



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Simple Shifts That Matter: “Thinking Systems” in Everyday Life.

It is at the small, everyday level that the implications of “thinking systems” may be most profound. For example, how I sometimes interact with a clerk at the store: I catch myself in a fussy mood, irritable in the brief exchange (self-centered) and other times I notice the difference it makes when I engage with the person in their role (systems-centered).

Or working with a couple when the couple shifts from blaming or trying to convert the other, to listening and starting to take their roles to problem solve together, with the recognition of the concerns of both.

Another good example happened here in Atlanta this week. As a result of the interruption in refinery production from the hurricanes in Texas, the gasoline supplies were limited. People began to hear of this and lines formed at the gas stations, with many “topping off” their tanks out of a fear that there would be further shortages. Neither pleas from officials not to “top off,” nor information that the flow of gas would be restored to normal in a week or two, changed drivers’ behavior. Lines still formed at stations, and while some of these drivers were actually low on gas, many others were topping off out of fear, causing stations to run out of gas completely.

The newspaper was full of “gas” stories. One article interviewed a psychiatrist who argued against a proposal that purchases be limited to a minimum of 10 gallons to reduce “topping off.” Instead, Dr. Berns suggested that “shaming” others into taking citizenship would be a good solution.

The role of citizen is certainly easily understood using systems-centered thinking. In fact, citizenship is equivalent to one’s member role. However, “thinking systems” might take us to a very different solution than that proposed by Berns.

A systems-centered view might start with looking at the system and the force field of driving and restraining forces that maintain it. The systems-centered emphasis on driving and restraining forces draws heavily from Lewin who introduced the idea that weakening restraining forces facilitated change more easily than increasing driving forces. In fact, Lewin and Margaret Mead’s work on strategies for modifying food preferences in the US during World War II may be a useful model for an exploration of how to modify the behavior that was exacerbating the gas shortage problem. Lewin’s goal was to increase the acceptability of eating organ meats since most of the meat was being shipped to the troops overseas and protein was projected to be in short supply. Wansink (2002) summarized Lewin’s approach to this problem:

“Lewin believed the focus needed to be on systematically determining what barriers prevented someone from eating organ meats in the first place. By helping reduce the barriers (or decreasing disincentives) which discourage consumption, Lewin believed the preparation and serving habits of the gate-keeping cook could be changed. This jointly-held perspective of Mead and Lewin framed the research efforts of the Committee of Food Habits. Lewin and Mead believed we first needed to reduce consumption barriers (decrease disincentives) before

What’s Inside

- From the Director1**
- From the Editor3**
- Emerging Theory3-6**
- Theory, Research & Application6-12**
- Systems-Centered® Training Program.....13**
- Special Focus: Foundation Level Training14**
- Reports & Updates15-19**
- Members Forum.....19**
- Letters to Editor.....20**
- System-Centered Training DVDs ..21**
- Conference Registration Form22**
- Membership Application23**

**Information on
SCTRI Trainings
can be found on our
website at
www.systemscentered.com
under the “Training” tab**

SYSTEM-CENTERED® NEWS

is published twice a year by the Systems-Centered Press.

Editor

Michael Robbins, MA, LMHC
michaelrobbins@rcn.com

Section Coordinators:

Emerging Theory

Yvonne Agazarian, Ed.D. , CGP, DFIGPA, FAPA
agazarian@aol.com

Reports & Updates

Verena Murphy, Ph.D.
vmch99@hotmail.com

Letters to the Editor

Bettie Banks, Ph.D.
Betsbanks@mindspring.com

Training

Kathy Lum
admin@systemscentered.com

Theory, Research & Application

Michael Silverstein, Ph.D.
silverstein@rowan.edu

Members Forum

Jan Vadell
jan@systemscentered.com

Production Coordinator

Jan I. Vadell

Production Consultant

Kathy Lum

Submission Deadlines:

November Issue - September 15th
June Issue - April 15th

Please submit articles to the appropriate Section Coordinators.

Display Ads:

Size	Cost
Quarter Page	\$120
Eighth Page	\$ 60

These prices are for camera-ready ads. There will be an additional charge for type-setting of ads.
Send Display Ads to Kathy Lum at admin@systemscentered.com

SCTRI

P.O. Box 2118
Decatur, GA 30031, USA
Phone: 404-378-5709 • Fax: 404-378-8970
E-mail: admin@systemscentered.com
www.systemscentered.com

we could effectively encourage people to change their eating habits (Lewin, 1943). That is, before giving people nutritional or patriotic reasons why they should say 'yes' to eating liver, it was important to first remove the reasons they would say 'no.' Without removing barriers to consumption, promotional incentives would be wasted."

So developing a force field related to the gas shortage: the person-centered behavior is maintained by the restraining forces of negative predictions. Reality information is being ignored. All of this is in the larger context of great instability in the U.S. and world financial systems with a high level of fear and uncertainty - conditions where person-centered behavior easily dominates.

"Thinking systems" then means reducing the restraining forces. At the individual level, this means undoing our own negative predictions, buying only the amount of gas we need in the next two weeks, or determining how to manage without gas for this period.

It also challenges us to identify and modify the restraining forces in the community system. A very brief force field for depicting the current community system follows.

→ DRIVING FORCES	RESTRAINING FORCES ←
Information on reality of gas availability	Fears and negative predictions that there will not be enough to go around; Vague information on how much availability there was and how this compared to consumer demand.
Guidelines for how to take one's citizenship	Person-centered focus

Finally, this links to the ongoing challenge for all of us, to keep discovering in our everyday lives, with both small interactions and the larger challenges that our communities face, whether or not "thinking systems" is a difference that makes a difference to each of us and to the various systems and communities of which we are a part.

Susan Gantt
sgantt@systemscentered.com

References

Kanell, M.E. (2008, September 24). Why we ran out of gas. Q&A/Gregory Berns, Emory University Professor. *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

Lewin, K. (1943). Forces behind food habits and methods of change. *The problem of changing food habits*. (Bulletin 108, October, pp. 35-65). Washington, DC: National Research Council and National Academy of Sciences.

Wansink, B. (2002). Changing habits on the home front: Lost lessons from World War II research. *Journal of Marketing and Public Policy*, 21(1), 90-99.

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Members,

As the global stock markets continue to gyrate and American electoral politics have come to a conclusion, it is clearer than ever that humanity-as-a-whole is a system in the throes of a profound transformation. In this changing economic and political climate, our capacity to “think systems” and to recognize and integrate differences both within and across our individual boundaries, becomes more and more critical. Isomorphic to our individual lives, SCTRI is a system nested within a larger context, and as it continues to survive, develop and transform, it must also continue to be permeable to the differences that it is integrating both within and across boundaries, both from other disciplines and from the changing global context.

The Newsletter, like our Website, exists at the boundary between the outside and the inside of our organization. As such, the first half of the Newsletter, which focuses more on the “Theory, Research and Application” of SCT, is directed both to our members and to people outside of SCTRI. The second half of the Newsletter, which gives you reports and updates from the various work groups, information about our programs and community news, is intended for members inside of SCTRI. The Newsletter is therefore one of the best ways for you to stay informed of both the cutting edge thinking that is developing in Systems-Centered theory and practice as well as a way for you to attune to the living heart beat of our community.

This issue begins with an article by Yvonne Agazarian in which she gives you an overview of the development of the Theory of Living Human Systems. In this article, you will learn how she has stood on the shoulders of such giants as Lewin, Bion, Bennis, and Shephard, and Shannon and Weaver. Understanding the historical context that has given birth to the unique synthesis of her theory is both fascinating and important for any serious student of SCT.

In the next section, “Theory, Research and Application,” we have a series of articles by our membership. The first article, by Mark Johnson, focuses on the concept of novelty, and how crucial it is for us to continue to integrate differences from other theories and disciplines if we are to continue to evolve both as individual practitioners and as an organization. In particular Mark focuses on the experience of our Conference, which has become a vital forum for practitioners to present their integration of SCT with other disciplines. The second article, by Katarina Billman, focuses on how to practically use SCT and its methods in a business context with

a specific focus on how to build a coaching system. Katarina has worked for many years as a business consultant employing SCT. Her expertise in translating SCT theory into practical results in companies throughout the world is an important resource for Organizational Development consultants that are already using, or becoming interested in applying, SCT within a business context. The next article, by Bettie Banks, focuses on the process of termination within an SCT context and explores the similarities and differences in the way that SCT practitioners and practitioners of other disciplines end their clinical work. I think that you will appreciate the poetic and elegant way that Bettie addresses this important topic. The final article is an edited version of the dialogue that our members engaged in over the listserv on the topic of “Guilt, Ethics and SCT.” I think that you will agree that this was a fascinating exploration of an important topic at a high theoretical and philosophical level.

The next half of the Newsletter is filled with “Reports and Updates” from the various work groups, a description of the Foundation Level of the SCT training program, “Letters to the Editor” and the “Members Forum.” We hope that these sections help you to stay in touch with the growth and development of SCTRI and also informs you of important news inside of our community.

You will also notice that this issue and the last issue are printed in color. This is an experiment and we would love your feedback as to whether or not this works for you. Because of financial constraints, we cannot print the Newsletter in two colors, so depending on your feedback, we will either return to a black and white format, or continue.

Finally, I would like to thank our wonderful Newsletter team for all of the hard work that they have put into creating this issue. The Newsletter would never be published without the efforts of Yvonne Agazarian, Michael Silverstein, Verena Murphy, Bettie Banks, Kathy Lum and especially Jan Vadell, whose invaluable help in polishing the final product and communicating with the printer cannot be underestimated. We all hope that you thoroughly enjoy this issue and that you give us your feedback so that we can continue to develop the Newsletter into a more functional and effective communication tool for SCTRI.

With best wishes for each of your continued health, the development of your wisdom, and your inner peace,

*-Michael Robbins
michaelrobbins@rcn.com*

EMERGING THEORY BY YVONNE AGAZARIAN

THE DEVELOPMENT OF GROUP SYSTEMS

There is some controversy in the field as to whether or not there is a predictable and characteristic sequence of phases in the development of groups. Even though some important

approaches do not acknowledge phases of development [for example the Tavistock Institute, and Yalom’s Interpersonal group therapy (1970)], many other disciplines do. Some important studies compared the different stages of development outlined by different theorists and concluded that, although different names were given to the different stages, the description and sequence of the stages were the same. This

holds true both for tightly structured groups, like cognitive behavioral and leader oriented, and also for less structured groups like psychodynamic and eclectic. (Beck 1981; Brabender, 1997, 2002; Brabender & Fallon (2008), Buzaglo & Wheelan, 1999).

Development Phases as System Contexts for Work

From a systems perspective, each phase of system development serves as the context in which the work of the group takes place. How effectively communications are organized in each phase determines what work can be done. SCT emphasizes that it is the context which determines how systems survive, develop and transform. Therefore, the SCT orientation to phases of development is to potentiate the organization and energy within each phase, and to reduce the restraining forces that hamper the drive to develop through one phase into the next.

