



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Functional Subgrouping as Human Research

We describe functional subgrouping as a method for conflict resolution, and of course it is! Yet, as we keep using it in more and more contexts, we keep discovering more of its uses and potentials. I want to recap one of these from our recent SCT Conference.

The Friday afternoon workshop revisited Phil Zimbardo's Stanford Prison experiment (<http://www.prisonexp.org/>). In his experiment, Zimbardo had randomly assigned undergraduate volunteers to be either a prisoner or guard in a prison simulation. The situation and roles induced significant hostility and aggression in the guards toward the prisoners and a mixture of passivity, depression and defiance as well as increased aggression in the prisoners.

For the SCT workshop, Yvonne Agazarian and Bill Roller played a ten minute clip of Zimbardo's video showing the guards and prisoners interacting, with their behaviors eerily foreshadowing the abuse in the military prison in Iraq, Abu Ghraib. The group in attendance was then asked to subgroup to explore which of the roles, prisoner or guard, they identified with while watching, and to explore their experience in this identification.

The subgrouping emerged quickly as many who were watching had strong responses. Those identifying with the guards felt powerful, in control and confident that they were doing what needed to be done to maintain order. Those identifying with the prisoners surfaced the defiance and determination. Less vocal was the identification with the passive prisoners and the feelings of depression. This beginning exploration led to a direct experience of the human responses that get aroused in such a situation. For many of us, this was a distressing experience, although it also deepened our understanding of the roles and attitudes that are easily aroused in us by the context.

Shifting our lens on this workshop to a wide-angle perspective, we can see this as an example of functional subgrouping as human research. This use of functional subgrouping helps us surface what we know as humans about human potentials and learn more about the challenges that participants in Zimbardo's study faced and that the military guards and prisoners in Abu Ghraib lived.

Both the prison study and the live example in Iraq are quite dramatic. When we are reading about them in our newspapers or online, it is all too easy to blame the specific people and have only a dim awareness that these same actions are human potentials in all of us. In fact, using functional subgrouping for human research means both working through the feelings we have about our human potential and gaining knowledge of our human potential so that we can then create different contexts that enable us to manage our sado-masochism differently.

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SCTRI Mission Statement:

Knowledge and Research. A primary purpose for this organization is to contribute to knowledge with the theory of living human systems and to do related research in long- and short-term change strategies.

Education and Training. A primary purpose for this organization is to continue development of methods of systems-centered education and practice and to train systems-centered practitioners to serve the community.

Community Development and Contribution. The organization will introduce SCT strategies for change to organizations, groups and individuals in private, public and clinical settings.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Members,

The Newsletter is one of the primary ways that we share information with each other and the world outside of SCTRI. As such, it is a medium through which we both get to know what is going on inside of SCTRI as well as how SCTRI interfaces with the larger professional, social and economic realities that we are nested within.

It is no secret that the pace of change is accelerating. Socially, politically and economically our world sits on the brink of changes that could potentially launch us into a whole new era of political and social equality, or descend us deeper into international conflict and economic despair. Predictably, the microcosm of SCTRI and personal lives reflects the movements that are occurring in the world around us. Predictably, the different ways that members are applying the Theory of Living Human Systems to the changing context of our world is reflected inside of these pages.

For example, in the Theory, Research and Applications section, Bettie Banks has written a sensitive and erudite article about how members of an SCT training group used functional subgrouping to help them work through their feelings in relationship to the current economic crises. Verena Murphy has also written an article about how she is using SCT in a class on group dynamics that she is teaching for Business majors at her university. Finally, Mark Johnson has written an article comparing Self Psychology and SCT, which helps us all to expand our understanding of the similarities and differences between the Theory of Living Human Systems (TLHS) and this extremely important psychological approach.

Our Founder, Yvonne Agazarian, has contributed three articles on aspects of SCT Theory that will deepen your insight into particular aspects of TLHS and its application. The first is concerned with the boundaries between past, present and future and how this relates in a very practical way to building a systems-centered system. The second concerns the basic building blocks of functional subgrouping, centering and undoing distractions and how important these methods are in SCT practice. Her last article concerns the differences between the psychological technique of interpretation and the SCT preference for interventions.

You will also find a section with a special focus on Foundation level training in SCT. This section will help you to develop a more sophisticated understanding of SCTRI's emerging training program.

The Newsletter also contains Reports and Updates from the various action groups. These reports reflect an organization that is growing, changing, and consolidating its structure into a form that is stable, flexible and vibrant.

All in all, this edition of the Newsletter is expressive of an organization that is moving from a fragile young sapling that could be easily blown over, into a young tree with firm roots and a trunk that is thick enough to withstand the winds of economic and social change.

As always I want to thank the marvelous staff of the Newsletter for their tireless efforts and contributions in putting this all together. Michael Silverstein, Bettie Banks, Verena Murphy, Yvonne Agazarian, Kathy Lum and especially Jan Vadell; this Newsletter would never complete the journey from idea to physical manifestation without your help. Thank you

for being such a fun and hardworking group!

I hope that you enjoy reading these pages. Please let us know your responses. I wish you a summer that is filled with peace, happiness and good health.

Until our paths cross again,

-Michael Robbins (michaelrobbins@rcn.com)

EMERGING THEORY BY YVONNE AGAZARIAN

BOUNDARIES BETWEEN THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Based on the reality that the present is the only arena in which problems are solved, systems-centered techniques deliberately shift energy from the past to the present, from the future to the present, and from the wishes and fears of the present, into present reality. The underlying assumption is that although neurological pathways to the past or the future determine familiar thinking patterns, the maladaptive aspects of those patterns can be modified by developing new neurological pathways that process information about the past and predictions about the future in the context of the present.

TIME TRAVEL CHART			
	PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
Interpreted Reality	Interpretations of past reality	Interpretations of present reality	predictions about future reality.
Experienced Reality	awareness of the past in different contexts	Facts about the present reality	common sense goals and plans

adapted from Lewin (1951) by Agazarian

In the figure above, the three top squares represents interpretations of reality, the reality that is generated by thoughts, and probably predominantly right brain. The three bottom squares represent the reality that has as its source sensory experience. The SCT goal is to make the boundary permeable between the two by encouraging reality testing.

There are specific SCT protocols for crossing the boundary between the different regions. For example, negative predictions about the future generate anxiety in the here-and-now, even though the thoughts have no validity. SCT members are asked if they can tell the future, and when they acknowledge that they can't for certain, they are asked how they feel for themselves (and all others) that, in an attempt to explain uncertainty, human responses tend to skew towards anxiety provoking interpretations. (Perhaps one of the differences between SCT methods and some of the methods of cognitive therapy is the necessary connection between the cognitive recognition of the defense and the its emotional impact. Grief at the cost of the defenses is an emotionally driving force towards change.)

Each "line" that separates the different time dimensions is conceptualized as a boundary between explanations of the

world on the one hand, and emotional experience of the world on the other. There are two boundaries to cross in undoing negative predictions, the first from the future ir-reality to the present, and then from present ir-reality to the experience of the present when it is no longer contaminated by ir-reality. This and other SCT methods are designed to develop a 'researcher role' in members (a role in which the person develops an observing self-system that discriminates and integrates reality tested information).

A different kind of boundary is the boundary between the three dimensions. Certain work requires collecting information in the present, other kinds of work require using the past as the source of information. For example, asking how the present is different from the past directs attention to the present. This intervention is particularly useful in encouraging members to recognize that it is the repetition compulsion that is skewing their experience. In SCT this is particularly important when diluting transference responses. Freeing perceptions of the present from the past is particularly important in undoing the roles and role locks that inevitably develop in the group. In contrast, when the focus is on recognizing the stimuli that are inducing the transference responses in the present, or when, in a later phase, the exploration of transference is the work, then asking the question "how is the past similar to the present?", directs attention to a past context.

FIRST BUILD THE GROUP

As SCT assumes that group dynamics have a greater influence on what a member can do or not do in a group than the members own psychodynamics, the work of the systems-centered therapist is to first build the group. This is different from the methods by which the therapists follow the emergence of the group with relatively little interference. SCT therapists influence the norms that SCT groups develop by introducing specific structuring methods. Thus every step along the way of the developing group there are specific methods that are designed to weaken the restraining forces that inhibit the system drive to the goal. What gives members freedom and autonomy in SCT groups, is that they are free to choose which fork-in-the-road to explore first whenever there is a conflict. Thus the SCT therapist establishes the structure but SCT members discover their own ways of using it.

