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Sociometry in the Classroom

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## SOCIOMETRY IN THE CLASSROOM\*

J. L. Moreno

in collaboration with

Helen H. Jennings and Richard Stockton

*Editorial Note:* The following material is reprinted in this issue of SOCIOMETRY because, as the first report to be published on the subject of the sociometric analysis of classrooms, it may be of interest to the readers. It appeared under the title "Analysis of Spontaneous Grouping within School Classes" on pages 98-102 of *Application of the Group Method to Classification*, published by the National Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor, New York, 1932. This was the second edition of an earlier work released in 1931 and first published under the title *Plan and Technique of Developing a Prison into a Socialized Community*. It will be noted also that the definition of *assignment* as then expressed differs little from the fuller elaboration given it in 1934 in Moreno's later work, *Who Shall Survive?* Similarly, the initial concepts reported as early as 1931 have since undergone hardly any re-orientation.

The objectives of these experiments are to add to the knowledge of group structure.

In classes with an average of twenty-five to thirty-five pupils, the children were instructed to choose spontaneously those pupils they would prefer to be associated with in their classrooms.

The self-assigning revealed that if the children had organized themselves of their own accord they would have chosen neighbors in their classrooms different from the ones they have now and would have developed definite groups with leaders and followers, drawing in numerous outsiders from other classes into their midst and cutting off numbers of their classmates as undesired.

The following data are preliminary findings relating to four classes of the fifth grade of that school.

1. Approximately 10% chose one of their present neighbors.
2. Approximately 30% of the pupils were undesired by their own classmates.
3. The number of undesired pupils was considerably reduced if they could be chosen by pupils in other classrooms of the same grade.
4. Approximately 30% of the pupils in the classes here considered chose pupils of other classes, but of the same grade.
5. Over 50% of the pupils within the grade were chosen *mutually* within their own classroom.

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\*Public School 181, Brooklyn.

## SOME TYPICAL STRUCTURES WITHIN GROUPS

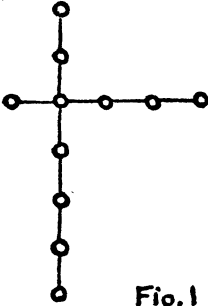


Fig. 1

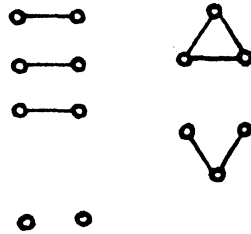


Fig. 2

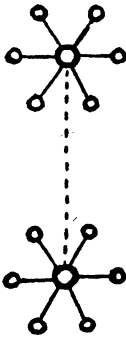


Fig. 3

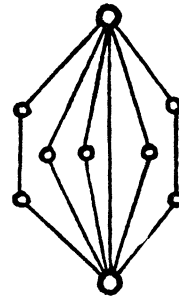
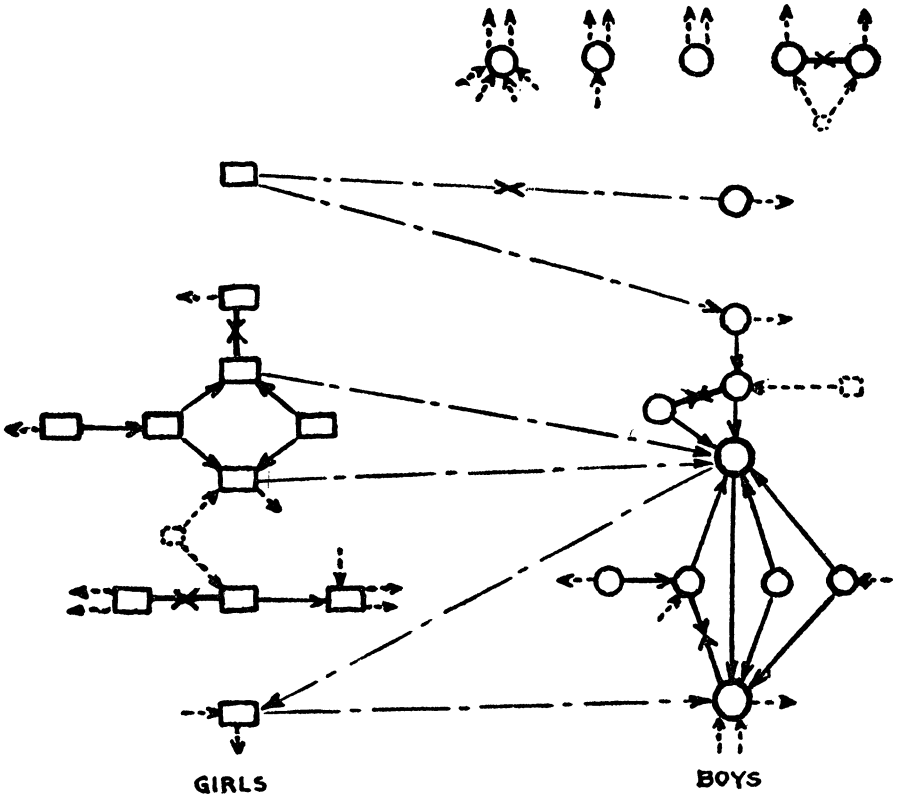


Fig. 4

- Fig. 1. Attractions between individuals take the form of a chain.  
 Fig. 2. Attractions take the form of isolated units, pairs and groups of three.  
 Fig. 3. Two sub-groups are centralized each about two dominating individuals who have no attractive forces uniting them.  
 Fig. 4. A group in which two dominating individuals are strongly united both directly and indirectly through other individuals.

ACTUAL STRUCTURE OF ONE OF THE CLASSES STUDIED



The boys in this class are represented by circles and the girls by squares.\* Heavy lines indicate attractions between individuals of like sex within the class. Dot-dash lines indicate attraction to individuals in a different class in the same grade. Arrows indicate the direction of the attraction. In five cases mutual or reciprocated attractions are indicated by facing arrows. In this class we see an isolated individual undesired from within the class attracting an outside individual, another isolated individual attracting four outside individuals, and another isolated individual attracting no individual even from outside. They make no reciprocal attraction. We see an isolated girl attracted to two boys, and the two dominant boys attracted to one isolated girl. Fourteen choices made from outside individuals and 19 made for outside individuals are indicated. There are six attractions between individuals of opposite sex, one of which is reciprocal.

The two charts on this page indicate the complicated forms resulting from attractions and repulsions between the different persons of a specific group. They are a study of the *inner* structures of groups and can be compared with studies concerning the nuclear nature of the atom or the physiological structure of the cell.

\*The symbols later were standardized as circles for girls and triangles for boys, and a simpler representation of the interrelations was also used: see J. L. Moreno, *Who Shall Survive?*

6. There was one triple-mutual choice made by three boys and another made by three girls, cutting themselves off from the rest of the class.
7. Approximately 5% of the choices made were for the opposite sex.
8. Approximately 10% of the pupils were over-desired.
9. The estimates of the teachers as to who were their most desired and least desired pupils from the viewpoint of the children were surprisingly inaccurate.

These experiments corroborate the importance of the spontaneous choice factor in any system of classification which leads to group assignment.

. . . . .

*Assignment.* The relating of one person to others and to the common social and cultural environment. Assignment is *Spontaneous* if this relating occurs by free choice alone. Assignment is *Experimental* if this relating occurs through the technique of classifying interrelationship attributes of persons. *Technique of Assignment* refers to the various procedures used to insure the most advantageous relating of any persons. (An important one is the procedure of determining the spontaneous choice factor.)