



SYSTEMS-CENTERED® NEWS

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

An Innovation to the Licensing Process from the 2011 Licensing Group

Each licensing group builds on the groups that went before it and lays the path for the groups that come next. This keeps SCT current and protects against rigidification at the expense of development. Licensing ensures that members who become licensed to represent themselves as SCT practitioners know both its methods, and also use the attunement and empathy that is essential in building a systems-centered system so that clients change experientially and not just cognitively.

Licensing groups form from “Authority Issue” groups only after thoroughly exploring first the hatred of authority that is endemic to our culture and then the separation and individuation demands of intimacy. As the group develops sufficient mastery of these two phases, it transitions into a work group with the goal of developing a licensing process by which to become licensed. The challenge is to work as a peer group establishing criteria to assess themselves and then to use their criteria to assess each other’s samples.

This is not an easy task: the group has to first develop its capacity to work as a task group with its own task and process leaders and then do peer assessment. In this process, each licensing group sets and implements the standard for SCT licensing and in doing so contributes to developing SCT. The group then makes their recommendations to a team of licensed members who review the group’s criteria and does its own assessment. These recommendations are then sent to the trademark owners for any needed system correction.

This process and how it functions has been emergent, with the idea that this very emergence builds system correction with each successive generation of licensing groups.

A very important system innovation and correction came out of the recent meeting of Licensing Group VI at our 2011 annual Conference in March. The group was assessing each other’s samples, and doing quite well with what is never an easy task. Building on previous licensing groups, they had divided into small groups or “pods” with four or five members each and assessed each other’s samples. The group then grappled with how to validate the work between the pods to ensure that they were all applying their criteria consistently. To assess this, they emerged a fishbowl structure, whereby each pod worked with one of their samples in the center with the rest of the group observing. The observing group then identified the driving and restraining forces in how the pod worked together and then each member of the observing group stated whether they saw the sample meeting the criteria for licensing, stating either “Yes” or “No.” This was a very moving process as all were very connected to the people they were assessing and also very committed to the assessment task. Several of the fishbowls assessed “No,” bringing in a difference to what the pod had recommended. These pods stayed in their member roles and took in the group’s feedback. The group was very satisfied with their accomplishment.

From the bird’s eye view, the group had discovered its own system correction whereby the fishbowls provided a system correction to the pods. At the larger system level, this was also a system correction in that by pioneering its own system correction, the group was also correcting a bias toward affiliation at the expense of the task (this had been a challenge for the previous licensing group). Congratulations to this licensing group and much appreciation for what you are contributing to our system. Your work is already having ripples!

-Susan Gantt (sgantt@systemscentered.com)

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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,

This is fun! My hope is that this issue will be as enjoyable for you to read as it just was for me to review!

The issue begins with an article from Yvonne about Pat de Maré which will give you a window into Pat the man as well as the influence of Pat's work on the development of her ideas. It left me with a poignant sense of the tenderness of their relationship as well as the impact Pat de Maré has had on the field of group psychology. The Theory and Application section begins with Elaine Dinitz's piece on "Systems-Centered Therapy in Couple's Treatment." Elaine's article is filled with practical theory and interventions for couples from a systems-centered point of view. If you do any work with couples, you will not want to miss it. On to a totally delightful contribution from Alberto Albeniz called "Meeting Master YA in York," in which he compares Yvonne to Master Yoda from the movie "Star Wars." If this article doesn't charm you and make you chuckle, I will be extremely surprised! Next we have part two of my series comparing Spiral Dynamics Integral and TLHS. In this article I look at what Spiral Dynamics calls second tier value systems and compare this to the third phase of systems development in TLHS. I think that it will help you to crystallize the clinical and organizational relevance of comparing these two theories. Next we have some research from Verena Murphy in "Exploring the Validity of SAVI as a Research Tool." In this piece, Verena concisely and clearly sets out how she has been using the SAVI grid as a research tool in her undergraduate course on the "Dynamics of Leadership" since 2007. Finally, we have a piece from Jale Punter in which she responds to Yvonne's question about the isomorphy between the development of the large group and the development of SCTRI. I think that you will find Jale's observations both captivating and thought-provoking.

Of course we also have the usual "Reports and Updates" and the "Members Forum." Here you will get a larger perspective on what is happening in the organization.

Finally, I want to thank the Newsletter team. Over the years we have truly evolved into a well oiled, working group. I hope that the pleasure that we have working together shines through the product that we produce. Bettie Banks, Connie Robinson, Jale Punter, Verena Murphy, Kathy Lum and Jan Vadell – you are truly a joy to collaborate with! Thank you.

I wish you all a wonderful summer. Until our paths cross again,

-Michael Robbins (michaelrobbins@rcn.com)

PATRICK DE MARÉ

I first got to know Pat in the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen in 1982. What I remember best is how much we laughed, and when I reluctantly parted from him after dinner I left with a warmth that is always with me when I think about Pat – and is with me now, even though he is no longer with us.

Our Tivoli meeting led to our meeting regularly whenever I was in London, and we would sit in his room overlooking his garden and talk groups. I was developing my Theory of Living Human Systems in the 1980's and 90's, and was very glad to have a kindred spirit who shared my enthusiasm for Lewin and Shannon and the idea that groups needed to be understood in terms of group variables, and not confined to interpretations based on the more familiar psychodynamics. We did not, however, as I will address later, share an enthusiasm for systems as I was defining them!

Pat's Median Group

Pat had introduced his conviction that the Median group of 17 to 24 people had a different potential for communication than either the small or large group. He wrote:

"The Median group is a term I use to differentiate between the small group and the large group. It's a term I adopted as a steppingstone between the small family sized tribal group – and the large group ... a hunter-gatherers type (of group) ... Whilst the small group is structurally the size of the family and lends itself therefore to having a hierarchical and tribal micro-culture (and family transferences) the large group tends to be level and social. The Median group of about 20 Members however, is large enough to be social rather than tribal and yet is small enough for each individual to be able to have his say within a reasonable time, i.e. 1 1/2 hours." (Personal communication.)

Koinonia

He called this communication potential by the Greek word *Koinonia*. Pat's understanding of *Koinonia* was a unique contribution to Group Analysis, and indeed to all groups in all settings. In his reply to my letter wanting to know more about *Koinonia* in Median groups, he wrote:

"To dear Yvonne, with Koinonia... Koinonia... communion, fellowship, intercourse... from the common carthorse of a language Koin... which united pre-classical Greece... belonging to everybody because it belonged to nobody.... Koinonia... implies not personal and individualistic but impersonal friendship... a 'democracy'... a form of togetherness and amity that brings a serendipity of resources... 'communion' as it is understood in the Greek Orthodox Church" (Personal communication, 1995).

I was very excited by Pat's ideas about developing *Koinonia* in Median groups – and in spite of his convictions that the small

and large groups demanded too much compromise, I was eager to share with Pat the fact that I believed that we, in our systems-centered discipline, had developed a communication method in functional subgrouping that elicited *Koinonian* dialogue from the beginning of a group, and would not, therefore as Pat had surmised, take ten years to develop.

Pat was not impressed and changed the subject. I then, also eagerly, introduced my conviction that by virtue of the isomorphy of all systems in a hierarchy we would be able to see the similarities of structure and function as a common factor. System isomorphy could generalize the structure and function to all groups: small, median and large. Pat's response was to give me a very blue stare.

So what I did not say next was that what I thought missing in Pat's schema is a consciousness of the underlying group forces (in other words, system dynamics). Pat did not seem to focus on the group's own potential for becoming aware of group dynamics, nor the leader potential for deliberately influencing these forces (as we do in Systems-Centered Therapy by pacing the phases of group development and communicating through the methods of functional subgrouping). Left to itself, *Koinonia* might indeed take ten years to develop.

Much of Pat's orientation to group rested upon the Group Analytic concept of conductor, which is the word used instead of therapist or consultant or leader in Group Analysis. The Group Analytic conductor follows the group rather than leads it. My take on the Conductor is that he or she conducts by providing both the structure (the score) and influencing how the orchestra will functionally bring the score alive in response to the conductor's interpretation of the score. In other words, the conductor sets the "norms" of the group – as we all do, consciously or unconsciously, whether we follow and reinforce the system dynamics or whether we guide them. A "conductor" may disown personal leadership, but never the influence of the leadership role!

Hatred

What I want to introduce now is Pat's reframing of human hatred, which for me, is an even *more important* contribution than Pat's emphasis on the potential for *Koinonic* communication in the Median group and a gift to our systems-centered orientation. Pat writes that *"Working on the basis that hate is the energy and the result of frustrated instinct, we have arrived at the conclusion that the (median) group constitutes a structure large enough to contain and transform hate for cultural purposes via the system of dialogue. Such a structure is not evident in either psychoanalysis or in small group situations.... Whereas the small group, particularly the psychoanalytic and Foulksian group, evokes family transferences and repetitious meanings in terms of the inner lives of the past, the Median group requires, through the containment of hate ... the transformation of energy into the*

socializing process of impersonal friendship and dialogue" (de Maré, Piper & Thompson, 1991, p. 98).

Pat, with these words, thus transforms the experience of hate in groups from a destructive affect into a natural, inevitable response, an energy that carries high potential for both destructive and constructive transformation. And Pat sees the Median group as the arena in which transformations of hatred can take place.