Functional subgrouping: The first structure to establish is functional subgrouping, the method which potentiates the discrimination and integration of differences (both a necessary and sufficient condition for the survival, development and transformation of living human systems.) Functional

subgrouping is the basic building block of SCT groups. SCT subgroups are characterized by functional subgrouping (as opposed to stereotypical subgrouping based on social, gender, racial or economic stereotypes), without which, the group is still a group, but not an SCT group

Thus, in building the group, SCT leaders explicitly train their members to subgroup. From the system perspective, it is the person system that provides the energy for the role that the member system takes up in the group context. It is the member system interactions that fuel the subgroup systems, and in turn, the interactions over time of the subgroup that develop the identifying characteristics of any particular group system.

All members, in all groups, spontaneously come together around similarities and split away from differences. When this spontaneous subgrouping competes with the goals of leadership, it is easy to give it the bad name it is given in some group therapies (Yalom). This is true when one observes subgrouping around stereotypes and is certainly true when one subgroup scapegoats the other, as it does when the group splits into stereotype subgroups like men and women, black and white, friend and foe, us and them, etc.,. It was to address these splits between different subgroups that SCT developed the methods of functional subgrouping. The SCT management of subgrouping gives SCT groups their character.

Thus SCT leaders explicitly train their members to take up roles in subgroups as a driving force in reaching system goals. Probably all group leaders implicitly train their members to fill the roles that will serve as driving forces to the goals, and as members develop the appropriate norms, they spontaneously subgroup. But driving forces in one group may be a restraining force in another. For example, the goal of a psychoanalytic group is to make the unconscious conscious. Thus roles that are appropriate to a cognitive behavioral group, in which methods of cognitive analysis move the group along the path to its goal, would be a restraining force in an analytic group where free-association is the driving force. Similarly in an interpersonal group, following the leader in the process of putting pressure on a single member to change would defeat the purpose of a systems-centered group where the major driving force is to explicitly subgroup functionally without the leader so that information can be discriminated and integrated by the subgroup members themselves.

The Centering method: Once functional subgrouping is established, SCT groups have a standard protocol for encouraging members to cross the boundary into the group. The first boundary is between the explaining brain and the exploring brain. One of the goals of SCT therapy is to make the boundary appropriately permeable between cognitive understanding and experience. With this boundary sufficiently permeable, members can learn to tell the differences between feelings that are generated from thoughts and feelings that reflect experience. The method is called ‘Centering’ and all SCT groups begin with a few minutes of centering.

Centering is designed to focus attention as one breathes deeply into oneself. The protocol requires members to take

three breaths, become aware of how the breathing ‘in’ lightens the energy in the body from the waist up and how in breathing ‘out’ the energy reaches the center. Pausing at the center increases the depth of experience. On the third in breath, the request is to bring the energy up from one’s center into one’s awareness, to open one’s eyes, widen one’s gaze, and bring oneself into membership of the system of group.

This structure fulfills one of the goals of SCT. It gives a clear structure which is vectored towards the member’s experience. It transfers the locus of leadership to the member, the therapist asks them to take three breaths, but the rhythm in which they take them is their own choice. In the service of the goal of the member’s autonomy, the therapist gives the instruction in a neutral voice. The neutral voice discriminates the SCT centering instructions from some meditation instructions which when delivered in a dependency inducing, semi-hypnotic tone, which can sometimes also induce a trance. Parenthetically, the main difference between centering and mindfulness meditation is that the goal is to cross the boundary between the person system and the member system and focus on the group. Thus the last input from the therapist is to request members to bring themselves up, open their eyes, widen their gaze, and perceive the group. (Widening the gaze brings members into the here-and-now and discourages them from personalizing their relationships.)

The next step in crossing the boundaries into an SCT group is called “distractions or news.” News opens the boundary for members to bring important happenings that are “news not work!” It is often at this time that members report successes or next steps that build on the work that was done in the preceding group.

“Distractions” encourage members to cross the boundaries from outside to inside and from the past, the future, and the present. Distractions have a set structure which encourages the member to describe the distraction in descriptive language, and to separate the facts from the feelings. This is an important training step in that it brings to the members attention that feelings can be generated from the thoughts as well as from experience, and that the brain does not know the difference. Feelings “feel” the same whether they are real or interpreted experience! It is also in this exercise that the member is encouraged to discriminate between thoughts from the past, thoughts about the future and thoughts about the present, outside or inside the group. (Again, the brain does not know the difference between feelings generated from memory, future predictions or the current context, but the mind can learn.) As soon as the member is reality oriented, they are asked which feeling they want to bring into the group, meeting each members’ eyes so that the two of them can contain the feeling between them. It is this silent connection that brings members across the boundaries and into the group. The exercise ends with the research question “are you more here, less here or the same?”

These two methods for bringing people out of their personalized systems so that they can cross the boundaries into the group influence the nature of the subgrouping that takes place. Members have confidence, that when they bring their work in, they will have the support of a subgroup. They also

know when work has been pre-empted, either because a new subgroup starts without waiting to see if the group is ready, or a member monopolizes, and loses the support of the group. Thus, it is the members themselves that monitor the group, focus on joining and building on each others work, and stay alert for when a member is inadvertently dropped.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INTERPRETATIONS AND INTERVENTIONS

One of the major differences between SCT and both analytic and psychodynamic therapy is in the approach to interpretation. The difference requires discriminating between interpretation and intervention. Interpretation usually frames the members' experience in both a containing and a re-organizing way. Interpretations may be vectored towards the pre-conscious, unconscious or conscious. Interpretations to the conscious often include bringing to the client's attention experience that the client had ignored. Pre-conscious interpretations can bring to the surface insights that have not quite crossed the boundary from the pre-conscious to the conscious. Spontaneous, empathic interpretations to the unconscious often use the language of the unconscious, like metaphor or paradox and irony.

In contrast, systems-centered therapy prefers to vector towards interventions. SCT interventions are predominantly related to providing the structure within which the members' work is done. For example, establishing functional subgrouping intervenes in the group process and sets up a structure with the assumption that the discrimination and integration of differences will be potentiated. SCT assumes that the discrimination and integration of differences is both a necessary and sufficient condition for the survival, development and transformation of all living human systems. Without the structure of functional subgrouping there is no systems-centered group.

Interventions have different goals from interpretations.

Whereas interpretations are typically oriented to the person in psychodynamic therapy, or to the group in group-as-a-whole therapy, SCT interventions are oriented to the system. Systems-centered therapists intervene to the person system, the member system, the subgroup system and the system of the group-as-a-whole. For example, a fundamental intervention is to the person system, enabling the member to distinguish between personalizing and being a member of their person system. Taking things just personally creates a system that ignores the context, and sees the world only from a personal point of view. SCT assumes that taking things just personally is the source of human anguish. In contrast, when there is an awareness of a wider context than just oneself, there are many perspectives on the same event. Seeing things from more than one point of view does not create anguish, and allows the integration of normal human happiness and unhappiness.

There is another difference between interpretation and intervention. Interpretations vector towards the emotional experience of the member. This does not necessarily mean that the experience generated will be explored. Attuned interpretations are often integrated without full consciousness. In contrast, many interventions engage what SCT calls the 'observing self-system'. Mobilizing the observing-self-system is like turning on the researcher. For example, the anxiety protocol either reduces anxiety or it doesn't. Exploring the impulse to scapegoat either resolves scapegoating or it doesn't.

All SCT interventions are hypotheses that can be tested in reality. Because SCT is a theory driven system, each intervention is a hypotheses that is being tested in the realities of the group. If the predicted outcome does not occur, then there is something wrong. It may be that the intervention was mistimed, misapplied or out of context (like when an intervention is premature in relationship to the phase of development) or it may be that the theory itself has failed. It is thus that systems-centered therapists have the additional role of researcher - testing the validity of the theory and the reliability of its practice by seeing whether what follows is in the direction of the predicted outcome.

THEORY, RESEARCH AND APPLICATION

SCT AND SELF PSYCHOLOGY

Introduction: Last year, we were fortunate to have Dr. Walter Stone offer a presentation of Self Psychology at the annual SCT Conference in San Francisco. He is the latest in a growing number of clinicians and practitioners to share a working model in this context. This article briefly lays out the major tenets of Self Psychology and then looks at some of its differences and similarities with SCT.

