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BRIEF REPORTS

Editor's note: These three brief reports concern aspects of Moreno's sociometric theory and derivatives of that theory. The authors apply the term "strong" to the original and the term "weak" to later variations of Moreno's procedures. In the reports, the case is made for the use of these adjectives, a tool for interpersonal feedback is described, and some guidelines and techniques are presented.

Strong Sociometry: A Definition - Roy Penner

To renew interest in Moreno's initial formulation of sociometry and its originally conceived use, I propose making a clear delineation between Moreno's formulation and its descendants. Moreno's definition of sociometry is broad, yet has been defined by the specific procedures he indicated and used. Some sociometrists will not agree with my interpretation of Moreno's writings and of his accounts. Nonetheless, I present citations from Moreno and other sources and accounts of my personal experiences that I believe make a strong case for my contentions. My objective is to have these observations and interpretations engender a debate, a closer examination of Moreno's ideas, and empirical investigations into the uses and impact of sociometry.

Sociometry

Sociometry, by definition, is the measurement of the socius, the interpersonal aspect of human relationships (Moreno, 1951). Key to this definition is the term *socius*. I maintain that the socius is defined by and is the result of the telic connections between and among people. To operationalize this rather abstract concept, one needs choices, that is, one person choosing others in relation to a criterion. These choices are a reflection of the telic connection in a group. Regardless of how involved, complex, or sensitive the mechanism for sociometric measurements and the resultant depictions, they are still extensions of these basic choices.

Moreno's Formulation

The difference between Moreno's (1953) formulation and its derivatives (for examples, see texts cited below) comes in his action orientation. Not only

must the choices be assessed, but they must be implemented. Accordingly, I maintain that the following requirements for sociometric measurement can be inferred from his work:

1. Choices, both positive (acceptances) and negative (rejections) should be made in relation to a specified criterion. (Choice making)
2. These choices should be implemented contiguously and as closely as possible to the way they were expressed. (Action emphasis)
3. The rationales behind these choices (the individual's warm-up) should be made explicit. (Study of the warming-up process).

Moreno believed that sociometry was not merely the measurement of interpersonal relationships but the use of that measurement. For whatever reason, Moreno recognized that simply stating the choices was different from implementing and experiencing them.

Distinctions

Where I differ in my interpretation from some other sociometrists is in my explication of the term *use*. Others maintain that what Moreno meant was to look at whether a group interaction was more or less effective as a result of sociometric assignment made from the measurement (choices of group members). Although such an assessment of effectiveness is a worthwhile goal, I believe Moreno emphasized not the outcome of the interaction but the warm-up to the choice, the process by which choosing those who could produce the optimal interaction (maximum spontaneity possible) within the parameters of the situation reflects the tele between individuals. To quote Moreno (1953):

The great misunderstanding, even among sociometrists, comes from the *neglect of studying experimentally the warming up process in the making of a choice* . . . (p. 134, emphasis added).

The important and different focus of Moreno's formulation of sociometry (the genius of it, if you will) is not on whether a better game of ring-around-the-rosy is achieved using sociometry (although that is a likely outcome) but on why the choices are made and what they tell about the socius of the group. To a degree, the criteria around which the choices are made are irrelevant. They are, for the present sociometric purpose, a means to an end, which is an assessment of the telic connections. This holds true as long as the criteria are adequate stimuli to produce the full range and depth of the warm-ups involved.

The choosing process and the warm-up to it are based on and reflective of the tele present. So what is "tele", and how is it assessed? Moreno (1975) described tele as

feelings into the actualities . . . insight into actual makeup (as opposed to transference) . . . feelings into one another . . . 'Zweifuhlung' . . . two-way communication. (pp. 6-7).

