

Exploring sociometric models and sociograms

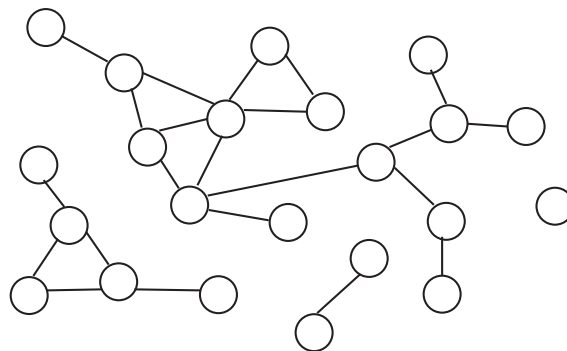
The questions often asked by teachers examining the Stage 6 Community and Family Studies syllabus are “what are sociometric models?” and “what are sociograms?” These concepts are found in the Preliminary course module, *Individuals and groups*. This article explores both of these concepts.

Sociometric studies measure the social interactions between individuals and within groups. One of the models used in sociometric studies is network analysis. Network analysis involves “mapping” the connections among a set of people, organisations, events or places. Examples of these include the leadership patterns of an organisation or friendship networks amongst teenagers in a community.

The key feature of the network is that each person is connected with others through direct or indirect linkages. It does not mean that every person needs to know or interact or be influenced by every other person in the network; however, together they are generally within an interconnected network.

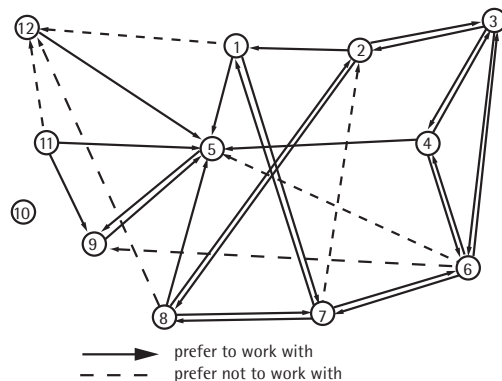
Researchers represent networks by drawing a sociogram, a diagram of circles connected with lines. Developing a sociogram involves people observing the social relationships within a group and recording the interactions of the individuals in the group in diagrammatic form.

The diagram below is an example of a sociogram.



A sociogram analysis allows researchers to discover, analyse and display sets of relationships. For example, in a business organisation, a sociogram analysis may be able to track the varying nature of relationships. Angela gives orders to Sue, Sue and Sam consult and help one another. Sam gets resources from Jenny. Jenny socialises with Alex. Researchers find that identifying these networks helps them to understand the structure of complex social relations within an organisation.

The following sociogram represents a group of twelve students in a youth group, with each circle representing a student. The students had to nominate three people they would prefer to work with to organise a function. They also had to identify three people they would prefer not to work with.



Source: Adapted from: Teasedale, T.C. (1976) *Social Psychology*. Reprinted in Eunson, B. (1994). *Communicating Team Building*, p. 35.

In the sociogram above, the people they prefer to work with are represented by black lines, while the people they prefer not to work with are represented by broken lines.

From this sociogram the following information is revealed.

- The person who is the most popular: No. 5
- Reciprocating friendships e.g. Nos. 7 and 8
- Chains of friendships e.g. Nos. 8, 7, 6, 3 and 2
- Closed friendship groups or cliques e.g. Nos. 3, 4, and 6
- People not chosen by anyone (rejected) e.g. No. 12
- Some people are neither rejected nor chosen (ignored) e.g. No. 11
- The person who neither makes a choice nor receives a choice (isolated) e.g. No. 10.
- The person with considerable influence e.g. No. 9, as he is chosen by the most popular person.

From this analysis, the two personality characteristics typical of most groups are revealed as being popularity and isolation.

For further information on sociograms and research methodology refer to the following resources:

- Eunson, B. (1994). *Communicating for Team Building*. Milton, Qld: John Wiley & Sons.
- Hayllar, B. (1996). *Pathways to Research*. Port Melbourne, Vic: Rigby Heinemann.