Self Psychology Overview

SCT owes much to psychoanalytic psychology for its theoretical underpinnings. As an integrative model, SCT has absorbed constructs such as the unconscious, (*See Editor's note on SCT and the unconscious*) regression, transference, and defenses. Among the variants of psychoanalytic practice, the

evolution of Self Psychology (e.g., Kohut, 1971) is of particular interest to SCT practitioners. Derived from the pioneering work of Heinz Kohut and the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis, Self Psychology helped move psychoanalytic psychotherapy from an "id" psychology, familiar to both Freud and neo-Freudians, to an "ego" psychology that is still prominent today.

At the center of Self Psychology theory is the assumption that psychopathology is the result of unmet or disrupted developmental needs. These "narcissistic injuries" result in the need for "self-objects", i.e., those objects, persons or activities that completed the self in order to allow for normal functioning. The self, therefore, is a key variable of the theory along with self "defects." Constructs such as empathy and empathic failures, mirroring, idealizing, alter ego/twinship and the tri-polar self are introduced. Interested readers can see

Kohut (1966; 1971) for a further explication of his model. (Jung, too, had a focus on the self, seeing it as an archetype which resulted from the integration of one's personality, i.e., the end point of individuation.)

Of particular focus for clinicians is the use of empathy as a tool. Empathy is understood in Self Psychology as a therapeutic skill that is describable, teachable, and critical to the understanding of the patient's subjective world view. To this end, therapists are taught to engage in "vicarious introspection" (also known as empathy) so that they can understand and explain (i.e. interpret) the experiences being described by their patients. How this transference relationship and the ensuing countertransference unfold is seen as diagnostic of the narcissistic injuries suffered in childhood. It is expected that this would be especially meaningful when a patient's preferred self-object was not accessible. The resultant "optimal frustration" was ideally solved imaginatively. When this fails, "surrogates" are created. The unraveling of these surrogates, via transference interpretations, is at the heart of the work. A key component to the therapy is the "empathic immersion" of the therapist in the subjective experience of the patient in order to understand and interpret reality from the patient's perspective (Ornstein, 1997).

Key Differences with SCT

Agazarian (1997) has written of the fundamental differences between SCT and psychodynamic groups (pp. 84-86). A "major difference" she identifies is in boundary management. "Defensive communications (in psychodynamic therapies) are not filtered out as they cross the boundaries. In short, psychodynamic therapists pay attention to all communications, whether they increase or decrease symptomatology; SCT therapists do not... (The) SCT group climate is developed...by developing norms within the group that are low on explanations and high on exploration, that is low on interpretations and critical judgments and high on reality testing" (p.29). This is a key point, as the regulation at the boundary of the "raw material" for therapy fundamentally shapes what follows. As a result, SCT therapists "follow a road map that indicates which dynamics should be addressed first, and which should be avoided until certain phases of group development have been mastered" (p.84). (See Agazarian, 1997, pp. 36-39 re: defense modification in the phases of group development.)

Another difference is in the fact that not all group therapy models support the conceptualization of predictable phases of development that occur across all groups. Most pointedly, this separates SCT from models without a construct of the group-as-a-whole distinct from the individual members.

Progression in therapy highlights another pair of key differences: working with the unconscious and working with past memories. In the first case, SCT works to discover and explore reality in the present rather than understand the unconscious through the activation of the transference and countertransference that allow uncovering and recovering past memories and experiences. By extension, working with past memories is actively discouraged by SCT therapists in the first phase of group development. The rationale behind this bears

special emphasis:

"Roles and relationships in the nuclear family are only addressed after group members can see things from more than one perspective, specifically, after they can see not only from the pain of childhood frustrations and disappointments but also from a systems-centered understanding of the roles in the family system. This transition does not occur until the group has moved through its preoccupations with authority figures and into the phase of intimacy.... Thus, for SCT to work, it is necessary to establish before the major dynamic issues of therapy are addressed, a depathologizing understanding of dynamics common to all living systems" (p.85).

Transference is also handled differently in SCT, as it is worked in the context of the phase of group development rather than as it spontaneously emerges during the course of therapy. That is, SCT therapists structure the series of defense modifications such that the simpler "secondary" transferences, which are more accessible to the consciousness of members, are worked early on, e.g., in the undoing of social defenses and during the flight sub-phase of the authority issue. Systematically undoing cognitive defenses, projections onto identified patients and scapegoats, and role work, follow. Such a progression is not the goal of a Self Psychology oriented group or individual therapy.

Finally, SCT group leaders explicitly structure the group's development from the very beginning of the first group meeting and at all subsequent group sessions. Contrast this to the beginning of a typical psychodynamic group that invites members to offer freely whatever they are thinking to the group for use as material. In this model, interpretation and intervention by the therapist will usually occur only after the group has developed its own structure. Conversely, SCT therapists shape the group structure to conform to SCT norms.

Key Similarities with SCT

The similarities between the models tend to be more conceptual than methodological. Both models recognize the following:

- A construct of the Self, akin to the Person system in SCT, which captures the essence of potential energy for living
- The unconscious as a source of information from either the Self or Person system
- Transference as an important source and means whereby information from past reality is brought into the present context
- Defenses as ways in which reality is distorted
- Regression as a driving force to help re-experience the past in the context of the present
- Separation and individuation as expected arcs in developmental trajectory
- Narcissism as a root cause for the etiology of psychopathology, e.g. narcissistic injuries (Self Psychology) and self-centeredness (SCT)
- A clear prohibition regarding acting out
- A goal of bringing experience into reality, in the here and now
- A valuing of empathy in both the therapeutic context as

well as in life

- Appreciating that humans need the experience of "alikehood" (Self Psychology) or of "being joined" (SCT) in order to explore and grow
- An appreciation of the developmental consequences for separation-individuation of being able to integrate differences from the initial basis of finding commonality/similarity

Conclusion

Thus, while these models are clearly different in their practices, they share much in terms of concepts and values. SCT practitioners can learn much about the clinical underpinnings, not only of our model, but of development in general, by understanding more about Self Psychology. Of particular value is an appreciation for how individuals manage the wounds of their early histories in the genesis of roles. These adaptive attempts to keep our caregivers close enough for them to be the good enough versions we need sets the stage for much of character development. How that is worked through in therapy will differ, but knowing more about how to think about and understand these universal human dilemmas can only improve our functionality as therapists and consultants. Your thoughts and comments on these two approaches are most welcome.

Any surprises, learnings, satisfactions, dissatisfactions, or discoveries?

-Mark Johnson (drmarkj@valley.net)

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* Editors note on SCT and the unconscious: "One of the goals of SCT is to make the boundary appropriately permeable between apprehensive and comprehensive experiences, apprehensive being a verbal and comprehensive being verbal. A group or an individual must work through the phases of Authority and Intimacy to reach the Work phase - and it is in the Work phase that the pervasive transferences emerge for understanding. The pervasive transferences emerge from what more traditional therapy would call the unconscious, as the pervasive experience is a verbal until it is accessed and explored. Throughout the phases, the SCT model moves, over and over again, from apprehensive, a verbal, somatic experience (preconscious, accessed through exploring rather than explaining) which then connects to feeling. The words for the feelings then connect with our comprehensive capacity, and 'explanations' are then based on internal present experience. As Marianne Bentzen proposed in her workshop at the 2009 SCT Conference, the route of development is from sensing to feeling to thinking. To sum up, the unconscious in SCT refers to the apprehensive experiences that we have sensed but have

not yet been able to formulate comprehensively with words into feelings or thoughts." Yvonne Agazarian, personal communication, with Michael Robbins, May 2009.

SCT IN THE MANAGEMENT EDUCATION CLASSROOM

When former students of my "Individual and Group Behavior in Organizations" class (a required course for juniors in a four-year Business major) come up to me with a big smile and say that they still have conversations with members of that class months later, I consider my course a success. In one class, three students became such good friends that at graduation they called it "the best experience" of their undergraduate career.

The students tell me that it is unusual to relate and care about other students in a class beyond the end of the course. In other classes they quietly take their seat in rows, take in the information presented by the instructor, perhaps express some opinions on a topic when prompted, and then leave the class more or less "incognito." The structure makes it difficult if not impossible to relate to someone who sits behind them or in front of them.