Bennis & Shepard

Pat is not alone in understanding that metabolizing hatred into fellowship results in a different potential for communication. Bennis and Shepard (1956) translated Bion's Basic Assumptions (1959) into a group development model that is not included in the Foulksian tradition. They then defined the common group eruptions of hatred towards the leader as a barometric event that generated the transition from preoccupations with authority into the phase of intimacy. In my turn, I then translated their developmental model into a systems approach, calling their fulcrum event "the crisis of hatred," common to the development of all isomorphic systems; whether the system be a Small, Median or Large group, each containing their component systems of person, member, subgroup and the system-as-a-whole (Agazarian, 1997).

Davanloo

For SCT, our next recognition of how to *actively* manage hatred in groups took a leap from the theoretical to the practical when I, together with others from SCT, studied with Habib Davanloo and watched videos of his breakthrough interview. We owe a great debt to Davanloo (1987) – not for his theory, not for his conviction that sadistic hatred is the nexus of super-ego pathology (we, in SCT, profoundly disagree with super-ego pathology), but for his innovation of the breakthrough interview in which, by putting sufficient pressured containment on the client, he incites the client to shift from passive helplessness in the face of their hatred into a proactive retaliation towards the hated person, situation or thing that is eliciting it. This led to us developing methods that shifted our current model of active listening to one of active intervention, and to learning how to reverse depression that results from the retaliatory impulse turned back on the self, and by so doing, freeing the energy of the exploratory drive.

Freud

Freud is perhaps the most important of all in the work of framing the crisis of hatred. Freud says, "*One day, the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father, and so made an end of the patriarchal horde. United they had the courage to do and succeeded in doing what would have been impossible for them individually. Cannibal savages as they were, it goes without saying that they devoured their victim as well as killing him*" (Freud, 1922, p. 142).

Thus Freud anticipates religious rituals, anticipates Bennis

and Shepard's barometric event, and anticipates the Systems-centered crisis of hatred and certainly the recognition that groups can do together what members cannot do alone.

Eros, Thanatos and Ananke

Freud sees hatred as arising from *Thanatos*, in opposition to *Eros*, thus introducing a primal split between good and evil: between *Thanatos* the death instinct and *Eros* the love of life. And this is where Pat's genius turns Freudian theory upside down. Pat says: "*Whilst love is linked to Eros (the life force), hate is not linked to Thanatos (the death instinct)... Hate is not the adversary of Eros but the inevitable irreversible outcome of the frustration of Eros: if there is any adversary to Eros, it is ... Ananke* (de Maré, Piper & Thompson, 1991, p. 62). The Greek word for the frustrations of external necessity.

"*Hate,*" says Pat, "*which in Greek also means grief... then constitutes the basis for psychic energy, which is transformed and expressed in the form of thinking dialogue and learning as distinct from an instinctual process*" (de Maré, Piper & Thompson, 1991 p. 141).

For Pat, hatred does not lead to the death wish. Rather, when hatred is metabolized, it leads to socialization and citizenship. This we know well in SCT with our crisis of hatred.

Freud claimed that the energy of the primitive super-ego is said to be derived from the id. What is more, the common psychodynamic understanding of hatred is closely linked to Freud's concept of the destructive super-ego and super-ego guilt. Pat, on the other hand, claims that the energy of the superego is not derived from the id, nor is it biological, nor is hatred and super-ego guilt a necessary corollary.

By introducing *Ananke*, Pat turned upside down the traditional thinking about the super-ego. This may well be the most important potential for change in our current descriptors of psychopathology in that Pat has reversed Freud's thesis that civilization is built upon the passive renunciation of instinctual gratification. On the contrary says Pat, "*It is the active frustration of hate to which the evolution of culture owes its origins ...*" Whereas for Freud the solution is passive, for Pat it is active. "*It has become ... clear to us that hate, arising out of the frustrating situation of the (Median) group... provides the incentive for dialogue and becomes transformed, through dialogue, into the impersonal fellowship of Koinonia*" (de Maré, Piper & Thompson, 1991, p. 4).

Implications

In the meantime, however, we in the field of psychotherapy are living under the tyranny of the super-ego. Perhaps the most destructive misunderstanding is to fail to see the difference between super-ego pathology and normal human aggression. Human aggression is the potential energy fundamental to fueling the flow of energy and information between all levels of human exchange. It is also the potential energy necessary to manage the inevitable frustrations that occur in everyday life. It is only when normal human aggression is viewed through the lens of the punitive super-ego that it becomes pathological.

All in all – the contribution of Pat’s that has the most impact on me – and indeed, perhaps on the conductors and leaders of groups in the future, is his re-interpretation of super-ego hatred into the raw material for creative energy. Many groups live with the terrible consequences of misunderstanding hatred as if it is linked to human aggression. Linking the two gives both a bad name.

Framing as pathological what could be otherwise interpreted as normal human conflict has important clinical consequences. For example: the exogenous depression that comes from people turning the other cheek and turning their aggression back in on themselves; the super-ego criticism of sadism and masochism that prevents the conflicts that they contain to be explored without judgment; the anger management techniques that teach people to act nice instead of acting out, without understanding that it is not just their angry hatred that is being modified but also their living energy. Perhaps most serious of all is the acquired fear of aggression. Fear of aggression goes hand in hand with fear of feeling and fear of feeling is too often resolved by rationalization. It may be common knowledge, but perhaps not common understanding, that feelings feel the same whether they are generated by thoughts or whether generated by our internal sensory experience of our world. From this confusion, communication norms develop that are manifested in anxiety-laden explanations of the past, present or future, repetitive stories about childhood, and a basic split between good and evil. When perception is based on projection, people become enmeshed in the anguish of personalizing.

Much of our attitude towards human aggression is generated by our disapproval of it, and our disapproval is directly related to our super-ego fear of our unconscious potential. There is no question that we owe a great debt to Freud for his gift to us of the unconscious. But his gift came at a price. Super-ego pathology has long been connected to a nightmare of demonic ideas – colluding with the profound fear of the unconscious that is inevitable if the unconscious contains the split between Thanatos and Eros. What is more, the common psychodynamic understanding of hatred is closely linked to the destructive primitive super-ego and super-ego guilt.

Thus Pat transforms Freudian pessimism into optimism by reversing Freud’s thesis that civilization is built upon the passive renunciation of instinctual gratification. On the contrary says Pat (and I repeat his words again), “*It is the active frustration of hate to which the evolution of culture owes its origins ...*”. (de Maré, Piper & Thompson, 1991, p. 61). Whereas for Freud the solution is passive, for Pat it is active.. “*It has become ... clear to us that hate, arising out of the frustrating situation of the larger group,.. provides the incentive for dialogue and becomes transformed, through dialogue, into the impersonal fellowship of Koinonia....*” (de Maré, Piper & Thompson, 1991, p. 61).

In one of his last letters to me Pat wrote: “*I’m 84 – less energy – play the accordant recorder – see 4 patients per day – once a monthly median group seminar – light candles for you in the catholic church next door – life is a bit over-ish*”

(Personal communication, 2000). When we understand Pat’s connection that hatred arises from the frustrations of reality, and not from an unconscious split between the life force and the death instinct, and if we continue to use functional subgrouping to establish Koinonian dialogue in our groups, whether they be small, median or large, then Pat’s life is not over-ish.

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Q & A – (ANSWERS BY YVONNE AGAZARIAN)

Question from Chetan Borkhetaria

Anxiety vs. curiosity - As I've come to understand these two concepts, I now see them as correlates of each other. This understanding has had a profound impact on my ability to move from anxiety to curiosity! Both seem to me a form of arousal. I see comprehensive and apprehensive elements in each, but to me 'anxiety' has a stronger apprehensive element while 'curiosity' has a stronger comprehensive element. In what ways are anxiety and curiosity similar, and what are the key differences?

Hi Chetan, this is not the way I see it. I see curiosity as a function of the exploratory drive which is related to the amygdala (sensory perception) whereas anxiety (different from fear) is related to a pre-frontal cortex cognitive processing – like mind reads and negative predictions. Anxiety at the edge of the unknown however, is hardwired ... allows for looking before one leaps. Why it is useful to be curious at the edge of the unknown is that it allows cognitive assessing of the situation and prevents an impulsive amygdala response which bypasses common sense.

PLEASE HELP!

The Problem: There is a muddle in SCT around the difference between the person system and personalizing. Because of this muddle, “person” is sometimes given a pejorative or pathologizing connotation. This is particularly difficult as the person system is the source of all energy-information throughout the hierarchy of living human systems, and has the same goals and roles as systems in general. (See “isomorphic systems” at the bottom of this column.)