Thanks to Bion

The first challenge was translating the existing understandings about group development into systems concepts. SCT owes a significant debt to Bion (1959), in his recognition that there was such a thing as “group” as different from its individual members and that groups had implicit as well as explicit goals. Bion’s discovery grew out of his surprise that what the members in the group were actually doing was quite different from what they said they were doing, i.e. they were saying one thing and doing another! It was from this that Bion assumed that the dynamics of the group determined what the group did, not the individual members. In other words, the individual members might talk about wanting to get back to war as soon as possible (he was working in a military hospital at the time) but the way they were behaving was “as if” they would rather take flight from getting better or fight among themselves. He made a basic assumption that flight and fight was what the group was doing, not whatever the members *thought* they were doing. For SCT, what is important about Bion’s assumptions is that he arrived at them by observing what was implied by group behavior. For SCT, observing system output behavior is the pathway to recognizing the groups’ heuristic goals. Thus Bion’s work was the forerunner of what systems-centered thinking now takes for granted: the group’s implicit goals (like to take flight or to fight) will determine how the group behaves, not their explicit goal. And the implicit goal of the group will also determine the member’s behavior, whatever the member’s individual goal might be. As will be addressed in a few paragraphs under SAVI, SCT also identifies verbal behaviors as a diagnostic of the phase of development in the group.

Thanks to Bennis and Shepard

Bennis and Shepard (1956), collected data from training groups of students learning group dynamics. The leadership style of the T-group was to pay attention to the group-as-a-whole and not to its members. Observing a similar sequence of developmental stages in these groups, they formulated their theory of group development. The innovative observation made by Bennis and Shepard was that Bion’s basic

assumptions were more likely to occur in a sequence, with dependency and flight/fight preceding pairing. Using their model, I adapted it to psychodynamic group psychotherapy (Agazarian & Peters, 1981). Later, in applying the developmental sequence to systems, it was clear that not only did phases of system development apply to every system, but also to all systems at every level of the hierarchy (Agazarian 1997, 1999). Several useful innovations in the structuring of SCT groups developed from adapting Bennis and Shepard’s phases into systems concepts.

Thanks to Shannon and Weaver

In their mathematical theory of communication, Shannon and Weaver (1964) postulated that there is an inverse relationship between noise in the communication channel and the probability that the information in the communication will be received. (Just like static on a cell phone, the more static there is, the less one can make sense of what is being said.) Translated into systems terms, there is an inverse relationship between differences that are too different in the transactions across the boundaries within the system hierarchy, and the probability that the information contained in the communications will be received and integrated.

In their theory, Shannon & Weaver defined noise as ambiguity and redundancy. For SCT we added the entropic impact of contradictions within the popular language of “Yes, but ...” Entropy within the communication channel has been a major contribution to SCT as it easily translates into the restraining forces that cause system boundaries to close. Reducing the restraining forces increase the probability that system boundaries will become permeable to the drive to communicate. Practically then, by reducing entropic communications behaviors, like gossip outside the group, or intellectualizations inside the group, it is probable that that the information in the communication channels will become more available.

SAVI: System for Analyzing Verbal Interaction

The SAVI system translates communication into categories of verbal behavior (Agazarian & Simon, 1989; Simon & Agazarian, 1967, 2000). SAVI coding is derived from theoretical criteria (Shannon & Weaver 1964; Howard & Scott 1965; Kurt Lewin, 1951) and discriminates between approach and avoidance verbal behaviors, that can be coded into the nine-square matrix below (note approach behaviors are neg-entropic and avoidant behaviors are entropic).

SAVI SYSTEM FOR CODING VERBAL INTERACTION			
	Personal	Factual	Orienting
Avoidance	1. Fighting	2. Obscuring	3. Competing
Contingent	4. Personalizing	5. Information gathering	6. Influencing
Approach	7. Resonating	8. Responding	9. Integrating

Simon & Agazarian, 1967 & 2000

The above matrix gives an immediate snapshot of the

overall pattern, as in each phase of systems development some squares are used more and others less, thus illustrating the approach and avoidance patterns of the group system as a whole.

Using SAVI it is possible to generate both the group-as-a-whole pattern of communication, and compare it to the patterns of the individual members. In an informal research project in the 1960's, I coded an hour-and-a-half of a group therapy tape later used in Ariadne Beck and Carol Lewis' book (Simon & Agazarian, 2000). I then divided the group communication patterns into quartiles, and took the central ten minutes of each quartile. The four quartile sections mirrored the pattern of the group-as-a-whole even though the individual patterns changed. Thus, something was maintaining the overall communication pattern of group flight in spite of the fluctuating patterns of the communication pattern of the individual members. This raised an important question: if the group patterns were the same and the individual patterns were different, how did the group system pattern remain the same? What was it that washed out the group's variability? On closer examination, it became clear, that whenever one individual would introduce approach, another would introduce avoidance. Thus in each segment, the system was stabilized in flight. What is more, it was not possible to predict which particular member would introduce avoidance. In one surprising section, members contributed to approach and it was the group therapist who reinstated avoidance! These findings reinforced the SCT opinion that it is the group system that determines whether or not individual approach behavior will be reinforced or not.

These findings led to the conclusion that it is not just the familiar construct of group norms that influences group behavior. If it was a matter of group norms, individuals would be specifically influenced towards a predictable norm throughout the development of the group. Rather, it became clear that the communication norms change as the phases of development change. Thus, even the work pattern of a 'working' group will almost certainly be re-directed into flight, when, for example, at the threshold of new work, the group is at the edge of the unknown.

This leads us to the next question which was how to identify the restraining forces generic to each phase of development so that they can be weakened, and how to contribute to the development of the driving forces towards work. Thanks again to Kurt Lewin's construct of the force field (which maps the conflict between the forces that drive towards the goal, and the forces that restrain the drive) it became possible for us to reframe the approach and avoidance categories in the SAVI map as a force field. Observing the SAVI force field for each phase of development made it possible for SCT to identify which particular restraining forces to weaken within each phase in order to release the developmental drive.

For example, in the flight phase, avoidant restraining forces are predominantly vague or redundant, whereas approach driving forces give evidence that communication has crossed the boundaries, for example answering a question or building on another's idea. On the other hand depressive restraining forces (turning retaliatory impulses back on the self) characterized the transition between the flight and fight

sub-phase, and despair (denial of hope for change) characterized the alienation sub-phase in Intimacy. In systems centered practice, there is a protocol for reducing the restraining forces in each phase and sub-phase of system development. The work of reducing the restraining forces in each phase is synchronized, so that the techniques that reduce any particular restraining force builds on the techniques that applied to the one that came before it and introduces the skills to reduce the one that comes next. (This is called the Hierarchy of Defense Modification.) This principle of sequencing and synchronizing is applied to each sub-phase within each phase, and thus reduces the restraining forces to developing, not only through each phase, but also from one phase to another (Agazarian, 1997).

Summary

It can be said that the primary problem to be solved in any communication process is the reduction of the noise that effects the transfer of information. Thus, there are two goals to be met for effective communication. A primary goal of noise reduction so that information can be transferred and a secondary goal of orienting the information in relationship to the purpose of the communication: the explicit work or relational social goal (Agazarian, 1997).

In this sense, every verbal behavioral act can be said to either add to, or reduce, the noise inherent in the communication process and can thus be characterized as either an approach behavior or an avoidance behavior in relationship to solving this primary problem of noise so that the transfer of information can take place.

The hypothesis underlying the criteria for organizing verbal behavior into the SAVI matrix is that communication is the verbal output of the individual and group systems. Thus an analysis of verbal behavior gives us the data to infer the implicit and explicit goals of the systems of both the individual and the group-as-a-whole. Congruence between implicit and explicit goals result in work patterns, incongruence, result in patterns of communication that reflect the group defenses.

References

- Agazarian, Y. M. (1997). *Systems-centered therapy for groups*. New York: Guilford. Re-printed Karnac, London, 2004.
- Agazarian, Y. M. (1999). Phases of development in the systems-centered group. *Small Group Research*, 30 (1), 82-107.
- Agazarian, Y. M. & Peters, R. (1981). *The visible and invisible group*. London: Routledge & Kegan Pal, Ltd. Reprinted in paper back (1987). London: Karnac Books.
- Agazarian, Y. M. & Simon, A. (1989) "An analysis of excerpts from the Chicago group script of a psychotherapy group by SAVI, a behavioral observation system." AGPA Conference presentation. San Francisco, February, 1989.
- Beck, A. P. (1981). A study of phase development and emergent leadership. *GROUP*, 5, 48-54.

Bennis, W.G. & Shepard, H.A. (1956). A theory of group development. *Human Relations*, 9(4); 415-437.

Bion, W. R. (1959). *Experiences in groups*. London: Tavistock.

Brabender, V. (1997). Chaos and order in the psychotherapy group. In F. Masterpasqua & P. Perna, (Eds.), *The psychological meaning of chaos: Translating theory into practice* (pp 225-253). Washington: American Psychological Association.

Brabender, V. (2002). *Introduction to group therapy*. New York: Wiley.

Brabender, V. & Fallon, A. (2008). Group development in practice: Guidance for clinicians and researchers on stages and dynamics of change. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Buzaglo, G. & Wheelan, S. (1999). Facilitating work team effectiveness: Case studies from Central America. *Small Group Research*, 30 (1), 108-129.

Howard, A. & Scott, R. A. (1965). A proposed framework for the analysis of stress in the human organism. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 10:141

Lewin, K. (1951). *Field theory in social science*. New York: Harper & Row.

Shannon, C. E. & Weaver, W. (1964). *The mathematical theory of communication*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Simon, A. & Agazarian, Y.M. (1967). SAVI: Sequential analysis of verbal interaction. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

Simon, A. & Agazarian, Y. M. (2000). SAVI - the system for analyzing verbal interaction. In A.P. Beck & C.M. Lewis, (Eds), *The process of group psychotherapy: Systems for analyzing change*, Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 357-380.

Yalom, I.(1970) *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy*, 4th edn. New York: Basic Books.

THEORY, RESEARCH AND APPLICATION

SCT INTEGRATION AT THE SYSTEMS LEVEL: IN SUPPORT OF NOVELTY

SCT's annual Conference has recently hosted presentations ranging from Psychoanalytic (Anne Alonso), to Bodydynamics (Merete Holm Brantbjerg), to Neurobiology (Michael Robbins, John Straznickas and Juliet Koprowska) and Emotionally Focused Therapy (Bonnie Macbride), to name just a few. More are coming, and hopefully always will. What can we learn from this at the systems level, and why is it important?

Integration

If we take our own theory seriously, we *must* appreciate that maturation *within* our system will require us to both discriminate and integrate differences. In some very real ways, that is exactly what we are doing at the annual Conferences, especially in what has been labeled "large group," i.e., the end-of-the-day experiential group that typically has 80-100 plus members in attendance. This year especially, issues of race served as a catalyst for discussions of differences held by members that are starting to become integrated into the larger culture of SCT. This system-wide change is vital to our growth and transformation. We use functional subgrouping for this methodologically and it has proven itself successful, although it remains a work in progress.