So, how do students form such bonds in my classroom? I hypothesize it is because I'm implementing SCT theory. During a semester we meet twice a week for 75 minutes, and our goal is "to become a working group", the specific meaning of which remains a mystery until they discover it for themselves later in the semester.

In the first 15 minutes of each session I present one or two principles from the Theory of Living Human Systems (for example, "living human systems live in a hierarchy," accompanied by a picture of Russian Nesting dolls). After "titrating" bits of theory first, we organize ourselves into a circle and practice moving from our "person" to our "member" role in our small "organization" of 13 to 26 class members.

We differentiate between our two sources of information (comprehensive/apprehensive) and learn to reality test by exploring our negative predictions and mind-reading as they spontaneously occur during sessions.

Right away we practice "functional subgrouping" where we learn to build on an idea, opinion or experience first, before moving on to exploring the differences. We also attempt to discriminate new things from what we already know (exploring vs. explaining). Since it is not a therapy group, the students mostly prefer to "explain" and tell stories.

After tolerating much ambiguity and frustration, the class members eventually discover what it means for them to be a "working group" - organizing themselves to come to a consensus on a problem they all face. The group's stated problem usually has to do with how they want to have their exams, in-class vs. take home exams, individual vs. group tests etc.. They learn that their group lives in the context of the system "above" them and that they have to check with me in the instructor role, which requires me to implement and uphold the rules and regulations of the university, to see if the decision they have reached by consensus is possible.

They learn that structural changes are not possible due to the structure /regulations of the system above, while within

their own system they have room for making adjustments that move them towards their goal. Thus they learn to differentiate the spirit of the law from the letter of the law.

We conclude each session with 10 minutes of Surprises, Learnings, Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction, or Discoveries. This helps the students consolidate what they have learned in the class and make the transition out of student role and into whatever role comes next.

We spend 45 minutes of class in an experiential session after which we review the “phase of development” the group was working in. We assess the phase of development based on the behaviors observed in the class, and compare them with what the theory predicts. I show these theory predictions at the end of class on a power point slide. This is often illuminating and surprising to them, as their behavior is usually so nicely detailed and predicted on the slides! This also serves as a useful tool for them to learn not to take what happened just personally.

Learning how not to take the students’ responses to me just personally is also my task as an instructor (isomorphy). Each semester I can predict that I will encounter a phase of feeling dread when walking into the classroom (or even when I’m just thinking about the class!) Naturally, we proceed through the phases of development the theory predicts. It is when most of the students are completely frustrated with me and the course, which is “the most stupid” course they have ever taken and they are saying such things as: “Who wants to sit so exposed in a circle?” and “Why can’t the instructor just give us a book to make things easy and predictable and something we are used to?!” that it is most difficult for me not to take things personally.

Thank goodness that by then the students have learned enough about discriminating “having a feeling/opinion and exploring it” vs. “acting it out” so that no one has yet reported me to the Dean as “one of the universities most inept instructors,” while they are going through their authority issue. Instead I can report just the opposite, as last week I received a nomination for the “Distinguished Teacher” award.

After each class, the students are required to write a 2 page reflective journal entry about their group experience, which I collect twice during the semester. What I am discovering is that the phases of development are evident in the students’ journal entries. These journal entries have become data for a future research paper.

In reviewing the journals – my only “conversation to individual students” during the semester, (unless they see me during office hours), I take great care to use SAVI Green and Yellow Light behaviors in my comments. For example, I might use Green Light communications such as Positive Statements, (Square 9), or asking Feeling Questions (Square 7), or use Yellow Light behaviors, such as Narrow or Broad Questions (Square 5) instead of Red Light behaviors such as Leading Questions (Square 3).

I hypothesize that the students walk away from my class with a capacity to continue to relate in an authentic way with former peers long after the class has ended because they have worked through the Phases of Systems Development together. During the class, they were able to explore and normalize their retaliatory impulses (e.g. stereotyping), explore the fight phase

rather than act it out inside or outside the classroom, as well as move beyond this phase to targeting and “overthrowing” the leader, and then form a bond as a group against their leader to make their own decisions regarding the types of exams they’d rather have, (if they are “forced to have exams”). After having taken up their own authority and made such a decision they realize that they have just taken a major step towards the group’s goal: becoming a working group!

--Verena Murphy (vmch99@hotmail.com)

THE EFFICACY OF SCT IN LOWERING STRESS

The stress of the global financial crises has taken a toll on people from all walks of life, but nowhere has it been more evident than in the group of “soon-to-be” or “already there” retirees. People who carefully saved and invested their money thinking that they were securing a safe and secure financial old age have seen those retirement accounts reduced by as much as 40% with the added stress of being at an age where it is not likely that they will ever recoup their losses. Plans to live the good life in whatever form that took in their minds have fallen to earth with a crash, leaving folks anxious and fearful. Younger investors had a no less dim view of their situations as they rode the crest of economic successes down into the depths of recession where their possessions became their chains, holding them to a standard of living they could neither support, sustain, nor escape.

A group of experienced intermediate-level SCT therapists and consultants came to their experiential group in the fall of 2008 at the height of the financial debacle. Since money is the new sex, no one mentioned the subject. We live in a culture where the discussion of money is considered gauche at best. Bragging about wealth or the accumulation of wealth is simply not done. It is far more likely to be acted out in the building of a six bathroom “McMansion” or the purchase of a boat or enormous car, or in the jewelry and clothing of trophy wives. The New York Times breached this taboo with an article with an accompanying photograph about a society matron in a Southern city who was digging into the recesses of her closet to bring out last season’s \$5000 Chanel gown to wear to a charity gala rather than buy a new one. However, that is quite different from actually mentioning anything personal about one’s financial well-being or the lack thereof.

The group began in the usual way with centering and the suggestion that any distractions be undone. The group announced their presence and readiness for work. However, no matter what gambit was introduced, the group remained essentially dead in the water. Subgroups initiated were dropped almost immediately. It was an unusual and puzzling experience until finally one member said that he was hemorrhaging money and there appeared to be no end to it. From that point the group caught fire. Functional subgroups formed, and as members joined the subgroups and explored, the group grew in depth and complexity. The levels of stress initially hidden and contained were exposed and explored fully. All of the feelings and defenses of anger, fear, remorse, panic, despair, blame, outrage, depression and helplessness spilled

out. The group worked with this material with full energy and came back the next session and continued the work. As they did their work, the stress that previously had been palpable in their levels of tension and expressions of feeling appeared to drain away.

The process of lowering stress in these group members took approximately two sessions before the group turned to other matters. The external stress did not change in that time frame, and, in fact, it remains relatively unchanged now some six months later as spouses are affected by the loss of employment and requests for consultants and therapists has tapered off. What changed was the handling of the stress, the way members learned to think about it, feel about it, and deal with it. There was no denial of the reality of the economic debacle or its impact on the individual life styles, but much of the anxiety and helplessness disappeared. The distress disappeared; the stress was lowered to under the radar.

Because the experience of those two group sessions was so valuable and effective in reducing the level of stress in the members, and because the same upset experienced by those therapists continues to be prevalent in clients as well as in other contexts, it seems useful to look at the driving and restraining forces that occurred in those two meetings. In this article, driving and restraining forces will be named, and System-centered methods and techniques will be examined in the context of lowering stress.

The first clear driving force was in the naming of "hemorrhaging of money" as could be seen by the immediate joins from other members in a functional subgroup. What happened was that what was implicit in the earlier failure to join, the lack of energy, and the general malaise of the group was made explicit in the naming of that which was being left out. Since the collapse of financial giants on Wall Street was paramount in the news and affected every group member, the failure to introduce this topic as a distraction keeping working energy out of the group served as a restraining force to being genuinely present and ready to work. The recognition of this distraction by a member and his willingness to speak it quite literally eliminated that restraining force, thus freeing the group to subgroup around a topic with which they all had resonance. The energy was high. Gradually, differences emerged, and subgroups were formed around those differences. The group-as-a-whole had an ebb and flow to it that allowed for a deeper and deeper exploration of attitudes, closely held beliefs, areas of shame, and areas of dysfunction.

