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Sociometric Elements Related to the "Healing Circle" as Presented by John Mosher

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ABSTRACT. The Mosher Healing Circle can be used as a model by sociometrists. The author applied her own frame of reference to the model and identified stages that correspond to opposites in sociometric position. The models derived from variations of the quartered circle proved useful in helping members of a group accept the currents of acceptance and rejection within their own groups.

AT THE 1987 MEETING of the Psychodrama Conference in Santa Monica, John Mosher made a day-long presentation entitled "The Healing Circle: Myth, Ritual, and Therapy." This was the premier presentation of some 20 years building and involved trays of slides, a text in draft form, and many fascinating and convincing parallels between a therapeutic process and natural cycles. The Healing Circle is the quartered circle mandala that Mosher presented in terms of the following components: (1) duality; (2) developmental stages; (3) the seasons; (4) the elements; and (5) intrarelationship in the circle. Mosher (1987) proposed that "this synthesizing meta-model can help strategize a course of therapy or determine an immediate tactical intervention."

The clarity of the presentation made it possible for those of us who attended to begin immediately to apply our own frame of reference to the model. The author applied sociometric principles to the quartered circle, identifying stages with each season that correspond to opposites in sociometric position. Figure 1 illustrates the sociometric cycle.

Hale (1985) proposes that there are six possible results of reciprocal choice making in a group. Three are mutual, and three are incongruous:

positive choice met with a positive choice: + +
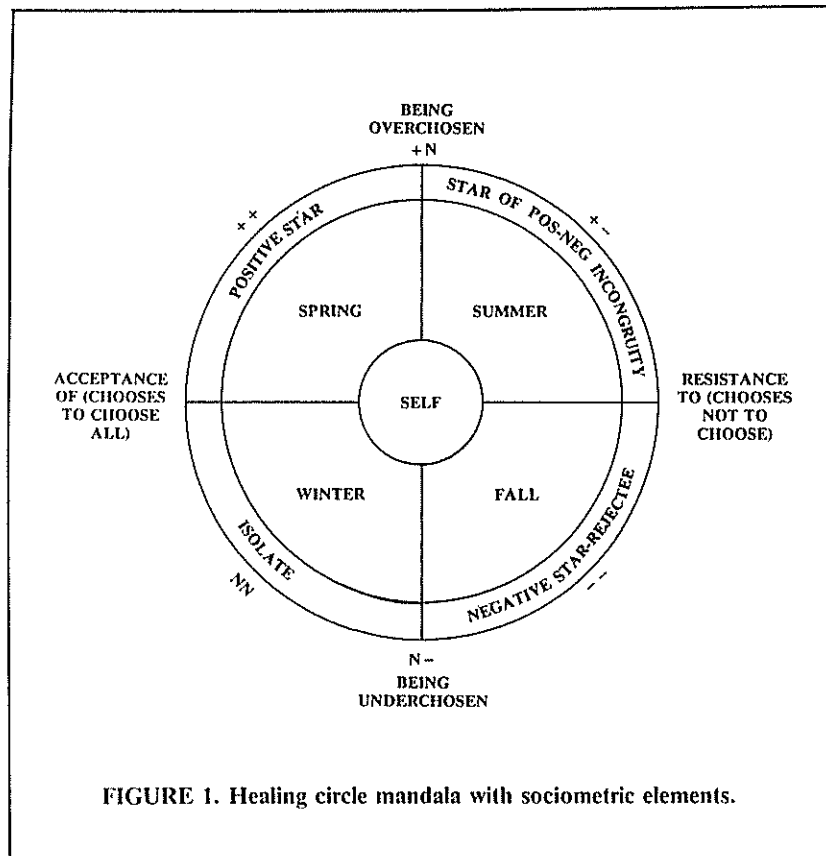positive choice met with a negative choice: + −

FIGURE 1. Healing circle mandala with sociometric elements.

positive choice met with a neutral response: + n
negative choice met with a neutral response: − n
negative choice met with a negative choice: − −
neutral choice met with a neutral choice: n n

To the six have been added the choice-making position of (1) choosing all and (2) choosing not to choose, which, while similar stances, have an opposite effect on a group.

In the circle, acceptance of has been written at the west position, and at the east position, resistance to, which may be read as follows:

1. Acceptance of being overchosen results in reciprocating positive choices and is experienced as being a star of positive mutuality: + +. Placement within the healing circle mandala corresponds with the season of spring.

2. Acceptance of being underchosen is experienced as isolation: n n. This corresponds with the winter season.

3. Resistance to being overchosen results in being neutral toward, or rejecting positive choices, and is experienced as high intensity incongruity: + − . This corresponds with the summer season.