While admirable and necessary, these "within-group" differences tell only half the story. What about the ways that SCT itself is different from other models for human change? And how are we to integrate those differences? The standard functional subgrouping method with which we are so familiar is hard to apply here. Yet despite this, we've made progress in this enterprise at each successive annual conference. How?

Notice what happens at the Conference when attending presentations that are from models other than SCT. Here's a partial list from my experience. Parenthetically, I'd love to hear others' experiences and ask you to send them to me via email at drmarkj@valley.net (*editor's note: you may also wish to consider submitting them to the Newsletter, either as a formal article or as a letter to the editor*).

1. The SCT audience often, but not always, centers itself and directs attention to the speaker(s). Time boundaries are honored and meetings commence on time.
2. The audience actively participates, whether as a fish-bowl group, working along in experiential exercises, building a force field or engaging in a question and answer dialogue.
3. The audience inevitably identifies similarities with the Theory of Living Human Systems (TLHS) and systems-centered practice. Invariably, the commonalities and overlap with SCT are highlighted first, before exploring differences. Those commonalities may involve a focus on group dynamics, or an emphasis on methods of centering or a specific approach to understanding and describing the roles generated by families of origin. You can see where this is going - we tacitly functionally subgroup with the presenters; in good SCT form, we first "join on similarities" before "exploring differences." We are declaring our resonance. Presenters report this as "welcoming," "open" and "receptive".
4. Just as in any group experiential, differences then emerge and, time permitting, are explored. SCT audiences typically ask questions that name these differences, e.g., "In SCT we handle defenses in this way; how does this other model work that

issue?" Sometimes the difference itself is highlighted, but often members suggest a bridge back by naming a similarity in goals.

These types of responses, of course, are the language of integration. We discriminate and integrate, find "differences in the apparently similar" and similarities in the apparently different, separate and individuate, and we grow. In my view, SCT theory and practice transforms and develops directly from these encounters. Our own theoretical model would make just such a prediction, i.e., that functional subgrouping is a method that supports and leads to integration.

Novelty

The vehicle for this expansion in our model is novelty. I've written in prior newsletters about how novelty is the core construct that undergirds self-correction. Recall that self-correction is a key feature of the Theory of Living Human Systems. In TLHS, human systems are "energy-organizing, goal-directed, and self-correcting" (Agazarian, 2004). Functional subgrouping is the way we introduce novelty to the system within our training, consultation and therapy groups. I suggest that is what we are doing in our Conferences as well.

As an interesting side-bar, recent work in brain architecture (Lynch & Granger, 2008) reports on how novelty is captured initially in the hippocampus and amygdala. These "emotion centers" now appear to be intrinsically involved not only in what gets noticed, but what gets stored in memory. "Without the hippocampus, these novelties won't be detected and won't be stored" (p.79). So novelty not only helps us discriminate difference (by definition), it also enhances the likelihood of a memory trace that can help us in the future.

So after the Conference, when you re-enter the larger world and rejoin all the other systems of which you are a part and you think about your experiences and what you've learned, think about novelty. Of course we try to reinforce this consolidation when we ask for any "surprises, learnings, satisfactions, dissatisfactions, or discoveries" after various SCT exercises. But you already knew that.

-Mark Johnson
drmarkj@valley.net

References

Agazarian, Y.M. (1997). *Systems-centered therapy for groups*. Reprinted Karnac, London, 2004.

Lynch, G., Granger, R., and Cotman, C. (illustrator) (2008). *Big brain: The origins and future of human intelligence*. Hampshire, England: Palgrave MacMillan

SCT IN BUSINESS COACHING - SCT CONFERENCE SUMMARY

This article was written in response to encouragement from the SCTRI Newsletter Editor for Conference presenters to share their information with the larger SCT system. The article is a summary of a workshop I created and led at the Annual SCT Conference in San Francisco earlier this year. The goals of the article are threefold:

1. To contribute to a deeper learning for those who already participated in the workshop (i.e. the power of functional repetition).
2. To inspire potential workshop leaders to offer a workshop at a future SCT Conference.
3. To share the content of this workshop with curious people who did not attend.

Workshop Structure and Content:

The time boundary for the workshop was 2 hours with a 15 minute break, and began with a definition of goals: *To provide the participants with an increased understanding of how to apply SCT theory and its methods in a business context, with a specific focus on how to build the coaching system.*

The following five sections of this article parallel and summarize the five parts of the workshop that followed. These sections are: 1) A definition of key concepts 2) The contextual frame. i.e. a description of the business case 3) Role play 4) Group force field 5) Satisfactions, Dissatisfactions, Surprises, Learnings, and Discoveries.

1) Definitions of key concepts

After setting goals for the workshop I then shared the definition used in our company, *Billman Engquist*, to define coaching: "Coaching is a leadership development tool we use to facilitate living human systems to survive, develop and transform in relation to a contextual goal" (*Billman Engquist*, 2008). I then further refined this definition from an SCT perspective as "reaching an increased capacity to use one's common sense in functional role, in order to reach clear goals within a given context." We then moved into a discussion of what it means to build a functional coaching system. This was summarized as always beginning by setting a structure and then balancing that structure with function and energy.

2) Contextual frame

Next, a specific business case based on an actual consulting assignment was shared with workshop participants.

The fictitious name given the company to whom we consulted was Alinone, an international company producing modern packaging solutions. The business consultant task was to build and deliver the "Member and Team Development Program" (MTDP), which was a subsystem of the *Alinone Management Trainee Program*, which in its turn was a subsystem of the corporate "Sales & Marketing" function of the Alinone company.

The trainees recruited into this program were young "high potential graduates." The goal of the MDTP was to promote leadership development within the larger goal of the trainee program, which was to promote an accelerated learning curve for its members. The desired outcome goal was for graduates to take up top leadership roles within the global Sales and Marketing Unit within 5-7 years. The coaching consultants' roles were to help the program participants build a functional system and vector the system energy toward its goals.

The MDTP offered two interrelated services; team coaching and individual coaching. The goal for the team coaching was "to build a team where members take

BOOK ENDS - THE TERMINATION INTERVIEW - A PERSPECTIVE ON USING SCT METHODS IN THE TERMINATION PROCESS

responsibility to support each other to reach the goals of the trainee program.” The goal of the individual coaching was “to find, take up and give authority from member role and integrate this work with Alinone’s defined set of leadership capabilities” (putting the authority work into the context of the larger system). In Alinone, the structure for these two program parts was five individual, ninety-minute coaching sessions, which alternated with five team coaching sessions each lasting one-half to a full day.

3) Role Play

We then engaged in a role play, using the business case as a contextual frame. Participants were divided into groups of three including coach, consultee (trainee member) and observer. The specific situation involved the consultee struggling with anxiety about an upcoming international conference, building on assumed similarities within the consultees in the business case and participants of the SCTRI Conference.

The triads worked for three rounds and shifted roles each time. For the first round the coach was free to work spontaneously with the client on goal formulation for that session. The second round the coach introduced instructions to use “My problem is I... and the third round the “consultant” was encouraged to vector the coaching system toward apprehension through keeping an eye on body posture, timing and voice tone. After each round the triads shared learnings with each other that were then shared with the entire group-as-a-whole. We noticed that the triad subsystems continuously imported learnings and undid restraining forces from both prior rounds and from the group-as-a-whole learnings that were then utilized during the subsequent rounds of role-play. This example of growth and development was evidence that we had formed a self-correcting workshop system.

4) Force Field

We then jointly created a force field of driving and restraining forces towards the goal of building a functional business coaching system.

5) SLDS

We ended the workshop with Surprises, Learnings, Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction. I was asked why I did not also include Discoveries. My answer to this was that in business groups I want to avoid redundancy (in this instance, an overflow of information) and that using four categories instead of five made it easier for the participant to sort his/her information into discreet and distinct categories.

The workshop ended with a word play: Do you know what ALINONE really means? It’s an abbreviation of ALL IN ONE, the leading vision of the business; each package to fit in the package size above, and be the package for the smaller one. So in a way we can say that there is a clear similarity between the Alinone business vision and the SCT isomorphic principle! Anybody else?

-Katarina Billman

The initial interview and the termination interview stand as book ends to the psychotherapeutic process. Whereas the initial interview marks the start of a journey, the termination interview marks the place where the person decides to stop, be it for awhile or forever. These two interviews mark the boundaries of the work. Treatment begins with the therapist and client working together to build a system that provides the safety the client needs to begin the work. The client learns to explore concerns, to overcome deterrents to resolving concerns, to confront various demons along the way, and eventually to recognize that in the process he has developed skills that serve him in coping with whatever life throws at him. When this occurs, it is time to stop this particular journey. The point of the termination interview is to mark this spot in the learning clearly and to put closure to a process of intimate connection. The therapist requests the termination interview in addition to the session in which the client speaks his plan to leave. Often the idea is resisted. The prospect of loss is rarely met with enthusiastic endorsement.

The reluctance to say “good-bye” is similar to the reluctance to mourn. It is difficult for most people to face an ending, and so it is not surprising to find one backing away from making a loss concrete, whether it is a literal death or a little death, as in parting. So often people demur, saying that they will see you again, and this is not the end. They have all sorts of reasons and justifications for avoiding the most simple; the explicit “good-bye.” People want to deny the fact that the river keeps flowing, and that should they step in it again, even at the very same spot, it is not the same river. Some of the stones may still be there, but even they have changed from the rush of new waters over them. By the same token, the person who returns is not the same person as he who left. Life has happened to him as well. Only a life lived on the surface can maintain the pretence that all remains the same and that a “good-bye” is not necessary or even desired.

The SCT therapist has similar and different tasks from the traditional therapist in the process of the final interview. While the goal is the same, to give the client the experience of saying a full good-bye, the path to that goal meanders through a territory rich with meaning, and people frequently leave the process feeling accomplished and excited. Whereas in some systems an effort is made to hold the client in the process in order to “finish” the work, in SCT the client is in charge, and the therapist works with the client from that perspective. This underscores the separation as a bittersweet experience, one that frequently is held in the heart for many years to come, and serves as a template for the good-byes essential in life.

When a client determines that he is ready to terminate his work, he is given several tasks by the SCT therapist. As with the initial interview, the time it takes the client to complete these tasks determines the length of the termination interview. It can range anywhere from one to several sessions. The first task the client is asked to do is to summarize for himself the main steps of his journey, to name the actual skills he has

acquired in order to handle the exegeses of life. He is asked to name his milestones, describing each accomplishment. When he has completed this task, he is asked to state where he thinks he is in terms of what is left to do. Since, there is no such thing as a fully evolved person, he is asked where he sees himself on his journey and what else he would like to accomplish. By doing this he provides himself with a road map to be used in his own growth or as a guide for his next therapy should he so desire.

The final task is to take back from the therapist, or, if a member of a group, take back from each group member, whatever it is that he has projected upon them. Other group members do this with him also. In this way, the person has the opportunity to claim for himself all those disowned attributes. While he may not take them in fully, at the very least he has the experience of naming them, the first step toward a claim.

Having done all of this, the person has then come to the moment of saying "good-bye." Often, just the act of saying those words brings a closure to the experience that a hundred words could never express as well.

