

Sociometry

Sociometry is a way of measuring relationships between people in a particular group (e.g., a classroom). Sociometric tests can discover, describe and evaluate social status and structure, and it can measure the level of acceptance or rejection among group members. It was developed by psychotherapist Jacob L. Moreno and Helen Hall Jennings in their studies of the relationship between social structures and psychological well-being, and used during Remedial Teaching.

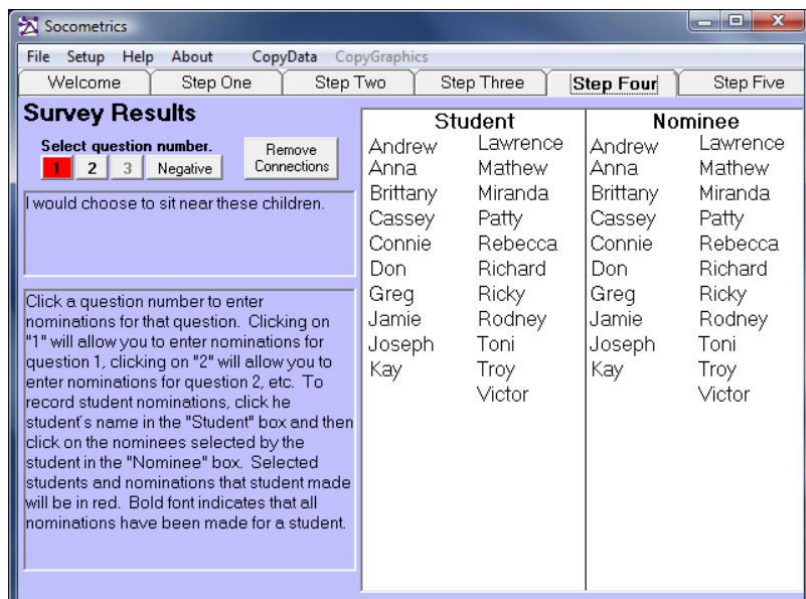
Some purposes for the use of sociometry in schools and classrooms could include:

- (a) assessing the degree of acceptance for new students, EAL students with other cultural traditions, customs, and religions, or LBGTQ students, as a baseline measure before intervening with strategies to promote better inclusion,
- (b) assessing students who may be neglected by other classmates due to poor social skills (e.g., shy/anxious, low self-esteem, depression, those with autism, students with intellectual disabilities, etc.),
- (c) assessing students who may be rejected because of excessive aggression or bullying toward others, such as those with ADHD, Intermittent Explosive Disorder, trauma history, or Conduct Disorder. A subsequent improvement in social status could be one criterion for improvement after implementing social skills and BIP interventions.
- (d) to help predict possible aggression toward certain group members as part of a safety assessment (e.g., the “revenge-seekers” due to multiple rejections).
- (e) to determine who the popular students are, which could guide pairing, grouping, and communication strategies for improving the social status of socially withdrawn and neglected students.
- (f) to determine student preferences for work partners, which could guide peer-tutoring efforts and more compatible memberships for cooperative learning groups.
- (g) to improve classroom cohesion via bibliotherapy, YouTube videos about discrimination/acceptance, teaching a unit about friendship (with assignments to increase positive interactions and communication in class), class discussions to challenge discrimination, giving warm-fuzzies, doing Secret Santa, using a dependent group-oriented contingency (aka the Hero Procedure), etc.

A “*sociogram*” is a graphic representation of the relationships assessed in sociometry. It plots the structure of interpersonal relations in a group situation. It can show the social “stars” (popular), the social “isolates” (rejected), “ghosts” (neglected), “friends” (mutually nominated), “enemies” (mutually rejected), “islands” (smaller groups of mutual selection or cliques), “controversial” students (more positive and negative nominations than average), and those with an average mix of positive and negative nominations.

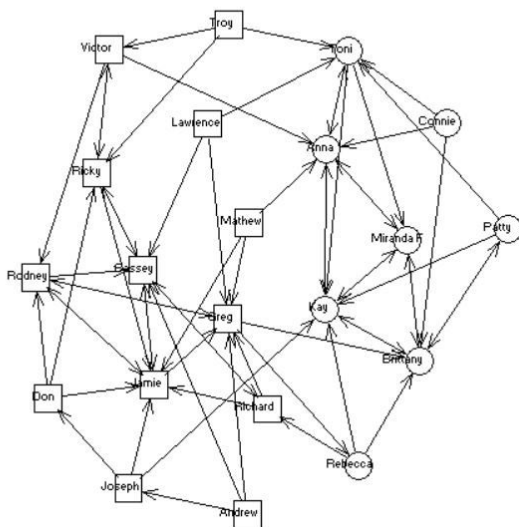
A PC software program called Walsh’s Classroom Sociometrics can provide a relatively quick and efficient method for producing graphic representations of group relationships (e.g., sociograms, nomination charts, and socio-maps) for a specific classroom. The cost is \$49.99 US or about \$55.00 CDN for a single computer license, which is a very reasonable cost, and it works on Windows 7 to 10 operating systems. A screenshot from one tab of the program is shown below.

In this tab, which is step 4, the psychologist can easily click on the names of students and their nominees from the data sheet it produces. The program has suggested questions to include on the data sheet, but also allows the clinician to formulate his/her own questions. On the last tab, you can print off a variety of graphical summary charts to easily analyze the relationships in the classroom, as shown below.



Sociogram of Choices

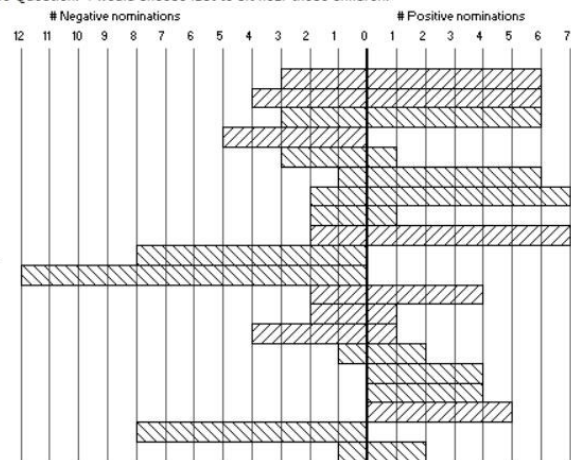
Positive Question: I would choose to sit near these children.



Nomination Chart

Positive Question: I would choose to sit near these children.

Negative Question: I would choose last to sit near these children.



For reporting purposes, only the name of the referred student would be included on a graph used in a psychological report to respect the confidentiality of other students. Alternatively, numbers codes could be used to hide the identity of other students involved, or the graph itself could be omitted from the report, and only the pertinent text might be included (e.g., the data suggests that Mathew is highly rejected by his peers in class since he received the most rejection nominations and no positive or inclusive nominations).

Socio-Map

Positive Question: I would choose these children to help me with my work.

Negative Question: I would not choose to play with these children at recess.