4. Resistance to being underchosen is experienced as rejection. − − . This corresponds with the fall season.

In terms of duality, the author considers the following to be the strongest opposites:

Star of mutuality (+ +)	Rejectee (− −)
Overchosen (+ n)	Underchosen (− n)
Isolate (nn)	Star of Incongruity (+ −)
Chooses to choose all	Chooses not to choose

The isolate and star of incongruity are opposites, being matched for highest intensity and lowest intensity.

Application

According to Mosher, each position within the quartered circle represents a developmental stage in the individual or in the group. The task of therapy is often one of assisting in the full experience of *what is* happening in life and the preparation for the future. The sociometric-cycle frame of reference provides an explanation to group leaders and group members about ways an individual's sociometric position is connected to his or her or the group's developmental stage.

This example of the cycle of a group star illustrates the healing circle mandala. A group star may find the role of being overchosen confining and may feel stuck there by the expectations of others. According to the circle, the star's task is to resist being overchosen and begin to reject, resulting in strong positive and negative relating. This results in mutual rejection because withholding something that is valued is a major contributor to negative choice making. There follows acceptance of rejection and the cooling off period that we allow ourselves and others who have disappointed us: the isolate in a healing of wounds period. Once a person has experienced successfully getting out of an untenable star position, it makes it possible for him or her to begin to leave the isolation and move toward developing skills and connections to others that may once again result in being a positive star. Thus, the cycle begins again.

Maggie Lawrence (1987) identified a sociometric cycle based on the issue of inclusion as illustrated in Figure 2. Each position has advantages and disadvantages to the person and has potential for enhancing growth.
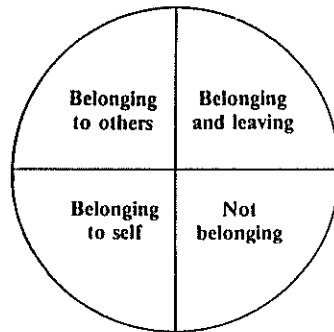
FIGURE 2. Lawrence's inclusion cycle.

Purpose of the Meta-models

These meta-models are extremely useful in helping members of a group accept the currents of acceptance and resistance within their own processes and evaluate the results of sociometric testing in ways that *liberate them from judgments about the higher or lower desirability of one sociometric position over another*. The dreaded position of rejectee or isolate may be viewed as therapeutic, or natural, and as providing group members with experiences that facilitate them developmentally.

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New Developments in Sociometry

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SOCIOMETRY AS A QUANTIFYING and a qualitative social science has benefitted in recent years from both the development of theory and the application of computer technology. This section provides information to the reader about the following: computer programs for sociometric data, particularly the MacIntosh program; the work of Hector Sabelli that features a process theory and emphasizes the union of opposites; and John Mosher's work in myth, ritual, and therapy, which has prompted the design of the "sociometric cycle." The following short reports elaborate on these new developments.

Computer Programs for Sociometric Data

When Jimmie Naugher (1975) completed his dissertation, *A System for the Collection and Computer Analysis of Sociometric Data for Research and Classroom Purposes*, at North Texas State University, the computer program was written for a main frame computer. In 1986, Tom Treadwell headed a project to write the program for an IBM PC. This computer program was introduced to attendees at the 1987 annual meeting of the American Society for Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama in New York. The program allows for entering sociometric data, quantifying and analyzing the results, and assembling the data in a form that assists in the drawing of sociograms. Further descriptions and information are available from Treadwell at the Department of Psychology, Westchester State College, Westchester, PA 19383.

There is now a computer program for sociometric test data that runs on the MacIntosh 512 computer. Frank Snyder, coordinator of the School of Social Work Computer Lab at Ohio State University, along with Mowgli Assor and Barry Stellrecht, has written a computer program in MAC BASIC for the MacIntosh 512 computer. The program can also run on the Mac Plus, the Mac SE, and the MacIntosh II. Frank Snyder refers to the program as "user friendly" and one that produces data in forms familiar to the sociometrist.

The program handles data from the sociometric test and can produce a 20 × 20 sociomatrix—a sociomatrix for a group of 20 participants. Figure 1 presents a sample of the MAC BASIC sociomatrix. The sociomatrix

FIGURE 1. Sample sociomatrix from EZ MATRIX program.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	+	−	N
1 :Female 1		+1 +	+2 +	N +	N ^{n}	N +	N +	+3 +	3	0	4
2 :Female 2	+2 +	.	+3 +	+1 +	+4 ^{n}	−1 −	N +	−2 −	4	2	1
3 :Female 3	+6 ^{n}	+1 +		+3 +	+5 +	−1 −	+2 +	+4 +	6	1	0
4 :Female 4	N ^{n}	+4 +	+4 +		+3 +	+2 +	+1 +	−4 +	5	1	1
5 :Male 4	+4 ^{n}	+1 ^{n}	+3 ^{n}	+2 +		N ^{n}	+6 −	+5 ^{n}	6	0	1
6 :Male 3	+3 +	+2 −	+4 ^{n}	−1 +	N ^{n}		N ^{n}	+1 +	4	1	2
7 :Male 2	+3 +	+1 ^{n}	+4 +	+2 +	N +	N +		+5 +	5	0	2
8 :Male 1	+2 +	−1 −	+4 ^{n}	+3 −	N +	N +	+1 +		4	1	2