There is one termination from a group which, while it may not be typical, stands as an example of what can occur. It was not suggested or orchestrated in any way. At the last "good-bye" the group members spontaneously rose and one by one filed out the door in silence. The client terminating stood a little back until all were through the door and shook hands with the therapist. Eyes spoke the words that were not needed, and the person left. The therapy was terminated. The book end was placed in its position on the shelf.

-Bettie S. Banks

GUILT, ETHICS AND SCT

Editor's note: The following article is an exploration between members that occurred over the listserv concerning the topic of "Guilt, Ethics and SCT." The Newsletter group agreed that this was a beautiful example of our membership struggling with a complex and fascinating topic at both a theoretical and practical level. This emergent exploration though functional subgrouping raises some important questions and we hope that you find it as stimulating as we did!

Mark Perlmutter: I've recently come across some research that says guilt is essential in promoting moral behavior and inhibiting immoral behavior. I'm under the impression that SCT treats guilt as a "mere construction," not really a feeling and, in fact, a defense to be undone. If that's true, my guess is that the feelings guilt is a defense against may be the feelings that are actually essential to promoting moral behavior. Can anyone help me with what those feelings might be? Guilt is particularly problematic in that it may either be 1) a present self-targeting for even thinking about a proposed action; 2) a negative prediction about how a person might feel if he/she acts out the contemplated course of action; or 3) a present, remorseful self-targeting once the action is taken.

That query leads me to wonder what are the implicit and explicit assumptions of SCT about what is moral. Anyone have any deep thoughts about that one?

Peter Bernhardt: Great question, Mark- good going. Perhaps guilt, like anxiety is a primitive system - a survival level warning system that we in SCT upgrade with the concepts of membership and the idea of reality testing to determine the cost to the self and the system of certain behaviors.

Tony Petro: I'll join with Peter. I'm curious as to whether guilt can be construed as a default dynamic, closely akin to scapegoating, with the functional goal of stabilizing a social system. No question that it can achieve that goal, but at considerable personal cost, as with many roles adopted with survival in mind.

What exactly do we mean by "moral behavior" and "immoral behavior?" From a philosophical perspective, this gets really tricky; theories of ethics are abundant. I want to say that viewed through a systems perspective, the question "what is moral?" maps to the question "what is functional?" given the operating constraints of the system (role/goal/context + development).

Interesting questions. Anyone else?

Sam Whelan: Perhaps guilt can be looked at in a too simplistic way? If we can look at fear as an emotion that has it's positive and negative roles/aspects i.e., a bear coming at you creates fear and you avoid it (positive/adaptive) or a social situation creates fear so you withdraw excessively (negative/adaptive); can we look at guilt in the same way? If guilt over something (you drove drunk and killed someone) influences you to behave in a more positive/adaptive way (no drinking and driving) do you really want to undo this? If guilt over something (you drove drunk and killed someone) influences you to behave in a more negative/adaptive way (increases your drinking) shouldn't you want to undo this? Is it the guilt we wish to undo or the effects it has on our person and perhaps those around us? Anyone else?

Leighton Hodges: I agree that guilt can generate negative and positive behavior. I think it is a good idea to define our terms here, or at least the situation we are using as an example. I see guilt as a self-targeting emotion of beating yourself up. Guilt in this sense lowers self-esteem and can lead to the guilty party going into all kinds of secondary roles to avoid the unpleasant feeling of self-targeting or to masochistically wallow in it. Drinking more to numb guilt might be an example. The presence of guilt in this, self-targeting sense, is much more likely to lead us to retreat into the person system. Healing is begun when targeting out is initiated.

"Regret" ("I'm so, so sorry") or feeling compassion/empathy for the pain your behavior has caused is more of a sub-grouping behavior which holds an awareness of the context and effects of your behavior on your system. This feeling of regret is also a recognition of the loss that accompanies your awareness of violating your own standards for behavior. There is no self-targeting in this response to your action. It might lead to acts of trying to make amends to those hurt by you. It certainly is more likely to lead one to subgroup rather than remain in the person system.

In this model an open heart is an important part of what keeps you ethical. I think your brain and your standards are

part of it. And it is a life long process of fine tuning your awareness and of refining of yourself.

I was once in a Robert Bly men's group workshop. He asked the veterans to stand up and be recognized for their service and sacrifice. He then said that what is not widely recognized is that when a person is killed there is a grief of the loved ones *and* a grief of the person who killed. The room erupted in sadness as the Vets began to grieve. He stopped the workshop for thirty minutes while the Vets comforted each other and were comforted. I believe this was triggered by his compassion for the Vet's loss of innocence and the emotional weight of the acts they had committed as young men. I believe their response also included some empathy/compassion for each other and for the loss of the families of the people they killed. I believe this event of sub grouping made them more ethical. Anyone else?

Michael Robbins: My first thought is that the deeper reality that the construction of guilt is defending against is the realization and felt experience of the interconnectedness of all of life. This might be a discrimination between the construct of guilt (which in SCT is a collision between a thought or "should" and a feeling or impulse) and the experience of an awakened conscience, which is related to the experience of regret or remorse which Leighton talks about. It also seems to me, that the experience of guilt is more salient to the authority phase of systems development, and that conscience, remorse or regret, is more salient to the intimacy phase. So that when we harm any sentient being, if we were truly in touch with the sensitive web that connects all of life, we would immediately have a sense of remorse that would be experienced as a felt sense of our connection and empathic resonance with the person that we have harmed.

This immediate sense of remorse, as differentiated from the construct of guilt (which is imposed from a sense of compliance to an outside authority) may even apply to something as mundane as littering. In other words, if we were truly awake to our interdependence, after littering we would immediately be aware that we had just harmed the environment that supports and nourishes us.

Perhaps it all goes back to undoing the primary defense of self-centeredness, which Yvonne has called the root of all human suffering. This is very close to the Buddhist understanding of the root of suffering, which the Buddha said is the illusion that we have a separate self.

Following that line of reasoning, guilt as a "mere construct" is based on the primary illusion that we are separate, independent beings. In other words, if we assume that guilt is a construct that is a secondary experience, imposed on us from the outside, it is necessarily based in a dualistic view of existence, as opposed to a fundamental experience of our inseparability, interconnection and interdependence. If we were awake to this reality, which I believe is confirmed by modern science, we would spontaneously act morally and with compassion for all beings. Does that resonate? Anyone else?

Susan Lange: My join is to differentiate constructs from other aspects of guilt. My builds are: Differentiating regret from remorse and from guilt is a driving force toward the goal

of reality-tested criteria for informed decision-making. Regret about our prior choices, e.g., about behavior that contradicts our values, explored, experienced, and accepted in the present is energy for potential change. To build on Michael's example, "I regret choosing to clean out my car by throwing trash out my car window because I really prefer an un-littered landscape and my value for this is more important to me than my immediate convenience." Reality-tested regret is a driving force toward the goal of authentic apology to self and other(s) and to the universe. "I'm sorry that I chose to throw the trash out my window." I can then decide whether to circle back and retrieve it (safety, cost in time and energy, etc.) and that I want to remind my self of this in the future. Differentiating decisions from outcomes can be a driving force to reduce guilt generated by constructed reality. e.g., "I should have known how this would turn out." Anybody else?

Mark Perlmutter: Thanks to everyone for your wonderfully informative and thoughtful insights. I've received one additional helpful comment directly that I'd like to share with the group: that guilt is a cognitive defense against the reality experience of the feelings about having done something that is inconsistent with being true to oneself; that guilt can be an obsessive rumination that does not bring about change; and that being true to oneself is an experience that makes more and more demands the more transformed the person system is.

Given your comments and this information, I want to return to my particular interest in asking the original question and to reframe it: what are the unpleasant *feelings* that underlie the construct of guilt, the avoidance of which feelings is a driving force toward ethical behavior or the pleasant feelings that would come from being true to oneself? And if we are successful at undoing the feelings that are associated with each level of the hierarchy of defenses, what remains to motivate pro-social behavior?

For instance, here's one example of how one might work through guilt: First, anxiety or tension about being discovered or adverse consequences might arise, which in turn may be underlain by self-targeting anger, which in turn might be underlain with anger at an external object, the undoing of which might then lead to discovery of an unsatisfied yearning to make things right or compassion for one's own imperfection. Any resonances, builds, or differences with that?

Michael Robbins: It seems like you are answering your own question as well as building our discussion here. I feel very resonant with the statement that "guilt is a cognitive defense against the reality of the experience of having done something that is inconsistent with being true to oneself." I would like to build on this idea.

I think that to explore the question of what the feelings are that are being defended against at the deepest level (as in your example), one first has to examine the meaning of the phrase "true to oneself." I like that you follow this statement with "being true to oneself is an experience that makes more and more demands, the more transformed the person system is." Let's go a little deeper into that.

It would seem to me that the more transformed the person system is, the less the person is clinging to old maladaptive

roles that hinder the free flow of the life force through the body/mind of the person. A transformed person system is thus fully present in their aliveness so that they can fulfill the here and now demands of their context. A fully transformed person system would then have at its core, a deep sense of dis-identification with any role and full access to the entire palette of possibilities and roles that may be called for to fulfill the goals of that unique context or the system-as-a-whole at any moment in time. In other words a fully transformed person system would be transparent, without blockages or grasping at any level of the body-mind. This fully transformed and transparent person system might then (hypothetically) be said to be at one with the life force that is flowing through every level of the system hierarchy.

Following that line of thinking let us now return to the phrase “true to oneself” and theoretically, see what that might mean in a fully transformed person system. For the purposes of this discussion, let us define the “true self” of a fully transformed person system as a system in which all of the defenses in the hierarchy of defenses, as well as the early developmental, pervasive transferences, cultural transferences, sexual blockages and other polarizations or distortions have been modified. Although, this level of personal development may be impossible to realize in actuality, it may still be useful to look at symbolically as an ideal state that the person system, as well as every level of the system hierarchy, is moving towards.

At the person system level (which would be isomorphic to every other level) the deeper these defenses and blockages in the body-mind have been modified, the more there is a basic shift in the center of gravity away from identifications with any role or polarization. In other words, the person system would be functioning at a very high level of the “work phase” of system development. Functionally, this would mean that the center of the person system is residing in a place of deep neutrality and a mindful witnessing of the flow of the life force through all levels of the system hierarchy. It would also mean that the person system is free to take up adaptive, functional roles for the system.

In the Taoist meditation system that I have been trained in as well as in the Buddhist tradition, this state of being is called a variety of things. Some examples are the Great Stillness, Emptiness, Void, Empty-Fullness, or Neutral Force. This state takes years or decades of practice to uncover or allow to emerge and then to stabilize as a *trait* that the person has relatively permanent access to, as opposed to a *state* that comes and goes. By using the terms “uncover or allow to emerge” these traditions are also making the assumption that this state is already residing inside of us and that through the work of personal development and transformation, paradoxically, we both cultivate something that in our undeveloped state we do not have access to, and recover or remember something that is actually the core of who we already are.