There are two ways you can help:

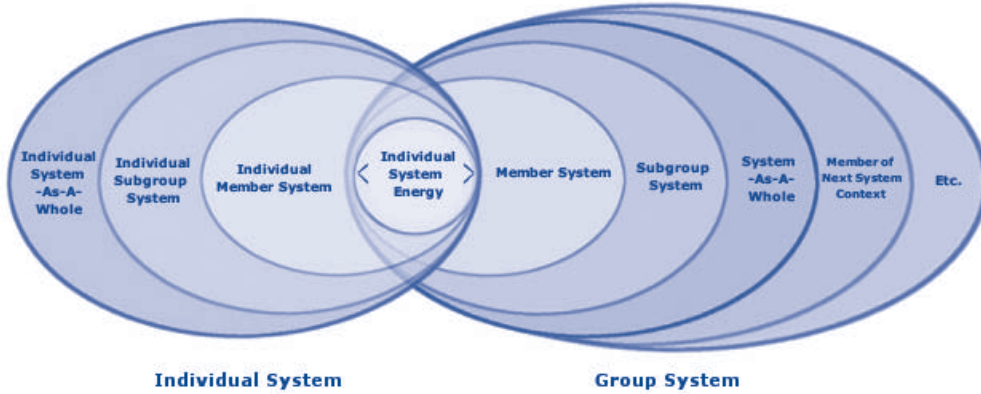
The first is to look at the figures below, and see if the

labels in any one solves the problem for you. If so, email me at Agazarian@aol.com and let me know if you vote for 1, 2 or 3. It would also be helpful if you would say a few words as to why.

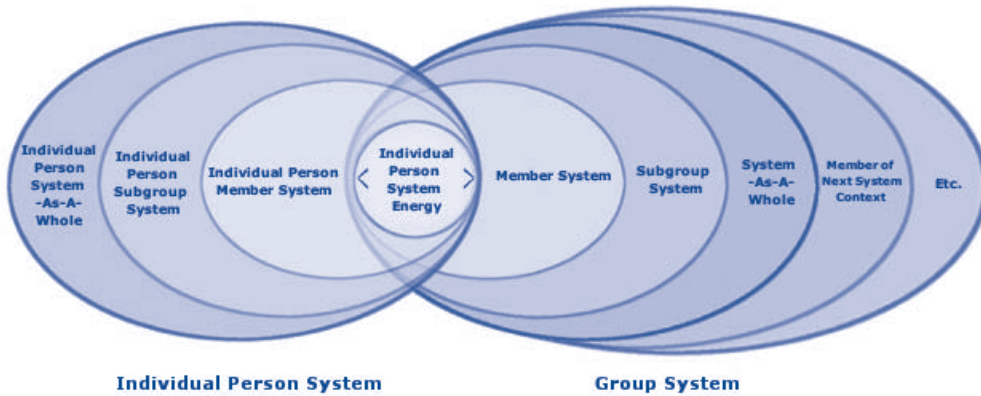
The second is to suggest a different label which you think would be better as the descriptor for the figures below, then email me with your one word suggestions. It would also be helpful if you would say a few words about what you see as the problem with 1, 2 or 3.

I look forward to putting your response in the next Newsletter.

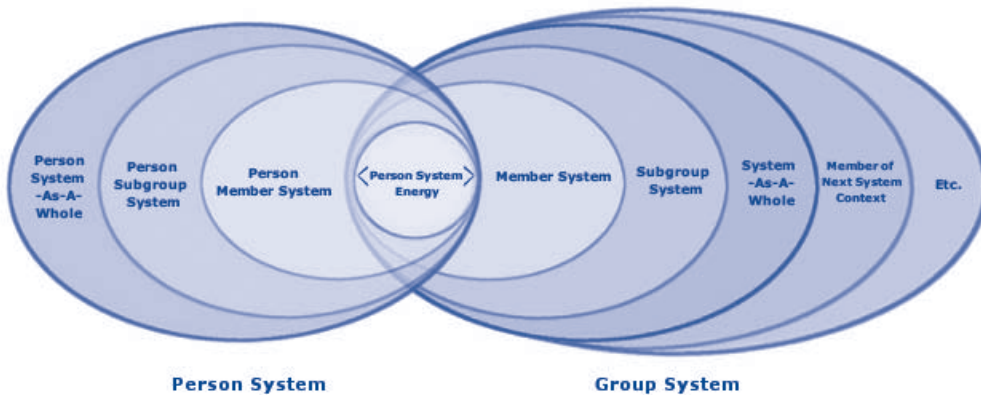
ISOMORPHIC SYSTEMS



ISOMORPHIC SYSTEMS



ISOMORPHIC SYSTEMS



Two SCT Prose Poems:

ISOMORPHIC SYSTEMS

The person system is the source of all energy-information
Within, between and among all systems in the hierarchy of
living human systems
When person energy-information crosses the boundary
Into the context of the system above it
The member system develops
Containing energy-information
For system survival, development and transformation
Energy-information contains both similarities and differences
Member systems develop into subsystems by joining around
similarities and differences
As similarities and differences are integrated within and
between subsystems
The system-as-a-whole develops and transforms
A process mirrored
In each system of the hierarchy of living human systems
Each system in the hierarchy contains person system energy
Each system is a member in the context of the system above it
Each system is the context for the system below it
In the hierarchy of living human systems.

SYSTEMS-CENTERED GOALS:

The goal of the person system is to survive, develop and
transform from simpler to more complex, and,

The goal of the person system is to cross boundaries into
member with the goal of subgrouping functionally, and,

The goal of functional subgrouping is to develop the norms of
discriminating and integrating differences in each system in the
hierarchy, and,

The goal of the system-as-a-whole is to develop norms for
integrating differences so that system energy is organized, goal-
oriented and self-correcting in the service of transformation
through integration, and,

The goal of isomorphic systems is to survive, develop
and transform from simpler to more complex through the
discrimination and integration of differences.

MESSAGE TO THE CONFERENCE LARGE GROUP

Sorry, I missed it. We had a difficult time on the last day at
the beginning of the large group – and what I missed was, that
after the satisfying self-affirmation of the group on the fourth
day, our next step was intimacy. It made sense then, that we
were in flight from intimacy in the face of the separation work
that was facing us on our last day. Sorry group, it would have
been easier if I had recognized that in time.
All the best, Yvonne

A System Correction in Regards to the Trademark

The term “systems-oriented” has never been part of our
trademark. SCTRI is now no longer recommending, or not
recommending, that trainees who are not licensed as SCT
practitioners refer to their work as systems-oriented. In other
words, officially and legally, SCTRI has no opinion about
the use of the term “systems-oriented” by non-licensed
trainees. A non-licensed member can refer to his or her
work as anything he or she wants, e.g. systems, systems-
oriented or something entirely different. The only terms that
cannot be used are systems-centered or SCT. Systems-
centered and SCT are trademarked and can only be used by
licensed SCT practitioners.

Continuing Education (CE's) for SCT Training

SCTRI is approved by the American Psychological
Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists
and offers CE's for psychologists at the Annual Conference
and at Core Curriculum training events (Skills, Mentor and
Authority Issue training groups). We also seek CE's on a
local basis for social workers, mental health counselors,
and marriage and family therapists in the area in which the
Annual Conference is held. Trainers may also provide CE's
for psychologists for training events they lead.

Certificates of attendance can also be obtained for the
Annual Conference and Core Curriculum trainings and
through individual trainers, with the member submitting these
to their professional organization for possible acceptance as
CE's.

SCTRI is interested in providing CE's for other
professions if members are willing to provide the time,
energy, and resources (emergent energy) to obtain provider
status for offering such credits. If you are interested in
further information about obtaining CE's, please contact
Dick Ganley, CE Group Liaison, at dickganley@aol.com or
610-664-5730.

New SCT Video on YouTube!

“The Crisis of Hatred (The Work of Pat de Maré) and
Its Influence on Systems-Centered Training” features
Yvonne Agazarian at the Friday afternoon workshop at
the 2011 SCT Annual Conference in Atlanta.

You'll find a link on the home page at
www.systemscentered.com

THEORY, RESEARCH AND APPLICATION

EXPLORING THE USE OF SYSTEMS-CENTERED THERAPY IN COUPLE'S TREATMENT

- Elaine Dinitz (elainedin@optonline.net)

When couples come to therapy with bruised feelings, unresolved conflicts, and intractable defenses, Agazarian's methods of contextualizing, functional subgrouping and defense modification are well-suited to their distress. Contextualizing shifts experience in their relationship from each individual to the couple, bypassing the suffering that comes from personalizing and blame. Functional subgrouping explores each side of a conflict until resolution is reached. And, defense modification systematically weakens the defenses that arise to block the path to the goals (Agazarian, 1997).

SCT Phases of System Development encompass three major phases: Authority; Intimacy; and Work, Play and Love (Agazarian, 1997). The present article offers explorations and sample interventions with couples, at the outset of therapy, in the first (authority) phase.

Throughout SCT treatment, progress is monitored by a force field of driving and restraining forces (Lewin, 1951). The force field is utilized in two ways: clients are trained to observe driving and restraining behaviors that move them toward or away from their goals; and, the therapist monitors driving and restraining forces to track their development, process issues, and next steps.

The following are some emerging explorations and interventions based on SCT principles in couple's therapy. They are organized by four topics: boundary permeability, the supporting structure, the process, and concluding the session.

Explorations and Interventions

I. Boundary permeability

This refers to openness in the couple's system to an exchange of energy and information. Closed boundaries are shut-down through stonewalling, interrupting, clamming-up, vagueness, and so forth. The following methods aim toward creating a system that appropriately regulates openness to each other's communications and energy.