He goes on to describe the telic experience as

A meeting of two: eye to eye, face to face. And when you are near I will tear your eyes out and place them instead of mine, and you will tear my eyes out and will place them instead of yours, then I will look at you with your eyes and you will look at me with mine. (p. 7)

From my personal experience and that of others (Remer, Lima, Rickey White, & Gentile, 1993) what Moreno is describing is the result of making the reasons behind the choices (the warming-up process) explicit. In that exchange, the sharing of the reasons behind the choices, I see myself as others see me, and others see me as I see myself. I am forced to examine and to determine what I see as real and what I see as not, both in myself and in the other person(s) involved. Often, the process is not easy or pleasant. The interaction is, however, one way, if not the only way, to find out more about the part of self hidden from both oneself and others (Johari's Window as described in Johnson [1990], pp. 36-40). I interpret this to mean that Moreno considered this "studying experimentally the warming up process" to be, if not the primary focus of sociometry, at least a focus not neglected as it has been.

Strong and Weak Sociometry

To delineate what I view as the differences between Moreno's original formulation of sociometry and those that have developed from it, I have chosen to label Moreno's original *strong* and its derivatives *weak*. I have two reasons for choosing these terms, one reason based on the mathematical denotation of these labels and the other grounded in their connotations. I believe this labeling will both facilitate further discussion of my thesis and provoke discussion of my contentions.

Mathematical Rationale

In mathematics, when two theories can produce the same results but one is more general than the other, that is, grounds and implications of the second can be derived from the first, the former is called "strong," the latter "weak" (Lord & Novick, 1968). Borrowing this labeling, I contend that Moreno's original formulation might be termed strong, while its derivatives might be called weak.

Most applications and discussions of sociometry are now somewhat tangential to Moreno's (1951) intent for the use of sociometry. To see the validi-

ty of my contention, one need only examine some of the classic texts in areas where sociometry is used (e.g., Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Cronbach, 1969; Sax, 1980; Thorndike & Hagen, 1977) or the more recent and extensive coverage by Barclay (1991). All these sources underline the fact that as more and more uses for the techniques of sociometry and sociometric theory were developed, the original conceptualization of Morenean sociometry (Moreno, 1951, 1953) became more generalized and diluted. For example, the derivatives tend to use part of the first or of the first two of Moreno's three definitive criteria. They define sociometry as making choices (usually only positive choices or selections) in reference to a specific criterion. In fact, although Moreno's brainchild may have borne fruit beyond his expectations in one way, much of the intention of the original formulation—to focus on the choosing process in action—has been lost. (Even Hale's [1981] exemplary explication of sociometry fails to emphasize the action orientation and study of the warming-up process that Moreno initially saw as integral.)

Another, specific, example, which is typical of how many professionals define and use sociometry, can be seen in the *Barclay Classroom Climate Inventory (BCCI)* (Barclay, Barclay, & Stilwell, 1972) in which students are asked to nominate classmates in relation to specific criteria (e.g., "listens to others," "gets work done on time"). These results are then tabulated to indicate the position of students in the school social milieu and reported to teachers, school psychologists, and counselors. The students themselves rarely are privy to the results of the assessment, never having to implement their choices or explain the reasons behind them.

These procedures, while producing useful information, include only aspects of Moreno's formulation of sociometry. In addition, the data on which these results are based could easily be obtained as a step or a by-product of a complete, "strong" sociometric exploration. Therefore, I term these representations "weak" sociometries.

Connotative Rationale

Moreno's description of tele, ". . . I tear out my eyes . . .," could be characterized as brutal. Many people experience a severe visceral response (dread) to the advent of participating in a Morenean sociometric exploration (Remer, Lima, Rickey, White, & Gentile, 1993), because they fear the stark honesty required of them in making their choices public and for examining the rationales behind them. They are right. The process can be demanding. The kind of honesty required to open oneself up to the negative tele inherent in the warming-up process to choosing demands courage and strength. Other, less confrontive, assessments of where one stands with others are gentler and weaker. They simply do not carry the same impact. The potency of the impact

of Morenean sociometry is a strong point, but this is also a weakness because people tend to shy away from its use.

Summary and Conclusion

Differences definitely exist between Moreno's formulation of sociometry and those popularly in use today. I have made the case for labeling Moreno's formulation strong sociometry. In concentrating on the benefits derived from employing other forms of sociometry, I believe the unique contribution derived from applying Moreno's full formulation of the process has been neglected, if not lost.