There are a number of benefits provided by functional subgrouping that perhaps get forgotten by simply subsuming them under the name, and it was these benefits that also acted as driving forces for the group in its exploration of the taboo topic of money. For example, the simple act of having someone join on the basis of a similarity is tremendously driving. A member's exposure of some belief can feel extraordinarily risky until another member can mirror that experience with resonance and attunement. The support that the member receives then allows for further and perhaps riskier exploration, leading the group deeper and deeper. When the norm is to explore the similarities first and then explore the differences, the differences do not feel personal but more a part of the natural course of things. There is much less need to

defend one's position and more willingness to listen to the position of others. With a subgroup, much that would not be okay as an individual feels acceptable and less personal. There is a way that a member can hold onto him or herself and his or her subgroup while also attending to the views of others. There is no greater reminder of the human need for community than in the experience of a functional subgroup. And the same can be said for the need for diversity.

One of the major restraining forces that emerged in the group very early was the distortion of boundaries in time, space, and reality. As group members risked more to reveal closely held beliefs, the prevalence of negative beliefs about the future and fear based on those beliefs came to light. The SCT techniques of shifting from living in the "as if" world of magical thinking by undoing the negative predictions proved to be possibly one of the most helpful of the techniques. Even though this was a group of experienced SCT members, the anxiety and fear based solely on negative predictions was high. An additional driving force was the trainer's insistence that once the negative prediction was "undone," that the member then state what the reality was, in terms that were specific and clear. No vagueness was allowed. Sometimes the reality was an unknown, and the member could choose between continuing to function in the "as if" world of his nightmares or face the unknown with curiosity. Over and over again the group went through this familiar ground, each time having it go deeper into the psyche until every member appeared to own it, and there were no compliant hold-outs to the old way of being. Everyone in the group left far less stressed even though nothing had changed in reality.

To put what happened in theoretical terms, as all of the noise in the system was reduced (the ambiguity, the predictions of dire consequences, etc.) information could cross the boundary and become discriminated and integrated by the subgroups. By the same token, the isomorphic relationship between the subgroup and the individual member of the subgroup allowed the member to also take in, discriminate and integrate information. Through this process the goal to survive, develop and transform occurs, and the group emerges from the process more capable of coping with the stresses so prevalent in the environment.

The next time the group gathered, there was little hesitation in getting right down to work. In the external world more bad news had emerged, and members whose propensity was more weighted in the outrage/blame column were not containing well in spite of their attempts to appear, and be, reasonable. Financial and political leaders were a natural target, and the outrage over their indiscretions was strong. Getting from outrage to actually feeling the anger was a driving force as was the making room for frustration that heretofore had been constricted. This was an active, energetic subgroup that worked with the anger and frustration, and that energy was driving for some and restraining for others. The others were basically silent until space was made for their silence to become verbal, and it was discovered that they were sinking into depression by blaming themselves for various things they either did or did not do to protect themselves from financial loss. The emphasis on facing the reality of what is by the trainer was driving. Again discernible tension and

frustration seemed to melt away as the group wrestled with all of the issues involved. The Theory of Living Human Systems predicts that as a group undoes flight defenses, it moves into the fight phase with the defenses of that stage emerging. This is what occurred. As the group came to grips with their flight defenses, it could move on to the fight phase and wrestle with the characteristic defenses of that stage, outrage, depression and the boomerang against the self.

A further driving force for the group that was evident in both sessions was the work that members did on their habitual roles. Some members were aware of old roles that pop up each time they experience severe stress, and some members were startled to discover roles that were out of awareness until this group. As more and more material came to light, the various roles became easier to spot and move away from. The group compared their experience in the role with their experience when free of it, an exercise that proved to be quite driving. When in a role, the experience is generally felt as a real feeling around some issue of importance to the person. When out of the role, the person is confronted with the disparity between what was sensed as genuine and discovered to be other. When one sees the world solely from the perspective of a specific role, this discrepancy can be quite destabilizing until the person gets a firmer grasp of the role, what triggers it, and how the world looks from the inside of the role. Only then can an accurate differentiation be made, enabling the person to experience a sense of a cohesive character.

In looking back on what happened last fall, it seems clear that the extreme circumstances in the financial world deeply affected the group members, and the group moved right into the flight phase with all of its accompanying difficulties. Many members found they could not access their common sense, a reaction that occurs when differences are too different to integrate and defenses are elicited. They could not think clearly and were yanked back to a time when they felt helpless, dependent, and betrayed. They were overtaken by anxiety, fear,

and panic, forgetting that they were ordinarily competent adults with access to both comprehensive and apprehensive functions. In addition, they had been trained to embrace the reality of the present and to problem-solve with the tools provided them. Add to that sense of being out of control the determination to appear otherwise, and a group in flight is bound to emerge. The efficacy of the SCT model was certainly showcased in this instance. That members could move from internal distress of this severity, albeit hidden, back to the world fully functioning in two sessions is on the face of it downright remarkable. The group has continued to meet and there has been no more expression of panic. In fact, the group pretty much resumed where they left off before this episode, continuing with issues of intimacy, separation/individuation, and, of course, roles. Every now and again someone might make a passing comment about something financial, but it is essentially in passing and does not become a focus for the group. There is no evidence that there is any hidden agenda not being voiced. The group continues to explore material with energy.

A final thought that may have some significance. The meaning of money to each member came to light and was explored in the two groups to some extent. How money is viewed, the role it is given in our lives, and the importance that is placed upon it are significant factors. In this culture, money, although not spoken about directly, has a place of extreme importance for many people. If not the money itself, certainly the toys money provides, and the status that comes with having it. Everyone knows on some level that money does not buy happiness. It can certainly cause difficulties in families and create roles that are close to impossible to avoid. The pursuit of money creates a climate of greed, avarice, and dishonesty that is currently pervasive. It erodes integrity. An exploration of the import of money, the feelings and beliefs that surround it, would seem to be a dialogue worth having. Anyone interested?

-Bettie Banks (Betsbanks@mindspring.com)

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR CONFERENCE 2010!

PHILADELPHIA
Pre-Conference Institutes:
April 24-25, 2010

5-Day Conference:
April 26-30, 2010

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: INTERMEDIATE MENTOR LEVEL TRAINING

This section contains official information about the evolving SCT training program. In this issue we are focusing on the six-day Mentor Training, a major piece of Intermediate Training. This is especially timely since the next Mentor Training is in November 2009!

OVERVIEW OF INTERMEDIATE LEVEL TRAINING

Intermediate Level training, including the Mentor Training, continues the personal and cognitive development begun at the Foundation Level, and adds to skill development the ability to use systems-centered methods and techniques with others. Consultation on the application of systems-centered techniques in one's own work context is a required element of the learning process at this level.

Cognitive Development - Theory: integration of the Theory of Living Human Systems and the methods (contextualizing, boundarying, vectoring and subgrouping) and techniques of systems-centered practice.

Experiential-Based Learning - Development: ongoing development of the capacity to take up one's member role and the exploration of experiences related to authority, intimacy and work in context; ongoing experiential work to increase one's capacity to fully take up functional roles in relationship to the goals of a context.

Technical Skill Development in Relation to Self and Others: building a systems-centered working context from the leader perspective; integration of the SCT protocols for reducing the system restraining forces in the hierarchy of defense modification in different application contexts.

Observation/Testing Hypotheses: continuing to practice the application of systems-centered methods and techniques in an observing, data-collecting mode, based on recognition that all practice is based on hypothesis-generation and testing.

THE SIX-DAY INTERMEDIATE MENTOR TRAINING

This coming November we will be offering the next step from the Intermediate Skill Training: Intermediate Mentor Training. This is the transition between Intermediate Skill Training (now housed in the annual SCT Conference and in

York, England) and taking up membership in the Authority Issue Group. Mentor training is a six-day intensive training that:

- builds on and reinforces the learning from the Intermediate Skill Training with further theoretical discussion, skill building, videotaped practicum session and force field review; builds on prior mastery of the SCT protocol set out in the "Gold Sheets."
- enhances the capacity to contextualize, understand what it means to develop a "systems-centered learning organization," orient to different contexts within the "organization," relate to the goal of the context, and take up one's functional role.
- starts members in the process of assessing their readiness to join the next Authority Issue Group.

To apply for Mentor Training, members must have completed the Intermediate Skill Training at least once and begun to apply systems-centered theory, under consultation, in work contexts. Members complete the application process in consultation with their primary trainers.