A. Reviewing how the couple came together. Inquiring about when they became a couple long has been an effective opener for couples, because it normally elicits pleasant feelings, an ice-breaker, of sorts. Early in treatment, inquiries about their courtship touch affectionate memories. Recalling how they fell in love softens attitudes and diffuses encumbering resentments. Including the therapist in their joyful moments and the hardships they overcame fosters emotional containment. This

is a good time to make a mental note of fond memories and mutual engagement for future reference.

Sample interventions:

How long have you known each other? Where did you meet? What attracted you to each other? What did you enjoy doing together? When did you fall in love? How did you know? What were the qualities in each other that you valued? When did you make a commitment to each other? When did you decide you wanted each other as life partners? What was the vision for your future together? How did you overcome obstacles in the way of your being together?

When the discussion is uplifting, pleasant feelings provide a favorable time to learn and practice how to explore feelings by joining on similarities and then adding their own contributions (Agazarian & Gantt, 2010). Learning to "join and build" with their pleasurable feelings prepares the couple for later explorations when conflicting feelings come into play. Developing an exploratory alliance is primary in their learning to regulate interpersonal boundaries.

B. Normalizing (similar to Yalom's universalizing [1975]) informs clients their difficulties are neither unique nor shameful. When the therapist's phrasing and voice-tone is accepting, candor is more likely to be forthcoming.

Sample interventions:

It's not surprising you feel stressed juggling so many responsibilities.

Losing a child can be extremely tough on a marriage.

C. Reframing (Agazarian & Gantt, 2010; Erickson & Satir, 1982; Haley, 1986). Reframing offers a fresh perspective. Boundaries open to discussion when a daunting prospect can appear more hopeful. Complaints can be reframed as goals, crises as opportunities, arguments as role-conflicts, and so forth.

Sample interventions:

Complaints into goals: You're sick of quarreling. Do you want to make "less quarrelling" a goal?

Crisis as Opportunity: When you had a fierce argument, your son had bad dreams. Did you learn anything that might help your family have a better week?

Arguments as role conflicts (Agazarian & Gantt, 2010): Gary, you want golf lessons. Gail wants to reserve the money for a new stove. You are in the self-development role, and Gail is in the business role. It's a matter of conflicting roles. We have a way to work with them.

D. *Compassion for the couple's system.* Stimulating awareness of what they are going through as a couple accesses compassion for their suffering. Recent developments in interpersonal neurobiology point to compassion as a catalyst for change. Gantt & Agazarian (2010); access the compassionate experience "to anchor cognitive work and promote neural integration." Moreover, they bring the compassionate experience up a level, from compassion for the individual to compassion for the system. Eliciting compassion for their couple's system softens affect and fosters mutuality.

Sample interventions:

What is it like for you, as a couple, straddling the parenting and business roles in these tough economic times?

How do you feel for yourselves balancing two careers with a child who needs attention?

II. Building the system

From the outset, SCT builds a structure to support the relationship. Setting goals establishes a focus; accessing their "researcher" promotes objectivity, and leading with strengths reinforces the exploratory drive essential to this work.

A. *Setting goals.* Asking the couple to discuss their goals sets a constructive tone and engages them in teamwork.

Sample interventions:

You're here to make some changes in your marriage. Discuss, with each other, what you want to accomplish together.

Talk to each other about what, in your relationship, you'd like to address today.

B. *Accessing the "researcher."* Monitoring their couple's system trains the couple to regard their experience objectively. An observing stance calls attention to ongoing shifts in their outlook and feelings. As their outlook expands, feelings change; and as their feelings are discriminated, their outlook further widens, and so forth. Stimulating interest in their process stimulates a tone of inquiry, arouses curiosity, and balances the emotionality of couples in turmoil.

Sample interventions:

When Gary paraphrases your feelings, do you feel better, worse, or the same?

You decided to take a "cool-down" break when discussions get "hot." What were your feelings each time you separated, and when you came back together?

Your youngest child has special needs. Let's look at how you're managing this stressful situation, together.

What's the impact of this "empty nest" on your marriage?

C. *Leading with strengths.* At the outset of treatment, ask the couple to examine satisfying behaviors in their strongest areas (Agazarian & Gantt, 2010). Exploring satisfactions is heartening and eases the working climate. Consistent with principles of learning theory, a backdrop of successes increases the probability of taking in something new. When their strengths are kept in the foreground, the prospect of change is less fearsome, and a driving force.

III. The systems-centered process (Agazarian, 1997)

A. *Contextualizing raises awareness of the greater context.* Guiding couples to regard their relationship as a system shifts their focus from each as an individual, to their common good. For example, when Gary was in his individual system, he tracked mud into the house. When his awareness shifted to his couple's system, he didn't mind leaving his boots at the door.

Agazarian and Gantt (2010) offer a fresh stance to couples who express dissatisfactions with each other. Asking "What kind of system do you want to live in" diffuses hostility and re-vectors their energy from discontent to a more productive option.

Sample interventions:

You said you feel unappreciated. Do you want a system that recognizes your hard work?

Think of your marriage as a system. What kind of system can you build together?

B. *Functional subgrouping and role subsystems* (Agazarian & Gantt, 2010). Functional subgrouping explores each side of a conflict separately. Role subsystems adapt subgrouping explorations for couple's therapy. (In the present article, "role subsystems" and "roles" will be used interchangeably).

The couple's system is split into four functional role subsystems: parenting, business, personal development and intimacy. Behaviors are explored with an eye toward transferring successful behavior patterns to less satisfying roles. Early on, they rank the four role subsystems from the most to least satisfying. The couple explores one role at a time. As with functional subgrouping, exploration of role subsystems bears the potential to increase system complexity and system transformation. Through the process of discriminating and integrating their slight differences, the system expands to accommodate previously larger and contentious differences. When sufficient exploration has taken place, a spontaneous shift in the emotional climate occurs. This integrative moment is followed by conflict resolution and a redistribution of the available time, energy, or money resources (Y.M. Agazarian, personal communications, 1997-2011).

Business and parenting roles fell into conflict when Lou checked the stock market, while Barrie had the children all readied for an outing. Alternate exploration of the business and parenting roles enabled the couple to appreciate benefits and drawbacks in each of their roles. Eventually, the couple came

up with a decision to bring the laptop to the park and take turns with minding the children.

The personal development and business roles came into conflict when Jill searched catalogues for exotic trips while Hal harshly accused her of unwarranted extravagance. Alternate explorations of each role stimulated Jill's appreciation of the monetary concerns and Hal's curiosity about travel. After a series of alternate explorations, they ultimately evolved a plan to increase their income, in order to accommodate travel.

The SCT method is never to offer advice, nor to prompt solutions. Conflict resolution occurs organically, and arises, naturally, from the couple's process. It may occur as a compromise, or be a creative and unexpected solution (Agazarian, 1997). The following directions to explore role-conflicts are based upon Agazarian & Gantt's 2010 work.

Marriage has four basic roles: parenting, business, personal development, and intimacy. Each role has a different goal. The goal of the business role is to manage the money. The goal of parenting is to raise the children. The goal of intimacy is companionship and fulfilling sex. The goal of personal development is to further each one's potential to be most fully themselves.

Sample interventions:

Let's see what we can learn from your most effective roles. We can start by ranking the four roles from most to least satisfying.

Your parenting and business roles are in conflict. Let's explore each role by starting with your most satisfying behaviors in that role. Then we will look at the opposing role, and keep on exploring, alternate roles, to see what happens. Start with your knowledge about a role, without taking positions, or attempting to make a case. Then, your spouse will say what she heard and build with a slight variation. Remember to demonstrate that you heard each other before you start to build and take very small steps. Which role do you want to explore first?

The children are at grandma's, and Martha, you feel pressured by the need to go shopping. Tom had his heart set on alone-time, together. In which roles would you fit "shopping" and "alone time?" Let's explore each role, separately.

Your couple's system is trying to do two roles at the same time. Which role do you want to explore first?

When we're immersed in one role it may be difficult to remember that all the roles are there to promote your well-being, as a couple.

C. *SCT defense modification* (Agazarian, 1997). At the outset of treatment, the SCT therapist undoes social defenses such as, superficial conversation that may bar a serious discussion of their relationship. Next, the anxiety and the frustration defenses are undone, and so forth. Below is a cursory look at addressing defenses in initial sessions. For a complete discussion of the defenses to system development please consult Yvonne

Agazarian's book, *Systems-Centered Therapy for Groups* (1997).

(1) *Social defenses* interfere with a serious discussion of the issues.

Sample intervention:

You were talking about this crisp autumn weather. Do you want to take a look at how you are feeling, right now?

(2) *Cognitive defenses generate anxiety* (Agazarian, Skills Training Manual, 2007). The following are some adaptations of Agazarian's protocols for regulating anxiety from negative predictions, mind-reads, and uncertainty:

Sample interventions:

Negative predictions generate anxiety about the future.

When you worry about Gary's health, he gets impatient. Can you tell the future? Is he all right, in this moment? How is it for your system to be caught in this pattern of worry and impatience, together?

Mind reads generate anxiety about other's thoughts, feelings or opinions.

You assume your wife doesn't notice when you're attentive to her. Are you willing to check the reality of your mind read?

Mild anxiety about uncertainty can be adaptive, wisely, warning us to use caution in new situations. Severe anxiety is, of course, disabling. Agazarian's protocol balances the impact of dysfunctional anxiety, by accessing curiosity.