Let us then return to the question of guilt in the light of the preceding train of thought as a “cognitive defense against the reality of having done something inconsistent with being true to oneself.” This cognitive defense, which Mark astutely notes as an “obsessive rumination that does not bring about change,” might then be hypothesized to be a defense against the

continual process of uncovering the deepest core of our essential nature as I have defined it above. This essential nature would be a liberated, “empty-full,” connection with the life force as it flows through our body-minds and through every level of the system hierarchy. This free flowing connection with the life force would also carry with it the primary and secondary needs of all systems at every level of the system hierarchy for survival, development and transformation. The feeling that would be defended against in a transformed person system that is “true to itself” if the experience of guilt arose (or perhaps, in a transformed person it might be more accurate to call it a troubled conscience as I defined it earlier) would be a painful, felt sense of schism or separation from this “true self”, which exists in union with the life force as it flows through every level of the system hierarchy.

The pain of this, as distinguished from the obsessive ruminations of guilt, would then be an intense motivation towards change. It might be like being connected to the power grid one moment and then having the connection shut down, or like having a short circuit in the energy flow that might be experienced as a deep sense of existential anxiety and alienation and a loss of access to the sources of creativity. In systems language, this might be understood as the person being unable to take up his or her member role with authenticity and heart.

The theoretical point here is that the more developed and transformed the person system is, the greater the felt sense of oneness with all of the levels of the system, including humanity as a whole and the natural environment! Thus a fully developed and transformed person system that is true to itself might feel the pain of allowing genocide in a very visceral way and be called to action. It would also be called on to bear with greater and greater degrees of spaciousness the true pain of the suffering in life that we are helpless to change. On the other side the spontaneously arising sense of joy of being at one with the flow of the life force would be an intense positive motivation to behave in ways that are “true to oneself.” The more sensitized and developed the body-mind is, the more acutely would it be aware of the pain on the one side and the spontaneously arising joy on the other.

I know that this was quite a long contribution to our discussion - so I hope that you followed it. Does it make sense? Anyone else?

Jale Punter: Building on what has been said before, my contribution is that the individual system is never without context and it will be the interaction between the person and the context they are in that will determine how much of the uninhibited life force that is possible to access. For example in a system in the flight phase, even our hypothetical ‘fully transformed person’ will experience the restrictions of flight.

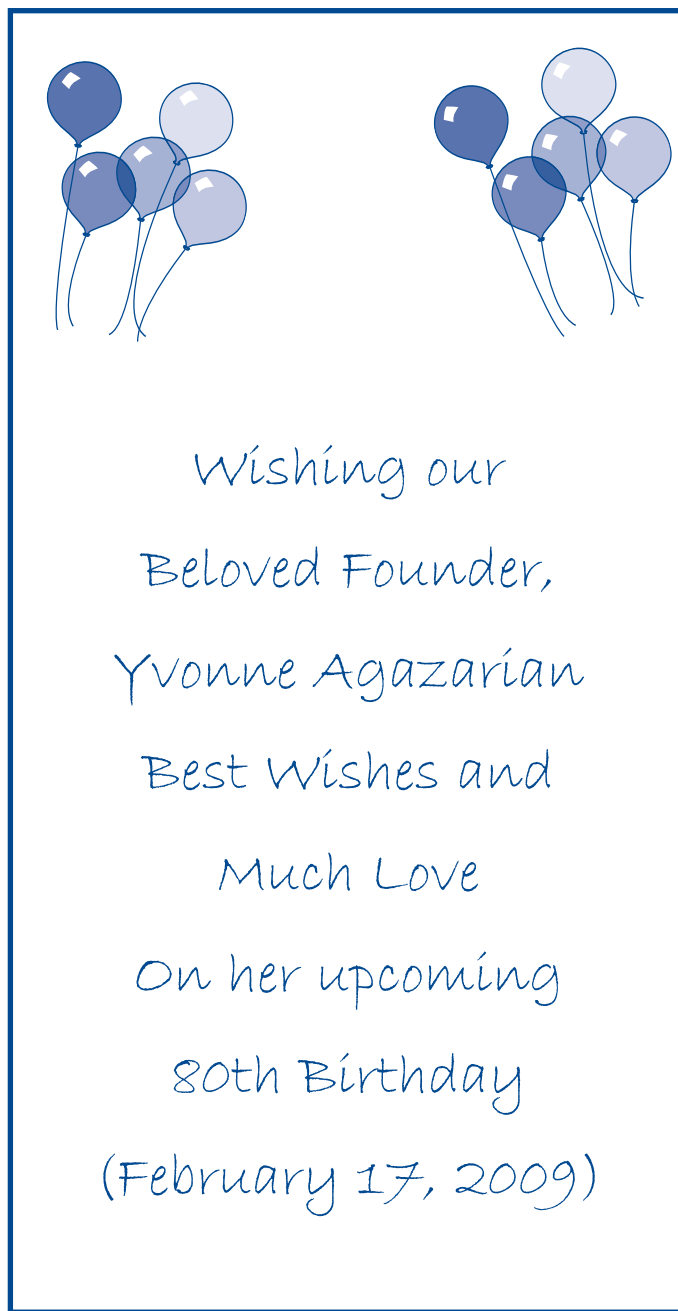
What is moral is also determined by the system, and the rules of society made up by people with the aim of keeping the system stable. Moral behavior in one society and context may be amoral in another at another time.

I was reminded by Yvonne's theory article in the last Newsletter, that “systems are goal directed, primary goals being survival, development and transformation and secondary goals being social goals, the goals we define for ourselves at

work, play and home, and when primary and secondary goals conflict, primary goals take precedence.”

Perhaps guilt occurs when the primary and secondary goals have conflicted and the person system has followed (and we have no choice!) the primary goal, breaking a secondary goal rule. Perhaps we can add that secondary goals, being human made, are internalized authority relationships, and so when they are broken, a 'should' is being violated and guilt ensues. What do you think of these ideas?

(Editor's note: If you would like to build this discussion, which I believe only scratches the surface of a very complex and interesting topic, please consider sending a Letter to the Editor or starting another dialogue on the Community Forum section of our website.)



POEM

For Yvonne, Mentor Extraordinaire, A Toast!

So, old eagle eyes,
you've been circling us protectively,
dive bombing our defenses,
challenging us to test our wings,
for quite a few years now.
The tribe has grown
in strength and competence under your guidance.
Thank you.

Your ruthless pursuit of truth
has steadily worn away
so much dishonesty and self deception,
ours and yours.

I would like to think that we are not the only ones
that are being transformed by this journey.
I don't think that I am wrong.

You have so steadily loved us into BEING,
revealing our inner wisdom and AUTHORITY
and REALITY.

How can we thank you?
How can I?

I want you to know how much I love and respect you
(yes, I know you already know that!)
But it's not just for the grace and clarity
with which you have articulated your ideas,
for they will have to stand on their own,
and bear the test of time.
More importantly it's for the resonance I feel with your spirit,
for the dancing light in your eyes,
the unwavering curiosity of your heart
for your generosity and your humor,
for the sureness of your mastery and how this has allowed
you to be humble enough to also learn from us,
and for how I feel respected and honored and welcomed by you.

I love you
for the little human exchanges we have had around the edges,
for the gusto with which you eat your dinner,
for your dedication in learning Tai Chi,
For the way your voice sings
and cuts through the atmosphere like Fred Astaire,
for your intuitive and raunchy sensuality,
and for your masterful leadership.
(God, you're brilliant - but you know that!)

So, Teacher, Friend, Soul Sister,
may the light of your Being reach out in ever widening circles
may the penetrating twinkle of your eyes live on in me and all of us
and may the elegance of your ideas stand the test of time.

The imprint
of your relentless dedication to Truth and Freedom
will ring down through the halls of eternity.
I extend to you a deep and humble bow,
and join with a great chorus in saying a resounding,
WELL DONE!

- Michael Robbins

SYSTEMS-CENTERED® TRAINING PROGRAM

SCT TRAINING OVERVIEW

There is a wide variety of training opportunities at the four levels of training described below, as well as specialty training with SAVI (a communications model) and with SCT applied to couples and organizations.

Systems-centered training combines group work practicum (where you learn by working as a member of a group), and theoretical and technical training. You can learn about SCT by attending training events at the level that matches your interest and resources, i.e., time, energy and money. These training tracks range from exploring SCT to making a commitment to formal training. The approach to training is functional with less emphasis on “checking off” certain experiences and more on mastering the theory, methods, and techniques at each level of training.

Levels of SCT Training: *Exploration, Foundation Training, Intermediate Training, and Advanced Training.*

Exploring SCT: For Curious People

In exploring SCT you can attend foundation or specialized training events once or as many times as you find useful. Some find the training group valuable for their own development; others want to learn the theoretical approach well enough to compare it to their own; others use elements of theory and technique in their current practical applications. At this level of participation, you are your own guide, sipping or drinking deeply as your interests and resources permit.

Foundation Training: For Learning SCT

Some people discover enough value in SCT theory and practice to consider making SCT a primary orientation to their work. The Foundation training emphasizes learning to use SCT methods with one's self and gaining the personal development and training that comes from working in an ongoing training group with sufficient intensity to explore and contain one's own issues with authority. At a minimum, a training group and some work with theory are foundations to further work in SCT. If you find yourself exploring this shift into more structured training, you should make contact with an SCT Mentor to find out more about the training process.

Intermediate Training

Intermediate training is for those interested in using SCT as their major theoretical orientation and work toward the goal of becoming a licensed systems-centered practitioner.

Members apply for Intermediate training experience after having learned to use SCT as a training group member, to understand basic SCT theory, and to understand and contain the dynamics of their own authority issue. The Intermediate level of training introduces more focus on theory, on the technical skills of SCT, on managing role boundaries, and on containing the dynamics of a system. Intermediate training includes the Intermediate Skills Training, the Intermediate Mentor Training, and the Authority Issue Group. The Skills Training focuses on the technical skills of defense modification in Modules I and II. The Intermediate Mentor Training focuses on the management of oneself in relation to changing roles and contexts. The Authority Issue Group is a training group working the issues of Module III in depth. At the Intermediate level, participants also work in a Theory group and in an ongoing Consultation group in addition to their ongoing training group.

Advanced Training

Advanced training activities emphasize integrating comprehensive and apprehensive knowledge in role, related to goal and context in application settings. One major advanced training track is working as a member of a peer licensing group to build a working group, develop criteria for assessment, and implement a peer assessment process. Joining the Board of Directors is another context for advanced training. An advanced training track is also offered at the annual conference for post-Authority group members and a special advanced training group is offered each summer. Advanced members also work with mentors to develop training opportunities.

USE OF THE SCT® TRADEMARK

Only licensed practitioners of SCT can call themselves **Systems-Centered** anything!

All others call themselves **systems-oriented** and **MUST** be careful not to link that nomenclature to SCT or Systems-Centered.

Anyone who wants to use SCT materials or the terms *SCT* or *Systems-Centered*, and who is not licensed, must apply for a Project License by contacting the trademark holders, Yvonne Agazarian or Susan Gantt (in SCTRI Director role).

SPECIAL FOCUS: FOUNDATION LEVEL TRAINING

This section contains official information about the evolving SCT training program. In this issue we are focusing on the Foundation level of SCT training.