The addition of implementing the choices and studying the processes involved in their formation (Moreno, 1951), the two procedures often omitted in implementing sociometry, lead to differences in formulations and highlight problems in application. For example, the difficulty in coping with the possible attendant negative aspects of rejections becomes obvious in contrasting approaches to sociometry. This particular topic is one that Moreno did not address but is one that needs to be considered. Empirical questions regarding this equivalence of strong and weak sociometry also remain. I hope this essay will reawaken interest in Moreno's writings on sociometry and fuel debate about his basic concepts. All formulations of sociometry need to be assessed by empirical study so that they may be used conscientiously and effectively.

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Using Strong Sociometry as an Interpersonal Feedback Tool

With this report on our use of Moreno's formulation of sociometry, we hope to renew interest in Moreno's definition of sociometry. After our delineation of Moreno's formulation, we examine a particular application for providing feedback regarding a person's impact on others within the context of therapist training.

Moreno's Sociometry

Moreno believed that sociometry was not only the measurement of interpersonal relationships but also the use of that measurement to study the warming-up process to choosing. He recognized that simply stating the choices was different from implementing and experiencing them. In fact, he saw that this specific potential for the use of sociometry was often missed or ignored because even veteran sociometrists neglected the study of warming-up to selecting or rejecting *in situ* (Moreno, 1951). Our goal was to exploit the potential of "strong" sociometry for examining the tele in a group for the purpose of self-exploration. We also wanted our students to learn about the use of the sociometric method and its strengths and weaknesses.

An Application of Strong Sociometry

In many programs for training therapists, self-knowledge and personal growth are considered essential. A vehicle for addressing these aspects is one's awareness of the impact one has on others. Sociometry provides a powerful method for clarifying, expressing, and conveying this information in a tangible form.

In the Counseling Psychology Training Program at the University of Kentucky, the experientially oriented courses have a personal growth component. In the course on group counseling and particularly in the seminar, Counseling Psychology: Psychodrama, we teach the sociometric procedures, which are a vital component of the learning experience. Sociometry is employed to provide students with interpersonal feedback and input into their growth process. The impact of the method is meant to be felt firsthand so that the students will experience it as their clients will when they, as therapists, use it in their own practices.

Preparation

Before we engaged the group in our sociometric experiment, we discussed the ground rules to ensure adequate warm-up. Students knew that they were expected to make choices, would be expected to act on those choices, and would be responsible for explaining the reasons for their choices. During the warm-up, we encouraged the students to process their anticipated reactions to the experiment thoroughly to reduce undesirable results as much as possible. We recognized, however, that the full impact of the implementation is usually not appreciated until the hypothetical becomes the actual.

The Experiment

We gave the following instructions to ensure that the requirements for strong sociometry would be attained. We told them that their choices would be implemented in doing small-group work, which, in this case, meant empty chair/situational psychodramas. Students were to choose two others with whom they wanted to be involved to form the required group of three to do the exercise and to choose two with whom they did not wish to be involved. Students knew that choices would be used in the small-group formation for the exercise and to demonstrate the use of sociometry for promoting interpersonal feedback. The choice data were collected confidentially from private ballots and were submitted to the instructor, who constructed the choice matrix and the sociograms. First, the triads were formed, and the situational psychodrama exercise was completed. Then, the sociograms and choice matrix on which they were based were displayed to the class members. Finally, the reasons for the choices—selections and rejections—were discussed.

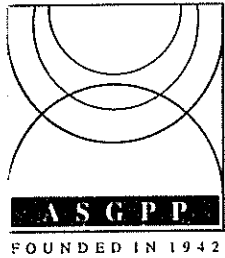
So that we are clear, the main objective of the experiment was not to produce a more effective exercise (although that was one result), but to provide a vehicle for examining the tele in the group. We could have employed any criterion of choice (e.g., "With whom would you like to sing a duet?"). That would

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The pioneering membership organization in group psychotherapy, the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama, founded by J. L. Moreno, MD, in April 1942, has been the source and inspiration of the later developments in this field. It sponsored and made possible the organization of the International Association on Group Psychotherapy. It also made possible a number of international congresses of group psychotherapy. Membership includes subscription to *The Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama and Sociometry*, founded in 1947 by J. L. Moreno as the first journal devoted to group psychotherapy in all its forms.



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