You're anxious about the impact of your mother-in-law's dependency. Most people would be a little anxious about the unknown in your situation. Can you find some curiosity about how it will play out?

(3) *Frustration defenses* of irritability, annoyance, outrage, and boomerang-depression can lead partners to picking on each other, attacks, outbursts, retaliations, or deprecation of the other or the self. Agazarian normalizes the impulses, and trains partners to identify and re-vector aggressive energy toward actions that are in the couple's best interest. The following intervention is based upon her protocols for managing frustration expressed in targeting or covert discharge.

Sample intervention:

Sarcastic remarks hurt each other's feelings. Exploring your experience can help you understand your feelings in order to have more choice in how you treat each other. Do you want to continue jabbing each other or explore the feelings?

IV. Concluding a session by referring back to the goals.

Awareness is, of course, the first step toward therapeutic

change. When partners keep an eye on therapeutic goals, they learn to monitor the correspondence between their immediate behavior and their target relationship and to notice their progress, or the lack of it.

Sample interventions:

You wanted to work on better communication. Was our work today a driving or a restraining force toward improving your communication? Your goal was to respect each other's feelings. After our work today, are you more, the same, or less aware of each others' feelings?

Concluding Comment

Readers who are unfamiliar with SCT may regard these explorations as a collection of evocative questions, or a smorgasbord of interventions, to pick from. In such case, I hope they add value to their toolbox. SCT-trained therapists will recognize they are applications and adaptations of Agazarian's strategies to (1) explore the experience of individuals as members of the larger context; (2) expand the system's functional capacity to contain differences; and (3) weaken the defenses that arise to block the paths toward survival, development, and transformation.

NOTE: I am in a couple's consultation group with Susan Gantt as our consultant. There are openings for new members. If you are interested, please contact me at elainedin@optonline.net.

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I attended an SCT Foundation course in York, the week of September 13 – 17th, 2010. It was my second Foundation group. I would like to share my experience of this workshop.

Within hours of the beginning of this experience, in the small and large group led by Yvonne Agazarian, after hearing strange statements, as if coming from outer space, such as “we have crossed time boundaries,” “you have crossed space boundaries,” “you are moving between a personal and a member system,” a familiar feeling started to arise, as if I had been beamed-up to a different territory.

Then, if I am allowed to have some personal disclosure, after a fantasy exercise of torturing a figure of authority in my childhood, I was left with some positive feelings of love. I very quickly directed them towards Yvonne and expressed that directly. The next day I felt proud, as I realized that that was the first time in my life I did that with a group leader.

Two days later I still wondered about why that happened and who was Yvonne representing in my life. Was she my mother? Was she my grandmother? Was she the life force that she was talking so much about in her interventions? My wonder brought to mind a familiar figure, a master Jedi from *Star Wars*, Yoda. She was the female version of Yoda!

I do not know if her usual signature “Y.A.” revealed any link with Y(OD)A. Definitely her wrinkles, her small stature, her smiles, her alert, piercing and gentle look--sometimes closing her eyes in a very placid and accepting way--were very similar. I never saw a light saber, a sort of green sword, but I saw her tremendous sharp fighting skills, without losing balance, moving very quickly to a resting and almost insignificant position, allowing the group dynamics to continue to emerge.

Then I realized that the green sword, though invisible (and I've been told she had mentioned something about group invisibility in her books) could represent her secret weapon, the weapon of sharp discrimination of the moment. This Jedi master, YA, wasn't an exception from her Jedi fellow trainers. She made all of us feel aware of the ever-changing forked road between the light and the dark side, the invisible and unknown boundary of the moment of now. By magic, once in that openness to the source, the life force became evident and channeled through her individuality. The consequences were brief losses of separateness, of taking things personally, and a beautiful, never-ending, renovating and surprising sense of connection to others, through others in the group.

On our fifth day, towards the ending of the group experience, I gave her this feedback. I shared with my group the secret I had discovered behind YA's identity, the disguised Jedi master, and the secret of her power. She laughed, we laughed.

She loved my feedback. She also reminded me that Jedi masters had a platform where they were fighting from. This

platform was the group and a method. I quickly disagreed with her, and I pointed out that the spirit would create a method and not otherwise. Many other therapists, many other methods and techniques, do work as well, as long as the therapist or the teacher embodies that spirit, which allows the clinician to create the effective method. She disagreed with me, reminding me that the sword was the method.

Days later, on reflection, I couldn't disagree that her method was rigorously and systematically applied.

What does this method consist of?

Well, perhaps some theoretical tradition and plenty of personal experience that she wasn't hiding at any time. Then, tricks of the fencing art, most of them aimed at feeling the force. There were numerous techniques such as attention to structure and centering oneself, adjusting posture, stopping explanations and encouraging active exploration. Dismantling the dark side defenses with funny forks and shower-baths, self-questioning, checking and naming the role locks. "No regression" was emphatically stated by YA because regression is another way of losing the present.

The contact with the present was not an ecstatic experience but a dynamic match. She was able to recognize that the group unconscious shows different phases, present, past, future, displayed rhythmically, cyclically. She used it very much like a gardener knows that there is a time for everything. He harvests tomatoes in the springtime, wheat in the summer, grapes in the autumn, oranges in winter. He knows that altering the order will not be harmonious, nor worth it. Very much like the tactful undressing of the beloved has to follow different layers of clothes, from the outside in, there are belts, buttons, laces, each garment with its own texture till reaching the naked intimacy. YA systematically applied the same method of undoing the defenses of anxiety, fight, authority, intimacy, and integration. There was a systematic method.

And... who is the enemy?

Lord Vader came to mind. Lord Vader Master of the Sith who, with his followers, the "separatists," had been seduced by the dark side. Lord Vader the great distracter, the one that splits us from the now, from the strength of membership in the group-as-a-whole, using numerous sneaky hypnotic ways. He confuses us by inducing us into thinking that happenings are personal, isolated, and away from the group context. Should we better call him Lord E-Vader? The Great Evader of the present moment as it is. Whenever possession by the dark force manifests, pain is its companion. Pain is at the same time its betrayer, as it alerts the trainee Jedi to a misalignment from the center.

I observed it in our group on many occasions, with a pervasive contagious effect. This was translated in disturbed group dynamics and often required intervention from the leader to initiate the counter-attack of awareness and re-centering. It resembled the organized emergence of separatists in *Star Wars*, a group of systems rebelling against the Galactic Republic.

Lord Vader fostered isolation, mutual suspicion of his followers and demanded total submission from everyone. He

ruthlessly squashed any hint of rebellion/retaliation to him.

In contrast, the Jedi's council was quite different. True, the leader looked around incessantly, and we looked at each other, but we were looking for connection as well as checking for signs of noise in the communication. We practiced rituals which seemed independent of the size of the group. We sat in a circle and followed a free-floating circumambulation. It was meant to contain and integrate differences. We learned to subgroup, by joining and demanding to be joined, to briefly afterwards, separate, as we shouted the mantra "anyone else?" Every now and again, usually after an unnoticed boundary break, YA invited the expression of anger and the fantasy of retaliation towards her. I witnessed swirling sparks in the room. This unveiled another masked expression of the life force evolving in the present. The "Master of Ceremony" not only endured it with equanimity, she blatantly enjoyed this confrontation as if she were secretly feeding from this rejected energy.

Luke Skywalker, another Jedi trainee, after being initiated in the art of feeling the force by Yoda, was told that in order to become a Jedi Knight he had to confront Lord Vader. He learned that Lord Vader was his own father. In our group we were also confronting authority.

One wonders, whether Lord Vader and Master Yoda were close friends and knew each other for a long time. In the same way one wonders whether the conscious and the unconscious have been together for a long time, enticed by the interminable process of knowing oneself. Perhaps this eternal couple, the closeness of their dancing, created the matrix that joyfully summoned and unleashed the life source. Perhaps this is the magnetic current that Freud described as libido or the binding drive of Bowlby's attachment. Who knows?

YA would constantly rename frustration as energy, and would constantly highlight the realness of feelings and impulses as channels of genuine life. This didn't avoid acknowledgement of the sourness of inevitable existential dilemmas.

Where was that vital energy coming from?

"Are you curious?" (Another powerful mantra repeated in the groups).

My conclusion was and still is that there is nowhere to look for the vital energy, as it is like the comical looking for lost house keys everywhere but in one's own pocket. The distracting belief that we don't have the life force, but have to acquire it or steal it from somewhere else, keeps vanishing with the transforming experience of being it. Intuition is listening to the spirit in your own pocket. Life offers it as courtesy training. It seems to manifest through the togetherness of group members who allow themselves to be receptive to this unknown present.

Spirit and method are complementary; they need and help each other. They are a loving couple intimately dancing in us.

I wonder what would be the next fruits of this relationship. Who knows! Are you curious?

Then,

May the Life Force be with you.

SPIRAL DYNAMICS INTEGRAL AND THE THEORY OF LIVING HUMAN SYSTEMS, PART 2

- Michael Robbins (michaelrobbins@rcn.com)

In the first part of this series, I compared and contrasted Spiral Dynamics Integral (SDI) (Beck & Cowan, 1996, Wilber, 2009) and the Theory of Living Human Systems (TLHS) (Agazarian, 1997) with a particular focus on what SDI calls first tier value systems. In this article I would like to focus on second tier value systems and the relevance of this model for SCT practitioners.

