sociometry, Bales process analysis, and systems analysis to study this phenomenon. The central hypothesis of this research is:

a group in process of establishment represents a system that is an assemblage of relations which are maintained, which evolve and become transformed in a cyclic manner but always according to a general pattern . . . and this independently of things after Durkheim . . . which they tie together (p. 1).

2. Action sociometry should be explored as a tool in contingency management. Sociometry deals with the choices of actors *in situ*. It is a measurement and recording of each group/team member's desired "*future of interaction*" in a specific situation.\* By obtaining a composite time projection the futuristic manager/researcher will be able to identify what contingencies we face in terms of human phenomenon and develop plans for the management of available resources to meet these eventualities.
3. Action sociometry can be a valuable tool in the study of interorganizational linkages for the purpose of identifying the best social pathways for the diffusion of innovations i.e., the use of social networks for diffusion of innovation. (Hart, 1979; Paul, 1976).
4. The use of action sociometry in spotting potential business leaders early (Byham, 1970; Bonney, 1969).
5. The study of sociometric perception and feedback. For example, the study of rejection and sociometric cleavage in the workplace would be an important subtopic to be investigated. For illustrative purposes an outline of the content of this subtopic follows:
  - I. Results of fear of rejection
    - A. Impair functioning at work
    - B. Interfere with interpersonal relationships
    - C. Stifle creative expression
    - D. Make one less capable of playing
    - E. Has negative influence on intellectual pursuits
  - II. Fear of rejection is an emotional phenomenon
  - III. You create yourself being rejected.
 

Rejection and the preconceived fear of being turned away is what you do to yourself, not what someone else or the world is capable of doing to you.
  - IV. Importance of understanding the significance of the choice process as a beginning in the process of learning to deal with one's fear and experience of rejection.

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\* As used in this context a situation as a conceptualization is the product of one's conclusions regarding (1) the effect of moving events, (2) one's acceptance of non-acceptance by significant actors involved in the event, and (3) one's continuity of existence (as an active or as an inactive participant), (4) psychological integrity, and (5) ability to maintain one's self in a future.

6. Action sociometric theory and research as the basis of a new theory of normal personal, leadership, and managerial behavior. Maslow's self actualization theory is stimulating and provocative. Unfortunately it does not readily lend itself to empirical validation. An alternative that would produce a testable theory of normal behavior could be derived from selected works of two individuals, Merl E. Bonney, (1969) and Rudolf Dreikurs, (1971).
7. Action sociometry is a valuable tool for the organizational development (OD) trainer/practitioner. The OD approach aims at organizational climate and a system of beliefs, values and attitudes which determines the way people relate to each other and to authority figures. The emphasis is on openness, authenticity, and confrontation. There is a bias toward the interpersonal and the interactional (Bolembiewski, 1974). However, it is possible for the OD practitioner to follow the easy road, select only one level at which to intervene and rely on comfortable interpersonal-interactional influence strategies appropriate for only one level and more comfortable for the practitioner. When this happens, (A) The OD practitioner may fail to extend the applications of their interventions to intergroup and structural issues, (B) The OD practitioner may have difficulty in dealing with the multiple memberships of the target population, and (C) select an inappropriate level of focus and attempt to apply micro-level interventions to macro-level problems.

As business consulting and the use of human behavioral science technologies have advanced from decade to decade, there has been an increased concern for dealing with more complex problems at higher and higher levels of management. The future step in this process is proposed to be an intervention process combining the technology of action sociometry and OD. Sociometric and action sociometric measures possess a number of qualities that make them of special interest to the OD practitioner. Among these are:

- A. Interdisciplinary popularity
- B. The development of these measures is not associated with any one discipline
- C. Their capacity to represent individuals in interaction within a miniature social system, makes it possible to study the "individual and the environment simultaneously"
- D. Are inexpensive and extremely cost effective
- E. Can be costed as a part of an operating budget—not necessarily as a part of a "funded" project
- F. Are good for use in exploratory and feasibility studies
- G. Ease and speed of administration of all these techniques.

8. The principles and techniques of sociometry and action sociometry can be of value for personal use of the manager, professional, and supervisor.
9. Sociometric and action sociometric techniques designed to measure group styles might be used as either a supplement or alternative to the "managerial" grid. Components of this proposed process would be:
  - A. A new approach to measuring "focusing power" and *effective cohesion* of the group or team
  - B. Identification of the configuration of decision-making styles in a group
  - C. Identification of the configuration of the internal creativity styles in a group
  - D. Identification of the configuration of learning styles in a group
  - E. Examine the interrelationship of focusing power, effective cohesion and these three styles configurations to explicate a *group style profile*.

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