OVERVIEW OF FOUNDATION LEVEL TRAINING

There are two orientations to Foundation level training in SCT. One is to simply explore SCT, learning and discovering as long as it is interesting and useful. The second orientation, which sometimes develops out of the first, is doing the groundwork for continued training at the Intermediate and Advanced levels. The training activities are the same, but the goals are different! This sketch highlights what is involved in Foundation training for people who do want to go on to Intermediate work. (For a full description of the SCT Training Program, go to www.systemscentered.com/training)

GOALS OF FOUNDATION LEVEL TRAINING

- Members experience and practice the skill of subgrouping to contain and explore differences and similarities.
- Members have worked with their own defenses sufficiently to 1) get in the habit of undoing them, 2) be able to manage and explore (vs. enact) their authority issues, and 3) to be able to not take things just personally (that is, to be able to view events from the perspectives of member, subgroup and group-as-a-whole as well as from the personal perspective).
- Members understand the constructs on which SCT is built and what it means that this is a theory-based model.
- Members recognize the difference between fact and opinion, and can use the force field to organize descriptive information about their own driving and restraining forces.
- Members have the SAVI tool for monitoring their communication input to groups they are a part of.

It is also in Foundation level work that members begin to experience the norms and values of SCT and SCTR. This allows people to discover whether SCT and SCTR are a good match for them at the important level of values, as well as theory and methods. One norm that is a little different from many of the training programs people may have participated in, is that training transitions are according to mastery and readiness, not number of events or time in training. Also, the energy to organize and keep moving in

training comes from the members, as they assess their time, energy and resources.

The specific training activities which enable people to meet these goals at the Foundation level are:

- Work in an ongoing SCT training group (working in a system, subgrouping, undoing defenses, doing force fields).
- Work in an SCT theory group.
- Take the basic two-day SAVI workshop.
- Work with a training mentor to assess your driving and restraining forces in relation to the criteria for moving toward Intermediate training.

Other training activities that contribute to skill development are SCT consultation groups, workshops, the annual conference, and working in SCTR action groups.

If you would like to talk with someone about your interest in systems-centered training, contact Kathy Lum, administrator, at (404)-378-5709 or admin@systemscentered.com, who can connect you with someone in your area. Or check out the website at www.systemscentered.com.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR CONFERENCE 2009!

SAN FRANCISCO

Pre-Conference Institutes:

April 18-19, 2009

5-Day Conference:

April 20-24, 2009

for more information go to:

www.systemscentered.com

SCT[®]RI REPORTS AND UPDATES

SCT[®]RI IN A NUTSHELL: THE ORGANIZATION

SCTRI is a volunteer organization. All roles (except Administrators) are filled with volunteer members who have time, energy and resources for the tasks. Working in an SCTRI Action Group is a learning environment for applying SCT in the service of task goals.

Board of Directors: Sets policy, oversees organizational direction, structure and function. This group meets twice yearly; selects, supports and guides the Director; and is made up of members at the advanced training level and beyond.

Director: Carries the organizational vision and values, oversees implementation, represents the organization to the larger world.

Research Director: Develops the research function with goals of fully integrating research into SCTRI and crossing the boundary to the larger world.

Steering Group: Implements policies and links Action Groups. Selected by and acts with the authority of the Board of Directors between its semi-annual meetings; meets weekly.

System Mentors: Keep an eye on the overall functioning of SCTRI and system-centered training with the goal of maintaining the spirit and values of SCT. Mentors consult to members and Action Groups as needed, and hold the final authority for accepting recommendations for licensing individual members as SCT practitioners.

Action Groups: Small groups of members carrying out specific aspects of the work of SCTRI.

Currently:

- Annual Conference
- Continuing Education
- Curriculum Development
- Electronic Communications/Web
- Fundraising
- Membership
- Newsletter
- Research
- Trainers

Administrators: Carry out organizational tasks under the supervision of the Director and the Steering Group..

STEERING GROUP

Over the past six months, the Steering Group has focused on its goal of providing a context to support the emergent energy in the organization and of linking resources in the system.

In July, the Steering Group took a new approach to supporting members' emergent energy for taking up roles in the organization. We hosted two meetings to provide members an opportunity to explore taking up roles. At one meeting, members who have expressed some interest in taking up the

role of Conference 2010 Directors were joined by current and former Conference Directors, as well as the Steering Group, and we functionally subgrouped around the driving and restraining forces for taking up the Conference Director role. The following week, the Steering Group hosted a meeting for those members of the organization who have completed the Authority Issue Group and are eligible to join the SCTRI Board of Directors. Several current members of the Board also attended this meeting and, again, we functionally subgrouped around the driving and restraining forces for joining the Board. In both meetings, interested members had an opportunity to ask questions and to relate to the energy of those who have experience in the roles. Through the spontaneity of functional subgrouping, we discovered or re-discovered the richness of training that these organizational roles provide, and we opened the boundary of our work to others in the organization, who expressed enthusiasm and appreciation for having an opportunity to explore the roles before making their decisions.

The Steering Group has also continued to support the emergent roles in the organization by meeting with Nina Klebanoff to develop the role of Treasurer and with Rich O'Neill to develop the role of Research Director. We have also offered resources to the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Study by allocating funds to hire leaders to build a Recruitment Work Group for the study and worked closely with the Web Group, reviewing the content and supporting the launch of the new website.

We have continued to link resources through our monthly Open House meetings, offering support to various Action Groups and helping the 2009 Conference Directors to take up their roles and build their conference system. Our Summit Meeting in May provided members of training groups and regional centers throughout the U.S. and Europe and opportunity to develop our system-as-a-whole by functionally subgrouping around the leading-edge work and (exciting) discoveries that are being made in the various groups throughout the system.

We are excited about the ways in which the Steering Group is evolving and using our SCT skills and methods in support of the organization. As more members of SCTRI join Action Groups and take up the tasks of the organization, the energy and the resources in the Steering Group are freed up to focus on issues of policy and vision - which supports our goal of making SCTRI a living experiment of the Theory of Living Human Systems.

*-Susan Gantt, Dorothy Gibbons,
Joy Luther & Michael Silverstein*

CONFERENCE 2009

Plans and preparations are well underway for Conference 2009! We were very fortunate to fill all essential roles for Conference 2009 immediately following Conference 2008! This allowed us to keep the momentum going without

interruption. We are pleased to announce the title for this year's Conference: "BUILDING SYSTEMS THAT WORK!" We like its concise sound, and we believe that it will pique the curiosity of newcomers. We are very excited to be celebrating the tenth annual conference this year!

Weekly phone bridge meetings, which started in April, continue with impressive regularity, despite the inevitable and much needed summer breaks that each of us has taken. The historical perspective which is held by Kathy Lum and Jan Vadell is invaluable in keeping us on track. Kathy has created an official "Timeline" document for time sensitive events which will become yet another tool for future coordinators.

Our monthly Conference Coordinators Group Meetings (CCG) began in June. In these meetings we are building our system and structure, as well as supporting the various roles which are required to bring the Conference to fruition. Our Program Coordinators and Mentors, Jim Peightel and Susan Karpenko are providing us with a well attuned learning container, in addition to crafting the content of the Conference. Thank you to all who submitted proposals, and to Jan for her essential role in processing them!

In keeping with our theme of providing practical building blocks of theory and techniques, we are exploring new ideas to give attendees complete, discrete pieces of theory and practice outside of the extensive time commitment of the morning ongoing training sessions.

Don't miss out on the \$200 Conference registration discount available by booking your room at the Holiday Inn Golden Gateway. Additional discounted rates are available to early registrants through February 28th, for first-time attendees from the Bay area, and for full time students. Check upcoming brochure and website for details.

And of course, the Conference would not be complete without the usual Monday night dinner and dancing, and Thursday night theme party. Get out your britches and cowboy boots! It's back to the "Gold Rush." Our party plans include something for everyone; some theme music to enjoy during our buffet dinner, some free-style dancing DJ'd by our beloved Steve Weinstein, some line dancing for those who like a little more structure, and who knows, maybe even some panning for gold! Other highlights which have now become time honored traditions will include our silent auction, prizes, and informal gatherings here and there for singing and sharing Conference learnings and person system stories. We all know how quickly the time goes, so before we know it we will be seeing you all again - with new faces as well - in beautiful San Francisco at the Holiday Inn Golden Gateway.

-Jim Grund & Holly Johnson

CONTINUING EDUCATION _____

The CE Group is currently functioning smoothly and meeting its goals. Conference 2008 was a success from a CE perspective, with members from a variety of professional groups earning continuing education credits in psychiatry, psychology, social work, counseling, marriage therapy, and group therapy. The work within the CE group has gone so well that we have been able to reduce our meeting time and to use structures we already have in place to complete the ongoing tasks. Conference 2008 was co-sponsored by the Northeast

Society for Group Psychotherapy, and we are hopeful of getting their endorsement for the upcoming year. This endorsement allows us to provide continuing medical education units to medical practitioners. My thanks and congratulations go to the members of the CE Group; Kathy Lum, Jan Quirl, and Norma Safransky for working hard to achieve these successes.

The CE Group continues to be fun to work in, and is a living example of a systems-centered system working efficiently to accomplish tasks. If anyone is interested in joining us, I'd love to talk to you about this work group in which you can both learn and make a contribution to SCTRI. Please contact me at dickganley@aol.com.

-Dick Ganley

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT _____

We are continuing to develop a fuller description of the systems-centered training curriculum to mount on the newly released SCTRI website. Our goal is to make the information easily accessible and easily comprehensible by both our new and long-time members. SCT training has become more complex as time has gone on – and we are working to keep up! We would really appreciate feedback. If you are interested, look at the description currently mounted under SCT Training Program, in the Training section of the website. Let us know what helps and what hinders!!

*-Claudia Byram, Fran Carter, Susan Gantt,
Dorothy Gibbons, Mark Johnson & Madeline O'Carroll*

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS _____

You will have seen, hopefully, our big news – the new SCTRI website! We are pleased, delighted, proud, excited, curious – and a little apprehensive too! Launching a new platform with more interactive access creates exciting potential for our organization, and we wait with baited breath to see how we all develop it. The largest innovation is the Forums: sort of mini-list-serves that each member can put themselves on or off at will. Go and look! And, come and join our meetings if you have ideas to improve or develop the site.

*-Claudia Byram, Rowena Davis, Lucy Fine, Roelof Langman,
Kathy Lum, Michael Silverstein & Alida Zweidler-McKay*

FUNDRAISING _____

Our Action Group continues to meet regularly to discuss possibilities for fundraising. So far we have identified one donor who has incorporated into their will, a sizeable donation to SCTRI upon their death. While this person wants to remain anonymous, the hope is that this might encourage similar ideas.

We hope that Nina Klebanoff, SCTRI's new Treasurer, will help us with her expertise in providing a more specific direction for identifying funding sources outside our SCTRI system.

If you have interest or expertise in fundraising, please join us! We are meeting on the telephone bridge on the first Friday of every month at 10:00am EST.