Choices Received:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
+	6	6	7	5	3	1	4	5
−	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	2
N	1	0	0	1	4	4	3	0

Mutuals:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
+	3	4	6	4	3	0	3	3
−	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
N	1	0	0	1	1	2	1	0

Incongruities:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
+/−	0	1	1	2	0	3	0	1
+/N	3	1	0	0	3	2	3	2
−/N	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	3	2	1	2	3	5	3	3

Weighting:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
+	16	26	18	19	6	4	14	12
−	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	0
Mutual	8.6	10.7	12.9	10.7	8.6	4.3	8.6	8.6
Total	24.6	35.8	30.9	28.8	14.6	6.3	22.6	20.6

(Figure 2) shows all choices made and received, all perceptions made and received, all mutuals and incongruities, and computes a weighting. For ease in analysis, the program can handle 10 sociomatrices per file and has a capacity to load sociometric test data from other files.
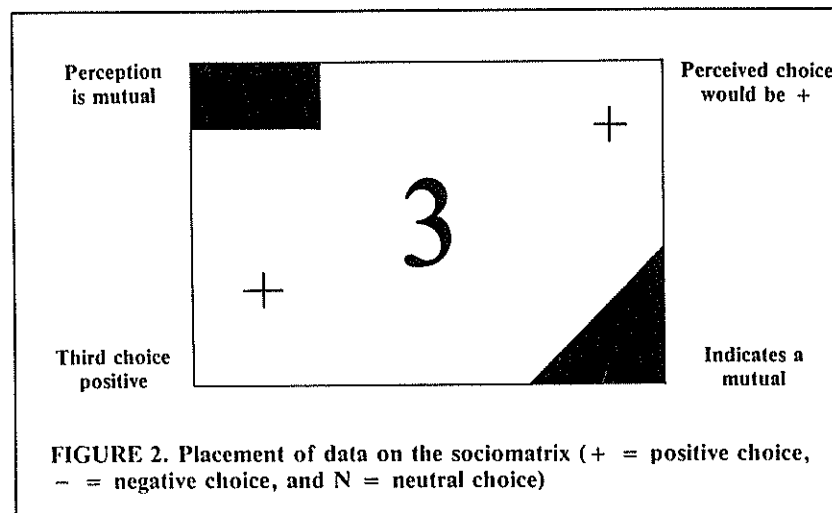
The matrix analysis program displays and prints all pairings by the level of choice (all first choices, for instance), can identify the highest reciprocal pairings for any level of choice, and provides for ease in subgrouping based on chosen variables.

The data can be entered by filling in a blank sociomatrix displayed on the screen, or each group member can key in his or her data individually following a programmed set of questions. Once the data have been entered, it takes 2 to 3 minutes to print a completed sociomatrix. This program does not produce a sociogram; however, portions of the sociomatrix can be highlighted. From this, a sociogram may be drawn.

Snyder, Assor, and Stellrecht plan to make the program available for purchase by fall 1987. For more complete information, readers should write to Frank Snyder at 1054 Westborough, North, Columbus, Ohio 43201-3717.

Sociometric Measurement Reviewed in Terms of H. Sabelli's Model of Opposition

Hector Sabelli (1986) proposes that every choice has oppositional components, both positive and negative. "The theory of the union of op-

FIGURE 2. Placement of data on the sociomatrix (+ = positive choice, − = negative choice, and N = neutral choice)

posites states that opposition cannot be represented by totally opposed vectors; there always is a common component to the two opposites."

In soliciting sociometric data, particularly data from a sociometric test, we are seeking information about the choices that person is making for others and information about the feelings underlying those choices. In the past, we have considered the results of those choices and the rankings persons have made and made assumptions about the feelings underlying the choices. If a person receives a positive choice, we assume the feelings are primarily positive. Often this is the case; however, the actual choice itself does not translate into a specific degree of positive feeling. In addition, being a first-choice positive does not necessarily mean that the first-choice person is held in higher positive regard than a person who is in third- or fourth-choice position.

At this time an experimental procedure is being developed for the collection of sociometric data that will elicit degrees of positive and degrees of negative feeling underlying a particular relationship and a specific role interaction and the third dimension of its relationship or impact on choice. Further elaborations of sociometric theory and Sabelli's process theory may appear in a future issue of this journal. For further information about the experimental stages of sociometric measurement, readers should write to Ann E. Hale at 4536 Latona Ave. NE, Seattle, WA 98105.

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