There are a number of similarities in the theories. Both theories inquire into the development of human systems from simple to complex and seek to understand the driving and restraining forces involved in this process. Both theories also understand that as human systems become more complex they contain paradoxical truths and hold deeper levels of the existential conflicts that are inherent in human life. Spiral Dynamics Integral sees the spiral of human development as held between the polarities of the human impulse towards individual agency and the impulse towards communion with others. Using the paradigm of TLHS to view the developmental conflicts on this path, I proposed that these conflicts could also be understood as complex iterations of conflicts around authority and intimacy. One difference is that SDI tracks the resolution of these conflicts on the large stage of human history and the development of cultural values as well as in the evolution of individuals and organizations. TLHS maps these conflicts in the development of human systems in a more general way and is not primarily concerned with historical context.

Another similarity between these two theories is that they both see the evolution of human systems as a movement from self-centeredness to the capacity to understand and care for oneself while remaining deeply resonant with a progressively larger context. In the language of TLHS, this is the movement from being self-centered to being centered in oneself in a systems-centered context.

Finally, both theories implicitly understand that as human systems hold more complexity they naturally grow in their capacity for compassion. This movement leads to a deep realization of each individual's interdependency and connection with all of life in one unitary and unbroken field of energy. The visceral recognition of this truth leads to an understanding of each person's responsibility for co-creating the context of life at every level, from family, to group, to the planetary and cosmic community. In SDI this becomes particularly clear in what is called the second tier of human systems development. In TLHS, this understanding is particularly relevant to the third phase of systems development, Interdependent: Love, Work and Play (Agazarian, 2008).

A Brief Recap of First Tier Value Systems

To briefly recap what I explored in Part 1, in SDI, human value systems develop along the following pathway (Robbins, 2010). They begin with confronting the problem of physical survival. At the individual level this is similar to the situation of the newborn. They then develop a *tribal* consciousness, which has a high value on the survival of the group. In tribal consciousness, nature is seen as filled with mysterious, magical forces that have to be placated with rituals and spells if the group is going to survive. This level provides a great deal of connection at the expense of many aspects of individual expressions of power and agency. In individuals, this is similar to the situation of the young child in a family. The next level is *warrior consciousness* in which the individual breaks from the sacred canopy of the group with all of its rituals and superstitions. Here human consciousness begins to develop a relationship with power and autonomy. This is similar to an adolescent rebellion as the teenager breaks from the protection and safety of the family. The excesses of this state of consciousness lead to the development of the *traditional wave* of consciousness. At this level, human systems create religious structures that delineate a universal system of rules and ethics based on some transcendent understanding or "revealed truth" of right and wrong. These rules save humanity from the chaos and brutality of *warrior* culture. However, these rules are often to be followed without question, compliantly, and dogmatically. This leads the spiral of development back to the individual, as human systems begin to question the truths of religion using the rational, logical power of the mind. This is the *modernist* wave of development. Critical thinking and scientific research are born. This scientific approach erodes faith in the "revealed truths" of traditional religion and leads to the industrial revolution, vast advances in medical technology, and various methods to use natural resources for the betterment of human life. On the down side, this value system also leads to the plunder of natural resources, immense corporate and individual greed, and an atmosphere of alienation in modern cities. The traditional structures and religious values that held families and communities together come under attack. These distortions of the scientific world-view swing the spiral back to the group with the birth of pluralism and *post-modernism*. This value system seeks to redress the abuses of the scientific world-view by proposing a value relativism that promotes consensus and an understanding between all points of view. The difficulty with this wave is that it flattens out the spiral and refuses to recognize the real differences in levels of complexity between the different levels of the spiral. This flattening of the hierarchy of development leads to a kind of groovy narcissism in which a *tribal* level of consciousness is seen on a par with a scientific (*modernist*) level or a traditional level with little appreciation for the real differences in levels of complexity between these levels. The excesses in this level of consciousness create the conditions for humanity to make the leap to a whole new tier of development. (See Part 1 of this series in the Fall 2010 issue

of *Systems-Centered News* for a more complete exploration of the different levels.)

Second Tier Waves of Development

Although some theorists divide the second tier of the spiral up into four or even six levels (Wilber, 2009), for the purposes of this article, I would like to briefly look at only the first two levels. Then I will examine how all of this might be relevant to SCT practitioners and also touch on how it has been personally meaningful for me to integrate the perspectives of these two theoretical perspectives.

Similar to the first tier of consciousness evolution, second tier consciousness continues to spiral between the human drives of agency and communion, but with a crucial difference. The essence of this difference is that when a person or a group or a culture is primarily identified in one of the first tier value systems, they feel the need to defend their point of view as “right.” A hallmark of second tier consciousness is that it is capable of honoring and understanding all of the previous levels of development with no need to fight for its own point of view. Second tier value systems understand the importance of every earlier wave of the Spiral and support the healthy expressions of each wave as inevitable and important steps along the path of human systems evolution. Furthermore, they do this without flattening out the hierarchy into a value relativism that denies the evolution of consciousness from simple to complex. Second tier consciousness understands that each level transcends and includes the levels beneath it in an ever-expanding march towards greater wholeness and inclusivity.

In the first wave in the second tier, which is usually called the *Integral* wave, consciousness focuses on the qualities of flow, functionality, competence, and spontaneity (Beck & Cowan, 1996). External authority and the issues around compliance and defiance to external authorities must be resolved for consciousness to truly enter this wave. At the integral level, what is important is competency and efficacy, not the relationship to external authorities, persons or dogma. The credos here are “does it work?” and “is it helpful?” rather than the pursuit of external validation, titles or degrees. There is a freedom from inner compulsiveness and a great capacity to enjoy the best that life has to offer, as well as the capacity to not take things personally. People whose primary center of gravity is at this level can fight for themselves while still being open to feedback and have the capacity to transcend their pull towards personalizing or defensiveness. This level has great respect for the power of knowledge and the skill to get something done, but not for persons, titles or dogma.

The second wave in the second tier is usually called “*Holistic*.” At this level, consciousness swings back to emphasize the experience of communion at a deeper level. At this level, consciousness intuitively feels the unitary energy field that knits all of life together and viscerally understands the interconnectedness of all living systems, human as well as

natural. Communion with others arises as an immediate felt sense and inner empathic knowing which creates an intuitive understanding of our oneness with this universal, energetic matrix. As consciousness tips into this layer, insights flow into awareness with a kind of visionary, apprehensive, suddenness in which we understand something about the nature of reality in a kind of complete and wordless knowing. It may take years to formulate these insights into language.

People who are awake at this level are deeply aware that words can never fully express what unfolds at this level of awareness. As the Tao Te Ching says “The Tao that can be spoken is not the true Tao.” Language that arises from this level is often poetic, mystical and the listener has a sense of something flowing beyond and behind the words. When one is in the presence of someone that is awake at this level of apprehensive, a-verbal knowing, one often feels inspired, uplifted, and understood at a core level that touches both the existential essence of universal truths and their unique manifestation in a particular context.

What Does All This Have To Do With TLHS?

So what does all of this have to do with the Theory of Living Human Systems? In my estimation, a lot.

Let’s go back to Agazarian’s Phases of Systems Development chart and look at Phase Three of human systems development: “Interdependent: Love, Work and Play” (Agazarian, 2008). At this stage of system development, Agazarian notes that human systems are concerned with modifying only two final defenses. The first are: “defenses against knowledge” and the second are “defenses against common sense.” In an earlier version of this same chart (Agazarian, 2006), she puts a little more meat on these bones. Under “defenses against knowledge,” she adds “defenses against autobiographical inner reality and integrated apprehensive and comprehensive knowledge,” and under “defenses against common sense” she adds “defenses against reality and reality-testing. Communications missing attunement and empathy. Closed mindedness” Although this is perhaps a less poetic way of describing the realizations of second tier consciousness, my hypothesis is that she is talking about the same thing as the SDI folks are talking about in their second tier.

If I look at the defenses against knowledge a little more closely, I am struck by two things. The first is that the defenses against “autobiographical inner reality” place an emphasis on our capacity for self-knowledge and an insight into the basic assumptions that have shaped our world-view up until that time. Unless we modify and see through the basic structures that formulate our pervasive transferences to the world, we will be limited. Our compulsion to repeat old roles and subtly distort our perceptions of our present context will be overwhelming and mostly outside of our awareness. We all know that the ramifications of this lack of awareness and insight can be severe. Once the assumptions that have limited our understanding of autobiographical inner reality

have been modified, the world opens up and the sources of apprehensive, a-verbal knowledge, as well as our openness to new comprehensive knowledge, takes an exponential leap. We are free to enjoy life with gusto, free from old roles with full access to our creativity. This sounds very much like a quality of the *integral* wave.

The continual modification of the boundary between our a-verbal knowing and our comprehensive understanding is a never-ending process. This process takes us into a deep development of our intuitive capacity to understand not only our own and others emotional lives, but also to have a direct understanding of the way the universe works. As our capacity for apprehensive understanding develops, it seems that human beings have the capacity to have a direct experience of the realities that disciplines such as quantum physics, complexity theory, or evolutionary theory explicate in abstract left-brain terms. Have you ever had an experience in an SCT group of exploring what the world looks like through the eyes of a tiger? Or a direct experience of the energy field that holds a sub group or the group-as-a-whole together? To me this sounds very similar to what the SDI people are describing as the *holistic* level. Does it to you?