*-Verena Murphy, Elaine Pratt, Jim Peightel & Jan Vadell
December 2008 - Systems-Centered News*

RESEARCH

An exciting development is the formation of a European SCT Research group, including Susan Gantt, Christer Sandahl, Sven-Eric Viskari, Ray Haddock and Jale Punter. They plan to do a comparative study of SCT and CBT psycho-educational groups with a clinical population. The work is at the stage of designing the study protocol and recruiting sites where comparisons will happen. Anyone else, who is interested and has energy to contribute, is welcome to join this group.

Rich O'Neill continues to work on the functional subgrouping study, collecting data from various groups and completing any revisions to the scale before collecting validation data. Rich is helped by two of his graduate students (recipients of the Yvonne Agazarian Research Scholarship for the 2008 Conference), who are also in the process of transcribing the notes from the Austin Board meetings for SAVI coding by Verena Murphy, a certified SAVI trainer.

Verena Murphy has been working on establishing inter-coder reliability with Marty Eggenberger, a volunteer, with Claudia Byram and Anita Simon serving in the role of SAVI consultants. Since early efforts showed mixed results when the transcripts were coded independently (72%, 78%, 85% reliability), Claudia suggested that two coders code the transcripts together. Result: 100% reliability when comparing 108 codes, and 97% reliability when we include those codes that required a discussion and checking the definitions before coming to an agreement. We discovered that differences in the earlier coding system we had developed are mostly a result of different training levels, not consulting the code book, and slight imprecision around coding every 3 seconds. The next step is to establish validity!!

- Rich O'Neill, Larry Ladden, Verena Murphy & Jale Punter

SUMMIT MEETING

The bi-annual Summit meeting for SCTRI was held on the phone bridge on May 13, 2008. The goal of the Summit is to provide members from all training groups and regional centers an opportunity to learn from each other and to develop our system-as-a-whole by functionally subgrouping around the leading-edge work and exciting discoveries that are being made in the various groups throughout the system.

We started by hearing about how Atlanta has built on the Philadelphia Center's practice of hosting a potluck Roundtable several times a year after a training event. Atlanta is showing clips of the HBO show "In Treatment" and having a follow-up discussion about what kind of system is being built in the therapeutic sessions. Members of the Atlanta SCT community invite their friends and colleagues for these lively discussions. Several members at the Summit meeting commented on how starting with a popular TV show is a great way of beginning with a common interest and it provides a live example of how we often miss "systems" because we are thinking "people."

This difference between "systems" and "people" led to a discussion about how we see this distinction in operation in SCT. The Philadelphia Friday Training Group with Yvonne

recently had an experience of exploring the difference between being a "good, bad member" or a "bad, good member," recognizing that inside the system we are always members, not just people and that all our behaviors are driving or restraining forces for the group. We subgrouped around the importance of building a system that can energize and contain the work, with members bringing in examples of how the GAD study is focusing on building a system to recruit subjects for the research projects, and how the licensing groups are building systems to support the task of licensure.

Our focus on "systems" rather than people continued as we looked at the fact that our attendance at the Summit meetings has declined in the past year, yet members who do attend report satisfaction with the cross-fertilization and the opportunity to see the larger system at work. We compared this trend of declining attendance to difficulties that some of the training groups are facing in getting new members for groups and workshops, and the lower number of members who are moving through the training track. One hypothesis is that, as members, we do not pay attention to how we transfer information across the boundaries of our groups to the larger system. For example, it is phase appropriate for members of the Authority Issue group or for members of groups that are in disenchantment to be struggling, and we wondered if we were bringing information about the group process across the boundary in a way that reflects a personal experience rather than the group's work—which could discourage others from taking the next steps in training. This took us back to the difference between thinking "systems" and "people."

As we looked at the Summit Meetings, we recognized that we value the space that the Steering Group creates twice a year to focus on training and regional centers. We acknowledged that the information that comes in through these meetings is enriching for all levels of the system—from SCTRI as an organization, through the training and regional centers, to the individual members. We also wondered whether or not we have clearly communicated the goal of the Summit meetings to the larger organization. A member from a training group suggested that one restraining force might be the term "Summit" which connotes a hierarchical meeting. As a first-time attendee, she stated that instead of reporting in to the organization, she was surprised and satisfied at how much she enjoyed the experience of functionally subgrouping with members of other training groups and discovering some new and exciting developments in the different groups.

In the next few months, the Steering Group will explore the driving and restraining forces of the Summit meeting in its current format and will functionally subgroup around ways to change the format or to create more relevant contexts for the transfer of information and energy about the leading edges of trainings and regional developments throughout the organization. We value the cross-fertilization and the diversity of information that the various groups and centers hold for the organization and we are open to any information members or groups may have about the driving and restraining forces of our current Summit structure. We

also welcome any suggestions you may have for creating a different context for this cross-fertilization.

- Dorothy Gibbons

SYSTEM MENTORS

We (the System Mentors) want to let you know about the development of our assessment resource for the work samples that members will submit for review in the licensing process. This summer we have been building on the work we began last year: developing a group of licensed members who will be able to undertake the Licensing Assessment process for our organization. We are getting closer to having a work group and a process that will be independent of the System Mentors, who have been carrying this function while the organization developed the resources to take it on. We are very excited that the time is nearly here.

The Developing System: So far, Katarina Billman, Susan Cassano, Erica Ekedahl, Larry Ladden, Susan Lange, Nina Klebanoff, Dave Schwing, Heather Twomey and Sven-Erik Viskari have participated along with Claudia, Fran and Susan. These licensed members have self-selected based on their time, energy (interest) and resources. As we work together we are building a system which has the potential to function independently of any individual member. Our goal is to have a “pool” of members to draw on whenever we get new samples to review.

The Review Process: Together with the Licensed Group, we first developed a “norming” processes to test for reliability. We formed small task groups with at least two members in each group. Each member reviewed the 3 submitted samples and then met with their small group for review and “norming” with a broad sense of whether the applicant was “licensable,” “provisionally licensable” or “not yet licensable” based on the data from the application and criteria set out by the licensing group. The three small groups then met together as a group-as-a-whole to integrate the information and subgroup around the driving and restraining forces in each sample and across samples in the context of both the criteria set by their licensing group as well as one or two additions the group developed. In each case, we discovered there were both similarities and differences and the actual range of difference was small. We had a high degree of reliability in our teams and cross teams.

Through the functional subgrouping process, the group-as-a-whole was able to reach consensus with all three applicants and make formal recommendations to the trademark holders. We are pleased to find the assessing process is rapidly approaching a time where it will function independently from the System Mentors with abundant energy and resources.

At this point, we are finding the work of assessment both energized and expedited by the resources of the Licensed Group, and look forward to learning more as we move forward together with you.

-Claudia Byram, Fran Carter, Susan Cassano,
Susan Gantt & Sven-Erik Viskari

TRAINERS

The trainers group has met a few times since the Conference and continued its earlier discussion on the subject of centering. At the Conference there was significant interest, numerous discussions and workshops that directly or indirectly approached the subject of centering. One afternoon at the Conference the trainers met for one hour with a focus on centering led by Merete Brantbjerg. Many trainers are experimenting with centering at the beginning of trainings, as well as in therapy contexts. As our group has been working on this issue for a number of meetings, we clarified some of the common threads we are discovering in centering.

Though emphasis and the language used are different from one leader to another, the goals are similar: centering into both the apprehensive self, and the given context, freeing the bound up energy in tension through intentional breathing and scanning for tension (and maybe areas of no sensation - similar to Merete’s work at the Conference), so that the freed energy can be directed to the various goals of the context. One way to describe the work of centering is that it develops resources. Another is that centering helps the brain shift into a proper working order and supports the work of reducing the defense systems.

Some members reported that having too much repetition of the same words in centering can be irritating and it seems fresher to experiment with emphasizing different aspects of this process. Encouraging members to lead others through the centering exercise can build skill and offer fresh perspectives. The particular work environment calls for different levels of centering (OD, training, consultation, therapy), with a range being described from work groups benefiting from a few sentences and some silence, to a more extended version when preparing for experiential work. In addition, we discussed the various orientations a leader may have to centering based on the development of the system - teaching the actual skills of centering, as different from members accessing existing centering skills.

We are also discussing the advantages of standardizing the beginning of each group vs. emphasizing spontaneity by leaving it up to the various leaders/trainers. Overall we are excited to see the development of this work on centering, as we continue to learn how important it is to the work of SCT, and how all levels of our organization are involved in discovering its usefulness, power and indeed, its various, creative implementations.

Finally, we consolidated our earlier discussions about the discriminations between therapy groups and training groups and organizational groups: therapy groups are oriented to reducing restraining forces in the person system in context, while training groups are oriented to reducing restraining forces in the role of member of a training group or organization in context. Another way to conceptualize this is that a therapy group is person related and a training group (or organizational system) is role related. No doubt, there is more to follow!

-Rich Armington

MEMBERS FORUM

This is a community forum for posting announcements on related trainings, personal life events, awards, letters to the Editor, and responses to articles that have appeared in our Newsletter.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS:

Koprowska, J. (2008). *Communication and interpersonal skills for social work* (second edition). Exeter, UK: Learning Matters.

Maher, M. & Street, C. (2008). Child and adolescent mental health services in England. In Kaye & Howlett (Eds.), *Mental Health Services Today and Tomorrow- Part 2* (pp.83-93). Oxford: Radcliffe.

Punter, J. (2008). Book Review: *Mindfulness and mental health. Group Analysis*, 41, 216-217.

RECENT PRESENTATIONS:

This section lists recent presentations by members to reflect the increasing presence we have in the communities outside of SCTRI.

Susan Gantt and Heather Twomey are presenting a workshop titled "*Functional Subgrouping for Working with Differences and Conflicts in Groups*" for the Atlanta Group Psychotherapy Society on December 13.

Susan Gantt is leading an institute on functional role-taking and a workshop on functional subgrouping at the Spiritual Care Collaborative Summit in Orlando in February 2009. The Summit is the joint effort of 6 pastoral care, counseling and education groups.

SCT was well represented at the Group Analytic Society's 14th Annual Symposium in Dublin in August. Yvonne Agazarian and Susan Gantt led a workshop titled "*From*

despair to desire and beyond: The systems-centered methods for group transformation." Una McCluskey led an attachment workshop and Ray Haddock did a panel paper session on SCT.

Ray Haddock, led a presentation titled Depression, despair dialogue and desire; Transformation in a systems centered group at the 14th European Symposium in Group Analysis in Dublin, Ireland. August 2008.

Michael E. Silverstein, Ph.D., presented a workshop on group dynamics to the Immaculata Predoctoral Internship Consortium on Nov. 14th, 2008. The workshop included lecture, discussion and experiential demonstration groups done in a fishbowl, focusing on the Theory of Living Human Systems and its System-Centered methods.

Do you like us with a little color?

We're experimenting with adding some color to our Newsletter while trying to contain expenses. We'd love your feedback.

Please write to
Jan@systemscentered.com
and let us know what you think.

**CONGRATULATIONS
to our newly licensed
System-Centered Practitioners!**

**Ray Haddock
Robert Hartford
Joy Luther**

LETTERS TO EDITOR

Response to “Large Group Takes a New Step at the SCTRI Conference,” by Susan Gantt; June 2008 Newsletter.