A CLOSER LOOK AT MENTOR TRAINING

The Mentor Training focuses on issues related to:

- 1) Contextualizing (role, goal and context) as Mentors experience the multiple role changes in this training and contribute to learning at all levels of the hierarchy.
- 2) Containing and vectoring energy toward the task goals of a small, developing work group in an intensive learning environment; taking one's authority in the practice of SCT Module I and II techniques (undoing anxiety, tension, depression, outrage and preliminary role locks); creating a context of attunement and resonance.
- 3) Creating a functional small work group by containing and working with the predictable driving and restraining forces present in a "new" group and developing a task-oriented environment for learning.
- 4) Processing the experience in a group-as-a-whole Mentor training group using functional subgrouping to share information, contain and resolve conflict, and work with issues aroused in the task aspects of this training.
- 5) Understanding what it means to contribute to the development of a task group.

Mentors will continue to develop skills in:

- 1) Understanding of the theoretical context for the use of

- the methods and techniques and its relevance for practice.
- 2) Teaching and providing a clear demonstration of Module I and II techniques.
 - 3) Working with a group to deepen the understanding of how to develop a functional force field that can be used as both a diagnostic and assessment tool.
 - 4) Collecting and organizing of observable data from videotape samples and using the information to develop hypotheses.
 - 5) Giving and getting clear feedback on their work.
 - 6) Assessing one's own and other's readiness to take the next step in training.

This training will continue to develop an assessment

process at the Intermediate Level. All those participating will use the data from the videotapes, force fields and feedback sheets to assess their own and others' readiness to enter the next Authority Issue Group or to continue to train in other contexts. This is an exciting addition to our training program and is isomorphic to the licensing process.

APPLICATION AND MORE INFORMATION

SCT Mentor Training dates: November 14 – 19, 2009

Location: Philadelphia

Application and additional information on the process are available in the Training section of the SCTRI website. Click on "SCT Training Program" and select "Applications."

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.

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.

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

Finance

Licensed SCT Practitioners Group

Membership

Newsletter

Research

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Trainers

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

STEERING GROUP

The Steering Group continues to focus on its role of supporting emergent system energy in the organization and linking that energy to resources in the system and to the overall mission of the organization.

The Steering Group has supported the development of the Treasurer by meeting frequently with our Treasurer, Nina Klebanoff. This emerging system is taking up its authority to help organize and manage the ongoing financial resources of the organization. It is also advising the Board of Directors and Steering Group about how those financial resources affect, our long-term planning and vision. Specific decisions made with the advice of the Treasurer include the decision, for the first time, to allocate funds to support travel and lodging for Board Members to attend Board meetings, approving funding for the Electronic Communications Group's further development of the website, and recommendations that are helping the Board and the Steering Group explore future research directions for the organization.

We continue to support the development of the Conference. We met monthly with the Co-Directors for Conference 2009, successfully filled the Co-Director roles for Conference 2010, chose a site for Conference 2010, and explored possible locations for Conference 2011. Filling the Co-Director roles for 2010 and selecting a site proved to be especially challenging. The Steering Group worked to stay at the edge-of-the-unknown as we hosted meetings among potential Co-Director candidates. Although it took some patience, it was exciting to see how energy spontaneously emerged for members taking up the Co-Directors roles. We are delighted to announce that David Schwing and Mark Johnson have volunteered to take up the role of Conference 2010 Co-Directors and that after two very successful Conferences on the

West Coast, we will return to the East Coast and hold Conference 2010 in Philadelphia.

We linked with a Board of Directors ad hoc group to clarify the spirit, format, budget and goal for a special commemorative monograph to be published in honor of Yvonne's 80th Birthday. We reviewed and revised the Systems-Centered Therapy posting on Wikipedia, and reviewed the Newsletter for its' accurate representation of both the Theory of Living Human Systems and the organization.

We remain energized and excited by the ways in which leadership energy is emerging in SCTRI. As this energy "bubbles up," the Steering Group is more able to use its skills to attend to the system-as-a-whole and the big picture of SCTRI's vision and mission.

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CONFERENCE 2010

Welcome to the 11th Annual International SCT Conference!

We hope you'll join us for the 11th Annual International SCT Conference in Philadelphia, April 24-30, 2010. There is wonderful energy emerging to explore differences in the system and in the broader world. With that in mind, our theme for Conference 2010 is "Building Communities by Integrating Differences." Our goal is to explicitly open the boundaries to other working models. SCT is full of talented, resourceful members with expertise in a wide range of disciplines. We want your voice! As well as your proposals, your energy, and of course, your attendance. As a theory-based system, SCT remains open to innovation, and takes seriously the notion that all systems mature by discriminating and integrating differences. Come join us and help SCT continue to grow!

The structure of the Conference will be as before, with our Pre-Conference Institute, our Five Day Program, and our week long training groups. Please check the SCTRI website, www.systemscentered.com for updates.

Looking forward to seeing you there!

*-David Schwing (davidschwingsw@aol.com),
Mark Johnson (drmarkj@valley.net)*

CONTINUING EDUCATION

We are pleased with the 2009 SCT Conference in San Francisco, as everything was again in place to offer a wide range of continuing education credits (CE's). As an approved sponsor for the American Psychological Association (APA) we were able to offer CE's for psychologists and many other professionals. Many thanks go to Jan Quirl and Kathy Lum for their efforts to keep our provider status current with APA. SCT Conference credits can also be used toward re-certification for Certified Group Psychotherapists.

Within California we were able to offer credits through the state boards for social workers, as well as for marriage and

family therapists. One of the goals of the CE Group is to provide CE's in the area where the Conference is held. In California we were fortunate to have Susan Gantt as an approved provider for both of these professional groups. Steven Weinstein also obtained approval for LMHC's and LMFT's in Massachusetts, and provided a good example of how the CE Group supports grass root efforts. Steve did the legwork and we provided support by making the documentation he needed readily available. Thank you, Steve! If anyone else would like to seek a similar arrangement in their own area, we would be happy to support your efforts.

Finally, we were again able to offer Continuing Medical Education Credits (CME's) through co-sponsorship of the Conference with The Northeastern Society for Group Psychotherapy. Norman Safransky has done a great job in establishing and maintaining the liaison with NSGP that allows this to happen. Thank you Norma!

The CE Group is an example of a systems-centered system working to meet its goal. It is a good place to learn about work groups, as well as to have some fun. If you are interested in joining us, or have any questions about CE's, please feel free to contact me.

-Dick Ganley (dickganley@aol.com)

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The group continues to focus on the goal of making sure that trainers have the information they need to accurately represent training programs to trainees and to the system in general. Our focus in the past 6 months has been on providing clear information about our curriculum to the Electronic Communications group for publication on the website. Sub goals have included clarifying the curriculum at every level of training, meeting with trainers and revising all website training descriptions. We also plan to meet with the trainers to discuss Mentor Training, Container and Observer training, AIG (Authority Issue Group) and Advanced training.

Our goal is to integrate the curriculum throughout the system at all levels of training. To that end, we are also working to help shape the 2010 Conference offerings to best integrate curriculum developments. We are hoping to launch a web based section called "frequently asked questions" to respond to inquiries about curriculum as it applies to trainers, trainees and those new to SCT.

Lastly, the group said goodbye, with much thanks and appreciation, to Susan Gantt and Eileen Jones.

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ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

The Electronic Communication group, commonly known as the Web Group, is excited to report that the new web site handled electronic registration for Conference 2009 in San Francisco! We expect to have this piece even more smoothly embedded for Conference 2010 in Philadelphia. Hooray! We are also excited that the "Forum" structure is beginning to be

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used by members, especially as a means for groups like the Authority Issue Group to share force fields, receive feedback and communicate within their group.

We are continuing to work to increase the functionality of the site, focusing on getting training materials and applications posted in easy-to-find locations, on making the Newsletter articles more accessible and on smoothing out the sign-in process for Registered Users and Members. We continue to be eager for feedback on the functioning of the web site. Please write to us at: admin@systemscentered.com.

-Claudia Byram (claudia.byram@verizon.net)

FUNDRAISING

Recently our action group recognized that we had completed the work we were authorized to do back in 2006!

In SCT, action groups are formed from emergent energy. Back in 2006 the “management group” (as our current Board of Directors was called at the time), gave our Fundraising Action Group (FRAG) the mandate to find resources for grant writing. Gradually, we discovered that grant writing is closely tied to specific research projects, and grant proposals require a 3-5 year business plan, which our system did not yet have. Such a plan is the basis for approaching potential private or corporate donors. Currently our fundraising occurs from the annual appeal to the membership, the Yvonne Agazarian Scholar Fund, the Conference each year, and from memorials.