Similarly, although again the language is much drier than the SDI language, the “defenses against common sense and present context,” if we modify them all the way down, would seem to lead to an intuitive attunement to a unitary field of energy that knits all of life together as it expresses itself in a particular context. Common sense, we may discover, is not that common. As we both apprehend and comprehend each particular context to a deeper level we cannot help but also be aware of the nested holarchy* (hierarchy of isomorphic systems) that connects every context all the way out, (or down, or up – directions don’t really make sense at this level) to this universal, unified energy field. This depth of attunement and empathy, theoretically at least, leads us to an experience of a-verbal knowing that is universal, existential, and also uniquely attuned to the dynamics of a particular situation in time and space. At least that is my read of phase three.

So What?

An important question to ask at this juncture is “so what?” Why am I putting these two perspectives together? Does it benefit us in any way to integrate these two theories? Certainly gloating over SCT being a second tier theory would totally miss the point.

My answer to this is based in my clinical experience of thinking about my clients and also my human experience of thinking about our planetary community.

First, my clinical experience. Having the lens of SDI has helped me to place my clients along a continuum of consciousness development. It has also helped me to communicate with them in language that is empathically attuned to the level of the conflicts that they are working through. Understanding an angry adolescent as working

through the “warrior” wave of development (rather than simply having major authority issues) helps me to resonate more fully with his muscle flexing and bravado. Talking to my religious clients who are concerned about family values and the erosion of their traditional communities has also made much more sense when I put them in the context of systems development that SDI proposes. The same goes for my atheistic professors from MIT. As a clinician trained in SCT, the resonance between the concepts proposed in SDI around the existential human conflicts to establish both agency and communion and the phases of systems development through *authority* and *intimacy* proposed in TLHS, makes this integration easy and intuitive.

Having this map helps me to look for signals that the next phase of development may be emerging. In TLHS terms, it has helped me to functionally subgroup more effectively and shore up the excesses of each level of the spiral that SDI suggests. Placing these conflicts in the larger context of the development of civilization has helped me to give more texture, flavor and depth to my clinical interventions. I am more able to contain, both apprehensively and comprehensively, my impulse to polarize with any of these points of view.

Reframing authority conflicts as issues around agency and autonomy has also helped me to be gentler with these inevitable developmental conflicts. Similarly, looking at the phase of intimacy as working through issues of communion has added a different color to my interventions that has seemed to deepen my capacity for empathic resonance with these conflicts. Maybe these are just semantic differences, but somehow it has made a difference.

Next, my experience as a world citizen. For years I had wondered how to apply TLHS to our global conflicts. Somehow, there was not enough granularity or subtlety in simply using the lens of the three phases of systems development. There was something that was right about it, but also “not enough.” Integrating SDI with TLHS and seeing how both of these theories were working with fundamental, human, existential conflicts has been eye-opening. Understanding the progressive working through of each iteration of human conflicts around authority and intimacy, agency and communion, as they play out on the stage of world history, has been important. At least for me.

The lens of SDI, integrated with TLHS, has helped me to understand the inevitability of these steps in cultural evolution. Indeed the applications to a variety of global conflicts are immense. SDI practitioners have worked in such hot spots of global conflict as South Africa and the Palestinian/Israeli situation. Integrating the TLHS method of functional sub grouping as a method of conflict resolution is an exciting prospect. Certainly this has helped me to not take the painful growing pains of our national and global culture wars so personally.

Finally, the emergence of second tier value systems (which has been an empirical discovery by SDI theorists, not

a theoretical one!!) has given me great hope. As more people and micro-cultures enter these waves of development, which correlates in my view to phase three in TLHS, perhaps there is hope that our world will survive the virulent culture wars that are wreaking havoc across the planet.

*A holarchy, in the terminology of Arthur Koestler, is a hierarchy of holons – where a holon is both a part and a whole. The term was coined in Koestler's 1967 book, *The Ghost in the Machine*.

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EXPLORING THE VALIDITY OF SAVI AS A RESEARCH TOOL

-Verena Murphy (vmch99@hotmail.com)

As a certified trainer, I have taught SAVI - the System for Analyzing Verbal Interaction - to about 20 undergraduate students each semester in a course called "Dynamics of Leadership" since the fall of 2007. In the course we spend several weeks practicing SAVI for about half an hour at a time, for a total of about 8 hours.

The context for teaching SAVI is the belief that future leaders benefit from the ability to see "patterns" of communication, rather than the personalities and the content of their opinions. Instead of the leaders taking sides in an argument or proposal, and favoring one side over another, the goal is to be able to "stay above the fray" in an argument or conflict, and remain in an impartial "leader role." The benefit of having learned SAVI means that those leaders are able to "listen with a third ear" and analyze, among other things, whether a team is actually problem-solving, or still brainstorming, instead of getting drawn into a conflict.

In SAVI language this translates into the following question: is the team using Square 5, 6, 8, and 9 verbal behaviors? Or is the team still in a Square 6 "opinion – opinion" or "opinion –

proposal" loop? (which means the team is not yet building on any one idea).

The first exposure the students have to SAVI is not the SAVI Grid, but a piece of paper that only contains the 48 verbal behaviors organized in 9 discrete groups. The students are instructed to use their own intuition and prior life experience, and not to be concerned whether they recognize all the names of verbal behaviors. (For example, they may ask what an "oughtitude" is, and get redirected to just using their intuition and what they do already know).

The students are then asked to identify the verbal behaviors that the "best communicators" they know use most frequently. The students identify those verbal behaviors with a check mark. Then they are asked to mark with a circle those verbal behaviors on the list that are used by the "worst communicators" they know.

Each semester, when I count the responses of each individual in the group, I am surprised that their responses provide the same pattern each time: the students intuitively recognize that the best communicators use mostly Square 7, 8, and 9 behaviors, and the worst communicators use mostly Square 1, 2, and 3 behaviors. In other words, the SAVI Grid was generated based on this intuitive prediction and we have anecdotal data from SAVI practitioners up until now, but we have no statistically relevant data yet to support that fact!

In the fall of 2011 I will have some preliminary data from five groups of students to begin a detailed analysis of people's intuitive knowledge – a small step toward being able to statistically support what Anita Simon and Yvonne Agazarian have been developing over the last 43 years! Given that prospect, are you as excited as I am?

ISOMORPHY BETWEEN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LARGE GROUP AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCTRI

-Jale Punter (jalepunter@doctors.org.uk)

The Spring 2010 Newsletter had an article by Yvonne Agazarian on isomorphy between the development of large groups at the conferences and the SCTRI organization-as-a-whole, with an invitation for members to share examples from their own experience. Interested in large groups, I responded to Yvonne's invitation. Her questions still remain, and with my contribution perhaps we can ask them again, so that more information from the subsystems of SCTRI can emerge.

Since I wrote my letter, we have had a very powerful large group experience in the Atlanta 2011 Annual Conference. The group passed through the crisis of hatred with a screaming emergence of life force followed by a very moving experience of members taking their authority, by speaking in their native languages. My experience of this large group was a deep level of connection, both in the authority and intimacy phases. I don't know yet what the isomorphy is with the organization, except

for a clear parallel with the context I was part of, Licensing Group VI. As we finished the work of our licensing group, we had an experience of awe, love of the group, and a deep and moving appreciation of the development in each of us through our work in this group. We felt tender, loving appreciation and gratitude, and the large group echoed these.

So, these were Yvonne's original questions: *Are the large group changes isomorphic to developmental trends in the organization? Is it reflected in the licensing process? Is it evidenced in the preparations for the Annual Conference? Is it reflected in the Action Groups? What are the essential change variables that we can trace that are common to the large group and other systems in the organization?*

The following letter was written to Yvonne in response to these questions.

Dear Yvonne:

I am writing in response to your article in the latest Newsletter. I have some more pieces of the puzzle to add in regards to your question: "Is there isomorphy between the subgroups of the SCTRI system, and the Conference large groups?" We would expect large groups of an organization to show isomorphically what happens in its subsystems, thereby giving the organization an opportunity to work on these (integrate the differences). To gather evidence that this is the case is a project that interests me.

There are two topics I want to address: the first is the major structural difference of having concentric seating in the 2010 SCT Conference, and second is around the issue of race and diversity.

The different structure of concentric seating allows the accommodation of larger numbers of people in the large group. Adapting to larger numbers by using concentric seating as a necessity and then adapting to this reality by using standing up, as suggested by the leadership, can be taken as evidence of development. The group, taking its authority, found another way of using standing up. Subgroups remained standing, so that they could be identified visually, showing a developed group that can take its authority, problem-solve, and adapt. So I agree with you that our evidence from the Conference 2010 large group is that it moved into work rapidly. I think both the leadership and the group showed more flexibility and adaptability to the environment. This large group then also allowed important feedback about trainers to be given. So it not only adapted to its new context rapidly, it then got on with important work by giving feedback. This adaptability and coming up with a working solution was also apparent in the York large group in 2009. The organizers responded to the feedback from the large group (feedback and work) so that in September 2010 the training ended at Friday lunch time, instead of Friday evening. My experience of the York large group in September 2010 was that it also moved to the Work phase quickly.