Dear Editor,

Beginning to explore racial issues and difference using functional subgrouping was a most impressive development in the Large Group at the Conference on two accounts. Firstly, it very hard in large groups (30 +) to think and to explore anything in a coherent way. Secondly, SCT has conceptualized race and ethnicity groupings as stereotyped subgrouping and hence a restraining force to the work in the here-and-now (Agazarian, 1997).

The fact that the Large Group has developed to the extent that it is possible to explore and work on organizational and larger system issues, is evidence of the effectiveness of the method of functional subgrouping, even in large groups. Median group size (12-30) usually lends itself better to surface societal dynamics (de Mare, 1990). These are referred to with the concept of the social unconscious in the group-analytic literature (Hopper, 2001) which refers to internalized unconscious relationships (roles) relating to gender, social class, racial or other social differences. My hypothesis is that the functional subgrouping technique brings the level of functioning of the large group close to that of a median group.

Through the work of this Large Group (of more than 100 people), which continued work from the median group (12-30 people) at the November Philadelphia weekend six months previously, I have learnt that there are times when it is useful to acknowledge and explore the social unconscious (perhaps we need different terminology for this in SCT) for system development. Talking of roles relating to visible differences is not always defensive. I am very curious to explore what determines and how to spot when such exploration is for defensive purposes and when it is in the service of the development of the system-as-a-whole.

-Jale Punter

Dear Jale:

Great observations and an interesting hypothesis linking experience in SCT to related group literature. I certainly join in acknowledging the impressive work of the large group at the Conference continuing to explore racial issues and difference. From a systems perspective, our group is similar in structure and function to other systems in the hierarchy of living human systems and subject to the same dynamics of any group of individuals, large or small, with stereotype subgroups forming spontaneously to organize energy in familiar and stabilizing ways, e.g. importing social norms and stereotypes from the larger context and establishing a familiar pecking order.

Functional subgrouping interrupts or disrupts stereotype subgrouping while preserving stability by instead requiring us to organize around similarities and differences relevant to our system goal. The relevant similarities across stereotype subgroups are usually greater than the differences between

them and when explored serve to develop and differentiate the group-as-a-whole into a more complex system in which obvious differences in reality can then be explored for differences that make a difference and lead to even greater system development and complexity. Therefore, as you note, exploration of obvious or visible differences is not always defensive but depends on the context, in particular the phase of development of the group or system.

Your references to the work of de Mare (1990) and Hopper (2001) identifying the additional dimensions of group size and member characteristics, respectively, suggest several directions for discussion that I hope will be explored at greater length in future editions of the Newsletter, perhaps at the Conference, and other contexts in SCT.

-Jon McCormick

References:

Agazarian, Y. M. (1997) *Systems-centered therapy for groups*. New York: Guilford, Reprinted Karmac, London 2004.

de Mare, P. B. (1990) The development of the median group. *Group Analysis*, 23 (1), 113-27.

Hopper, E. (1996) The social unconscious in clinical work. *Group*, 20(1), 7-42.

Follow-up to “Using the Force Field to Support Personal Development” by Roelof Langman; June 2008 Newsletter.

Dear Editor,

In SCT we have a tradition of adding a list of playful “true or false” statements to our Conference workshop descriptions. One sentence from my article “Using the Force Field to support Personal Development” in the previous Newsletter would be an interesting candidate for the list on the Authority Issue Group. The sentence reads: “In the Authority Issue Group, we use force fields to support our personal development.” The statement, as members of the AIG know, is false.

Before each AIG meeting, all members create a force field. Just like all SCT groups, the members are co-responsible, co-creators of this group, that creates a system for the exploration of the issues related to giving and taking authority. The individual force fields are about taking up membership in this particular context. All force fields together form a map of how we are doing in relation to our goal as members of this group. The force fields support the development of our system, which is a bit different from supporting our goals in the field of personal development.

The goal of the article was to help cross-pollination. It gives an answer to the question: is there anything we're learning in the AIG that could be of use to other members of SCTRI? The attempt was to generalize from our learning, shifting perspective from drawing up these personal force fields to personal force fields in general. I realize we've

stumbled over the doorstep, and I write “we” because the Newsletter Editor was involved. My original wording was unclear and an editorial improvement resulted in a sentence that was much clearer, but wrong. This created a useful opportunity to highlight how the personal force fields created to support the work of a group are different from personal force fields that aim to support personal development.

-Roelof Langman

Thank you, Roelof, for the useful discrimination between personal force fields that support the work of a group vs. personal force fields that support personal development.

Clearly in editing your article, I misunderstood your meaning! In the rush of getting the Newsletter through the final processes of printing, I do not always have time to check my editorial changes with the original author. Therefore, although I created a sentence that was clearer, overall, I introduced ambiguity and noise. Thank you so much for bringing this to my attention! You have my deepest, heartfelt apologies. The bright side is that I am grateful for such a clear example of a self-correcting system! I will certainly be more careful in the future.

-Michael Robbins
Newsletter Editor



Systems-Centered® Training New DVD's

“Decoding Gestures: When Your Body Knows Something You Don’t Know”

Excerpts from “Ten Sessions of Individual SCT Work: with Yvonne Agazarian (2008), 45 minutes). *Featured at the SCT Annual Conference in San Francisco, April, 2008.*

“Ten Sessions of Individual SCT Work”

The complete set of all 10 sessions with Yvonne Agazarian using SCT with an individual.

Proceeds from these sales go to SCTRI, a non-profit organization.

For more information: Contact Kathy Lum, Administrator at 404-378-5709 or admin@systemcentered.com or visit our website at www.systemscentered.com

Order Form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Country _____

Decoding Gestures: When Your Body Knows Somthing You Don't Know

Members \$175 Non-Members \$200 Quantity _____ \$ _____

Ten Sessions of Individuatl SCT Work

Members \$1000 Non-Members \$1050 Quantity _____ \$ _____

Enclosed is a check payable to “SCTRI” Shipping* \$ _____

Please charge my credit card Total \$ _____

Account # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

(required for credit card)

*Shipping cost will vary and will be applied at time of shipping.

Mail or fax completed order form & payment to:
SCTRI, PO Box 2118, Decatur, GA 30031 U.S. Fax 404-378-8970

SCT® and Systems-Centered® are registered trademarks of
Dr. Yvonne M. Agazarian and the Systems-Centered Training and Research Institute, Inc., a non-profit organization.

Systems-Centered® Training Annual Conference 2009

San Francisco • April 18-24

Complete program is available at www.systemscentered.com

Name: _____ Degree: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Country: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

E-mail: _____ Fax: _____

***Join SCTRI now and save on registration fees**

___ \$125 new member ___ \$175 membership renewal ___ \$50 full-time student
(more if you can, less if not)

___ I'd like to make a tax-deductible contribution to SCTRI

Registration	\$	
CE's (\$35) or CME's (\$50)	\$	
Monday Dinner (\$45)	\$	
Membership	\$	
Contribution	\$	
Discount *	less	
Total Enclosed	\$	

Send registration and payment to:

SCTRI
PO Box 2118
Decatur, GA 30031 U.S.

or fax to 404-378-8970

___ Check enclosed (payable to SCTRI) ___ Charge to my credit card:

___ Visa ___ MasterCard ___ American Express

Account Number: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Month/Year

Signature: _____

Required for Credit Card

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FEES

Save by staying at the Holiday Inn Golden Gateway! See discounts below.

	Early Registration Nov. 1 – Feb. 28		Registration after Feb. 28	
	Member	Non-member	Member	Non-member
5-day Conference	\$795	\$835	\$820	\$845
7-day Package	\$1,190	\$1,275	\$1,245	\$1,305
2-day Institute	\$470	\$490	\$475	\$515
1-day Institute	\$235	\$250	\$240	\$260
1-day Conference	\$200	\$210	\$205	\$215

*** Discounts available! Deduct:**

- \$200 if you are staying at the Holiday Inn Golden Gateway hotel & registering for the 5- or 7-day package
- \$150 if you are a first-time attendee from the local area & registering for the 5- or 7-day package
- 50% off your registration fee if you are a full-time student

Refunds and Cancellation Policy: Full refunds minus a \$50 processing fee until March 15, 2009. After this date, no refunds will be made.

*SCT® and Systems-Centered® are registered trademarks
of Dr. Yvonne M. Agazarian and the Systems-Centered Training and Research Institute, Inc., a non-profit organization.*

Systems-Centered[®] Training and Research Institute Membership Application/Membership Renewal 2009

Membership Benefits:

- Bi-Annual SCTRI Newsletter
- SCTRI Membership Directory
- Membership Section of SCTRI Web Site
- Peer Mentorship and Consultation
- Lower Fees for Training Groups
- Monthly Drop-In Study Group on the Phone

One must be an active member in the Systems-Centered Training and Research Institute to:

- move to Intermediate level of training
- apply for a license to use the SCT trademark
- participate in the SCTRI Action Groups
- be eligible for work exchange program

SCTRI members serve as mentors to one another and make themselves available for 10-minute free consultations.

Please check appropriate box: SCTRI New Member SCTRI Renewal

No change to my directory listing (fill in name & payment info only)

Name: _____ Degree: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Fax: _____ Email: _____

Please add me to the SCTRI email listserv so that I can stay up to date on what's happening _____

Are you willing to host/house visitors from out of town or foreign countries? Yes ___ No ___

House _____ Host _____ Arrange for visit to hospitals or clinics _____

Fees (more or less*): Introductory New Member Rate: **\$125** Renewal: **\$175** Full-Time Student: **\$50**

**Membership is available to anyone who wants to join. If you can afford to pay more than the stated rates, your additional contribution will further support the work of our organization. Otherwise, we welcome your membership for a fee at-or-below the stated rates. You are free to decide what is affordable for you.*

Enclosed is a check for \$ _____ payable to SCTRI, or

Charge \$ _____ to my Visa, MasterCard, or American Express

Credit card number: _____ Expiration date: _____ / _____
month/year

Signature: _____

Directory Information:

Discipline: _____

Specialties and Areas of Expertise: _____

**Send to: SCTRI Membership, PO Box 2118, Decatur, GA 30031 US
or fax to 404-378-8970**

*SCT[®] and Systems-Centered[®] are registered trademarks of
Dr. Yvonne M. Agazarian and the Systems-Centered Training and Research Institute, Inc., a non-profit organization.*

Systems-Centered® News

Systems-Centered Training and Research Institute, Inc.
PO Box 2118, Decatur, GA 30031, US
www.systemscentered.com



SYSTEMS-CENTERED® TRAINING EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS

Annual Conference Building Systems That Work

**APRIL 18-24, 2009
San Francisco**

- **Individual, Couples and Group Psychotherapy**
- **Organizational Development Applications**
- **Conflict Resolution Techniques**
- **Research and Theory Related to SCT Practice**
- **Therapeutic Mind-Body Approaches**
- **SAVI® Communication Strategies**
- **Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced Training Groups**

Pre-Conference Institute, April 18-19 • 5-Day Conference, April 20-24

Registration form on page 22. Full brochure available on website at
www.systemscentered.com

More Inside...