While FRAG had responsibility for fundraising, accountability to the Steering group, we recognized that we had no authority to carry out the Board’s mandate. This recognition moved the Board of Directors to devise another structure (the Treasurer role) to look at funding. This role was finalized in October of 2008. It now carries the financial leadership in SCTRI. At this point in our system’s development it made sense to have a group that holds the financial vision which determines much of the policy decisions for the institute. This new group calls itself “The Finance Group”.

Feeling quite delighted about our accomplishments and satisfied about the new system development, each of us in FRAG decided to shift roles and set new goals: Elaine Pratt discovered energy to join the Finance Group. Verena Murphy decided she would bring her energy and resources to the Scholar Fund at the Conference, and Jan Vadell and Jim Peightel remain curious to where their energy takes them next.

*-Verena Murphy (vmch99@hotmail.com),
Jim Peightel (jpeightel@comcast.net),
Elaine Pratt (pecat67@earthlink.net),
Jan Vadell (jan@systemscentered.com)*

RESEARCH

The Research Action Group group said goodbye to Larry Ladden with much appreciation for his 11 years of contributions. He has decided to focus his energy on his practice and on conducting workshops and presentations on Mindfulness with Subgrouping. Good luck, Larry!

Rich O’Neill has completed the subgrouping scale – a questionnaire to discover how much subgrouping occurs in a

July 2009 - Systems-Centered News

group. It is a 7 item scale with 3-5 responses for each item. It was tested out in number of SCT groups. Data is also being collected in non-SCT groups. The International Association for Group Psychotherapy will be asked to implement the questionnaire at their upcoming conference in Italy.

Jale Punter is part of an emerging European Research Group on Depression, comparing the results of Systems-centered Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Rather than have general practitioners involved with the study, it was decided to use the two approaches in mental health care settings.

On the SAVI research front: Verena Murphy has completed a comparison of 2261 SAVI codes from the communication of the SCTRI Austin Board of Directors (2007) with the SCTRI Steering Group (1998-2000). She found that they both evidenced 32% Green Light behaviors. The Steering Group (containing more experienced members) evidenced 2.7% Red Light behaviors, and the Austin Board contained 4.9% Red Light behaviors. Her next step is to include non SCT Board communications in her research.

Our group continues to meet every two months, and we welcome anyone with curiosity about research to join us!

*-Rich O’Neill (oneillr@upstate.edu),
Jale Punter (jalepunter@doctors.org.uk),
Verena Murphy (vmch99@hotmail.com)*

SYSTEM MENTORS

We are very pleased to report that the challenging job of reviewing work samples for licensing as SCT Practitioners has been successfully transferred from the System Mentors to the Licensed SCT Practitioners group. The System Mentors held this function as it was emerging, and as SCTRI and the SCT Practitioners group developed.

A short review of the process of licensing as an SCT Practitioner: a cohort of applicants forms after the completion of each Authority Issue Group. This Licensing Group works together to develop criteria against which they will assess their understanding of systems-centered theory and methods, and the ability to put these into practice. The group then assesses each member’s work sample using their criteria. When a member’s sample is assessed by one’s peer licensing group as meeting the group’s criteria for licensing, the group forwards the sample, its criteria and their assessment to the Licensed SCT Practitioners group, which reviews the material. They then make a recommendation to the trademark owners (Yvonne Agazarian and SCTRI, represented by the Director, Susan Gantt) to grant a license as SCT Practitioner, to grant a Provisional SCT Practitioner’s license, or to ask the candidate to submit another sample. The trademark owners then review the entire sample and recommendations with the final authority for the trademark license. (The provisional license certifies the person as an SCT Practitioner, provided they obtain ongoing consultation on the particular restraining forces identified by the reviewers. The member can re-submit a work sample when they and their consultant determine they are ready, or they can wait until the 5-year re-licensing cycle.)

This series of yes/no's, at the Licensing Group level, the Licensed SCT Practitioners level and finally by the trademark owners, develops the whole system's ability to do data-based assessments and to take up the authority of saying yes or no.

- Claudia Byram (claudia.byram@verizon.net),
Fran Carter (carter2229@aol.com),
Susan Cassano (susancassaon@sbcglobal.net),
Susan Gantt (sgantt@emory.edu),
Sven-Erik Viskari (sven-erik.viskari@telia.com)

TRAINERS

The Trainers group has been responding to the Curriculum Group's request for updated information regarding the core trainings at the Conference, including the name and leader(s) of each training as well as the goal and criteria for membership in each group. This compilation has also been useful for us as trainers as in the past we had only verbally updated each other. Below is a list and description of the core Conference training groups:

5 Day Conference Foundation Group - Heather Twomey and Jon McCormick

Goal: Introduction to the basic theory and skills of SCT, with a focus on the experience of subgrouping in the here and now.

Criteria: Interest and curiosity about SCT or experience in SCT with a desire to master the skills and learn to contain your own authority issues sufficiently to explore your experience.

5 Day Intermediate Group - Susan Lange and Ray Haddock

Goals: To provide experientially based learning and development in the following areas:

1. The capacity to take up the role of member in an SCT Group.
2. The exploration of experiences related to Authority, Intimacy and Work in context.
3. Ongoing experiential work to increase each member's capacity to fully take up functional roles in relationship to the goals of a context.

Criteria: The member has worked in an SCT experiential group sufficiently to have:

1. Learned how to work with SCT techniques to undo their own anxiety, tension and depression.
2. Learned to subgroup.
3. Recognize their pulls to compliant and defiant roles and role-locks.
4. Developed the ability to not take others or themselves 'just personally'.
5. Developed a sufficient awareness of their own authority issues to be able to contain and explore them, rather than act them out.

Intermediate Skills Training - Rich O'Neill

Goals:

1. Greater understanding and capacity to apply the Theory of Living Human Systems.
2. Being able to apply SCT methods with others.

3. Learning specific SCT skills and structures.
4. Differentiating between person and member role as a step toward mentor training.
5. Learning to use Force Fields.

Criteria:

1. Intention to use SCT as a major orientation in working with other people.
2. Applicants must work with their mentor on their application to this group.
3. Ability to contain the authority issue in support of the task of the group.
4. Declaring yourself as an SCT trainee.
5. Significant knowledge of the Theory of Living Human Systems and ability to articulate it.
6. Exit criteria is a commitment to on-going consultation.

Container Training - Susan Cassano

Goal: Work in the container role, in experiential practicum groups, is a transitional role from member to leader. Containers work as members, fully taking up member role, but with a difference. The difference is deliberately focusing on one's own experience as a function of the group, tracking the group's work and the driving and restraining forces towards the groups goal in the context of its phase of development, and consciously working for the group-as-a-whole.

Criterion: Intermediate level in SCT training program

Intermediate Leadership Training: Building an SCT Group - Sven-Erik Viskari

Goal: Develop leadership in building an SCT context for work using the methods of functional subgrouping, contextualizing and vectoring to create a functional system. Participants practice the skills of functional subgrouping, bringing energy into the member role, using the distraction exercise, and applying the principles of the "fork-in-the-road" to discriminate between explaining and exploring.

Criterion: Intermediate level in SCT training program

Observer Role - Phyllis Goltra

The Observer role offers leadership training by observing leader interventions, learning the Goltra-Agazarian Observation Tally Sheet, practicing developing hypotheses for the phase of group development, and giving feedback appropriate to the group's phase of development.

Goals:

1. To observe leader interventions, participant reactions and phase of group development, without input.
2. To learn how to give data based feedback to the group regarding its phase of development.
3. To develop hypotheses for the group using SCT theory, test the hypotheses, and review the outcome to develop the next hypothesis.
4. To develop ones skills as a leader by observing leader interventions.
5. To learn a data based observation tool (Goltra-Agazarian Observation Tally Sheet) to gather data on leader interventions and group reactions.
6. To develop ones own ideas for gathering data based group observations.

Criteria:

1. Post intermediate skills and experiential training.
2. Post container training.
3. Knowledge of SCT Theory sheet and Phases of Group Development
4. Ability to contain one's own authority issues

3 Year Intermediate Group - Claudia Byram and Joy Luther

Goals: To develop the capacity to experience and contain the dynamics of system development through the use of SCT skills as members. This experiential work will be the context for in-depth learning about phases of development, and linking the phases of development to force fields and research.

Entry criteria:

1. Demonstrated ability to work at an Intermediate level experientially.
2. Membership in ongoing Theory and Consultation settings.
3. Working knowledge of SCT protocols ("Gold Sheets").
4. Intermediate Skills Training required.
5. Intention to make SCT a major orientation in ones work; membership in SCTRI

Next group begins: SCT Conference 2011

Authority Issue Group - Yvonne Agazarian

Goals: In this experiential training, the emphasis is placed on using the SCT methods with attunement, building a working group and the exploration of the Authority Issue, i.e. the crisis of hatred, stubbornness and resistance to change, and related issues of giving and taking authority. In doing so, the members continue to develop the capacity to take up their member role, related to the goal of the shift in context to a task group.

Criteria: Intermediate members by application in consultation with their training mentors.

Advanced Training for Trainers: Observation of AIG - Rich Armington and Susan Gantt

Goal: The group will observe all experiential meetings of the Authority Issue Group and meet as a task group during the group's force field time to process observations. We will track the group dynamics and the phase of system development, the communication patterns that support them, the leader's interventions to the leading edges of the member, subgroup and group-as-a-whole, and link the leader's interventions to theory and group functioning.

Criteria: This training is for SCT trainers or those interested in becoming an SCT trainer, either in OD or group therapy. This training will meet twice a year, once at the conference (including the weekend). Prerequisites for this training are completion of the authority issue group, membership in a licensing group or being a licensed practitioner, and a commitment to membership in this advanced training for the duration of the Authority Issue Group (approximately three years).

Mentor Training - Fran Carter

Goals: This is a six-day intensive training that builds on and reinforces the learning from the Intermediate Skill Training with further theoretical discussion, skill building, video-taped practicum sessions and force field review. The focus of this

training is to enhance members capacity to contextualize, understand what it means to develop a "systems-centered learning organization", orient to different contexts within the "organization", relate to the goal of the context and take up one's functional role. This training builds on prior mastery of the SCT protocol set out in the "Gold Sheets".

Criteria: Completion of the Intermediate Skills Training

Advanced Experiential - Fran Carter

Goal: Ongoing leading edge exploration at the person, member, subgroup and group-as-a-whole levels.

Criteria: Members have completed the Authority Issue Group and all its pre-requisites.

Advanced Consultation - Fran Carter and Rich Armington

Goal: The goal of the series is to learn to build the SCT consultation system and understand the context, its goals and the different roles of the consultee and the consultant. This group is intended for those working in both OD and therapy contexts.

Criteria: Members have completed the Authority Issue Group and all its pre-requisites.

-Rich Armington (armington@gmail.com)

SCTRI-AUSTIN

SCTRI - Austin is a non-profit organization set up in 2000 to organize and promote SCT training in the Austin community. Currently we have three ongoing weekly training groups in Austin, two at the foundation level and one at the intermediate level. Approximately every two years, we also sponsor a weekend training with Susan Gantt.

Since our "community" is a diverse group of trainees, interested persons, clients and friends, we wanted to find a way to discover what kind of training events would appeal to our group. We had sent out surveys to members via email in the past, but the number of respondents was low. Therefore, the SCTRI-Austin Board developed a new type of survey in hopes that people would respond in higher numbers, giving us more data to draw on. The following is a summary of our survey:

This survey had only five questions and respondents needed to only circle an answer. The survey was short enough to be put on a post card. We had some post cards pre-stamped and some without postage. The pre-stamped were given out to clients, so that we were able to put them directly in the mail and preserve their confidentiality rather than ask them to "hand them in" to someone. We also sent pre-stamped cards to the Houston SCT trainer so that the Houston training group members could also fill them out and return them in the mail.

Our Austin Training group leaders used the post cards without stamps, they simply handed them out and gathered them up from group members at the end of group. This not only ensured getting many trainee responses, but we also saved money on postage!

The response to this survey was higher than any other we had used in the past and we believe this was due to this new format. The data obtained from this survey told us that the topics of interest for workshops were in personal growth and interpersonal development. The specific skills members

desired to develop were communication and conflict resolution.

Using this data the SCTRI-Austin board decided that a workshop on developing better communication in our personal and interpersonal lives would meet our community's interests as well as be open to people with no previous SCT experience. Claudia Byram, Ph.D. agreed to facilitate such a workshop: "From Conflict to Clarity: Building Conversations that Work Using SAVI®" which will be held in Austin October 10th and 11th 2009.

On March 27th 2009, The SCTRI-Austin Board then held a community meeting to present the survey results and

announce the workshop topic that came from the input. The participants were very excited about the workshop announcement, and how it reflected their input. An energetic discussion ensued as members discussed how they use SCT in their everyday lives. The SCTRI-Austin board members were happy to find a way to get in reality about the training wants in Austin and to see the community take its authority to guide their personal and professional development in Systems-centered Training.

If you would like a copy of the actual survey, please contact me.

-Tomi Dominguez (tomidominguez@austin.rr.com)

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.

CONGRATULATIONS

**To our newly licensed
SCT Practitioners!**

**Jeff Eiberson
Dorothy Gibbons
Deborah Karnbad**

**And to our newly RE- licensed
SCT Practitioners!**

Rich Armington	Claudia Byram
Fran Carter	Susan Cassano
Dick Ganley	Susan Gantt
Nina Klebanoff	Larry Ladden
Susan Lange	Joy Luther
Rich O'Neill	Steve Weinstein

Awards Presented at the 2009 Annual Conference:

The Leadership Award
Michael Robbins

*"In appreciation and recognition of
your outstanding efforts and contributions
as Editor of the SCTRI newsletter"*

Certificates of Appreciation
Conference 2009 Co-Directors
Jim Grund and Holly Johnson

For Years of Service on the SCTRI Board of Directors
10+ Years: Claudia Byram, Fran Carter, Dick Ganley, Susan Gantt, Eileen Jones, Rich O'Neill
5 -9 Years: Dorothy Gibbons, Nina Klebanoff, Joy Luther, Claude Marchessault, Jon McCormick, Jim Peightel, Elaine Pratt, Michael Robbins, Michael Silverstein
1-4 Years: Sven-Erik Viskari

POEMS

WHIRLING DERVISH

This morning
I discovered a Silence
in the center of my belly
that was pregnant
with Emptiness.

So pregnant,
that all of the galaxies
floated inside of it
like tiny particles of dust.

Inside this Silence
was a key
that unlocked
even the doors
that I had not yet imagined
and had no idea
were closed to me.

Inside of this Silence
was a beautiful Bird
longing for her freedom

and a Drum
that no-one in this world
has ever heard.

I followed its rhythm
and soon

I was whirling
like a Dervish.

-Michael Robbins

WHIRL UNTIL YOU SHATTER

You will never find Her outside of yourself!

Or inside of yourself!

Yet, when you find Her,
you will suddenly recognize Her everywhere!

The way out is closer then you could ever imagine!

There are no ways out!

You are never alone!

You are always alone!

Every truth is a lie!

Every lie is a truth!

Whirl with the tension of these contradictions
until you shatter!

-Michael Robbins



Thank you one and all for making my eightieth
wonderful. Thanks also to you who gave me a present and didn't get a thank you note.
Thank you also for all your cards - I feel very well wished for the years to come! Yvonne



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- Excerpt 2 Grief for father
- Excerpt 3 Are you worried about your temper?
- Session II: Excerpt 1 Hand gestures
- Session III: Excerpt 1 Decoding gestures
- Session V: Excerpt 1 Have I got you by the shoulders?
- Session IX: Excerpt 1 Turning blame back on self
- Excerpt 2 Mini rage
- Excerpt 3 Shakespeare alternative
- Session X: Excerpt 1 Integration
- Excerpt 2 Separation

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**Systems-Centered® Training & Research Institute
Presents**

In celebration of Yvonne's 80th Birthday

*

**Contributions from Yvonne Agazarian and
Systems-Centered Training**

*

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Role, Goal and Context: Key Issues for Group Therapists & Group Leaders *by Christer Sandahl*

Application of SCT to Psychodynamic Models of Group Psychotherapy *by Walter Stone*

Bibliography of Yvonne Agazarian, Photograph and Biography

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- participate in the SCTRI Action Groups
- apply for a license to use the SCT trademark
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November 14-19

AUTHORITY ISSUE GROUP - PHILADELPHIA

November 15-19

FALL WEEKEND SCT WORKSHOP - PHILADELPHIA

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