Regarding the race and diversity piece, we know the large group particularly highlights this societal cultural aspect. This work started in the 2008 Conference (a black member not being acknowledged by a white member), continued at the November Philadelphia weekend large group (the Clan reference) and came to a climax with the Conference 2009 large group, when one member very powerfully joined another member with being racially stereotyped, as well as recognizing how they stereotyped each other. Paralleling this was the emergence of a Special Interest Group to work on the issues of race and diversity in the organization. There were workshops at the Conferences (2007, 2008, and 2009) on racial and cultural roles. The Authority Issue Group at the time worked on race and culture difference too. This Special Interest Group is no longer active and I don't know how much the Board or other areas of SCTRI are holding the racial and cultural issue.

This parallel work on race and cultural difference looks isomorphic between the large group, and subsystems of the organization. Previously, as these differences were conceptualized in the theory as stereotyped subgroups, it had not been possible to functionally subgroup around them. One hypothesis is that as the large group was able to do the work of functionally subgrouping around race (and how we humans stereotype each other), this important work happened in the large group, thus allowing the race and diversity Special Interest Group to fade out.

The cultural aspect of roles is now acknowledged in the latest role protocol; so there is an interactive, developing process that I can see between the large group work, authority issue group work, the organization and the development of the theory and protocols.

One last piece to add from the current licensing group is that this will be the first time SCTRI licenses pastoral educators. So the organization is developing and becoming more diverse.

I appreciate your question and I am very interested to see how this develops.

**Announcing the first SCT OD
Conference in Europe!
"Putting Systems Thinking
Into Organizational Practice"
Stockholm
August 29-31, 2012
Workshops in Theory, Application
& Experiential Training
Details available soon**

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, and 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.

Dear Members,

The next issue of the *Systems-Centered News* will focus on the special topic of “splitting.” How human systems respond to the inevitable phenomena of splitting is fundamental to systems-centered thinking. Splitting occurs at all levels of human development, biologically, psychologically, socially, and culturally. It has creative and constructive manifestations as well as destructive and devastating manifestations. We are interested in your thoughts on both sides and at every level of human systems development. The deadline for submissions of articles is Sept. 1. We are very excited about this fall publication and hope that you will consider writing an article to help us all deepen our understanding of this critical issue.

Sincerely,
Michael Robbins
Editor, *Systems-Centered News*

PROGRAM NOTES

SPECIAL FOCUS: SAVI® IN SYSTEMS-CENTERED TRAINING

SAVI (System for Analyzing Verbal Interaction) was developed by Yvonne Agazarian and Anita Simon as a theory-based tool for describing the communication output of group systems. SAVI is a core component of SCT training, tracking the driving and restraining forces for the flow of energy/information through patterns of verbal communication. The introductory 2-day SAVI training is required at the Foundation level of SCT training. It is offered at the annual SCT Conference in the Pre-Conference Institute weekend.

SAVI in Training and Consultation

Systems-centered training requires members to develop their capacity to observe both their own behavior and the behavior of the systems they are living in. In this training, members recognize that the way we say what we say, the behavior that carries the message, has an impact on the systems we are building. SAVI provides an objective tool to capture patterns in the way system members are communicating, separating the behavior from the intentions of the people, individually or collectively. This separation creates the space for curiosity and exploration, both about the system itself and one's own contributions to it. Verbal communication patterns – the way people talk with one another – change as the system develops, from Flight to Fight to Intimacy to Work phases. SAVI is a core tool for identifying the phases of system development, and the particular driving and restraining forces

contributed by the communication pattern.

SAVI in Research

SAVI organizes communication behaviors along 2 dimensions. One, based on information theory, identifies behaviors that contribute noise to the communication system (Avoidance/Red Light), behaviors that give evidence that information has been transferred (Approach/Green Light), and behaviors that input information (Contingent/Yellow Light). The other dimension separates behaviors according to the focus of the content, toward information about the person (Personal), information about the world (Factual), or information about the speaker's orientation to the topic (Orienting). The resulting SAVI Grid can be used to gather data to test hypotheses, hypotheses generated from SCT theory or from other models. This hypothesis testing ranges from "action research" of the individual practitioners (Do I get a different response if I change the questions I ask from Leading Questions to Broad Questions? What is the difference?), to large scale projects (Are communication patterns related to the productivity of task groups?).

SAVI – Beyond the Basics

More advanced SAVI workshops apply SAVI to specific system settings and challenges: organizational diagnosis and consultation, phases of system development, giving and getting feedback, to name a few. These resources provide Intermediate and Advanced members with opportunities to develop their skills in applying SAVI to real-life contexts.



	PERSON		TOPIC
	Personal	Factual	Orienting
RED Light	1 <i>Fighting</i> Attack/Blame Righteous question Sarcasm Self attack/defend Complaint	2 <i>Obscuring</i> Mind-reading Negative or positive prediction Gossip Joking around Thinking out loud Ritual	3 <i>Competing</i> Yes-But Discount Leading question Oughtitude Interrupt
YELLOW Light	4 <i>Individualizing</i> Personal information current Personal information past Personal opinion/explanation Personal Question	5 <i>Finding Facts</i> Facts & figures General information Narrow question Broad question	6 <i>Influencing</i> Opinion Proposal Command Impersonal reinforcement
GREEN Light	7 <i>Resonating</i> Inner-feeling Feeling question Answer feeling question Mirror inner experience Affectionate joke Self assertion	8 <i>Responding</i> Answer question Clarify own answer (with data) Paraphrase Summarize Corrective feedback	9 <i>Integrating</i> Agreement Positives Build on other's ideas or experience Work joke

Silence, Laughter, Noise

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SCT[®]RI REPORTS AND UPDATES

SCTRI IN A NUTSHELL: THE ORGANIZATION

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

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

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

Associate Director: Keeps an eye on the overall activities and events within the organization and provides linkages among the Action Groups.

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

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

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

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

Currently:

- Annual Conference
- Continuing Education
- Curriculum Development
- European OD Conference
- Finance
- Fundraising
- Newsletter
- Research
- Trainers
- Web

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

FROM THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

I am writing to say goodbye from my role as Associate Director. I am very pleased to have pioneered this role from its inception in January 2010 to Spring of 2011, not quite a year and a half long. I have had a unique opportunity to forge the pathway, and help define the requirements and functions of this new role within SCTRI.

The Associate Director began with an awareness that the Director's time and energy would best be spent addressing the boundary between our organization and the world at large. If you follow the announcements in E-News, read this Newsletter, attend the Conference, and are familiar with the intensive amount of training and presenting that Susan does, you know that interfacing with SCTRI and the world is indeed a full-time job. The role of Associate Director was conceptualized as a role that would organize and track the many internal functions of SCTRI to facilitate the timely and smooth implementation of our various activities, from getting our annual donation campaign underway each Fall, to keeping an eye on timelines for Conference-related activities, membership dues, writing the Board of Directors Report for the membership, and other internal events that occur at regular intervals – annually or otherwise.

Toward the goal of fulfilling this aspect of the role, the administrators, Kathy Lum, Jan Vadell, and myself in my Associate Director role, organized these internal events in what has come to be known as the "Tracking Calendar." By following the monthly schedule of events, we reduce the likelihood that important events "fall through the cracks." In the weekly Steering Group meetings, the events on the tracking calendar are taken up, next steps created, and then implemented.

The Associate Director role is also charged with supporting the work of different Action Groups, and fostering connections which I addressed through the establishment of regular, monthly E-News publications. To accomplish this, I teamed up with Kathy Lum to gather data from Action Groups, announce new trainings or other news, create a spot for members to share accomplishments and experiences, and highlight improvements to the website and tips for accessing information on the website.

The job of pioneering the role was both challenging and rewarding. With some of the path laid down, my successor will be able to step into a context that already has some definition to it. I think the hardest thing about being the first to take up the role was the energy and vision required to build the needed structure. We all know about the importance and hard work involved in "building a system" and "creating a structure."

The benefits to being the first in this role were the

excitement of joining forces with our excellent administrators, and forging the way toward a more reliable structure where events would unfold predictably. All the information was there – it just needed to be made more visible and organized. This we accomplished through bi-monthly administrative meetings.

Another hidden benefit was the mentorship I received from our Director Susan Gantt in weekly phone meetings where the turbulence, successes, challenges, innovations, restraining forces, and unique aspects of beginning a new role were addressed. I feel very grateful for her unwavering support where no question was too small and where I was given license to learn according to my interests, abilities, and pace. Thank you Susan, Kathy, and Jan for your staunch support and expertise, which made this last year and a half such a great learning experience.

Lastly, I want to say a heartfelt thank you to the members of the Steering Group – Joy Luther, Dorothy Gibbons, Michael Silverstein, and Susan Gantt. The workload of the Steering Group, in case you don't already know, is quite intense. I am grateful to all of you for the many learning opportunities I experienced. Through you I learned how the Steering Group functions, how to make decisions about what information is nested within what context, how to be a container for the system at large, and how to monitor what crosses the boundary to the outside. And we were able to have some fun too!

Since we give a fair amount of lead time in getting our articles submitted for the Newsletter, it is possible that by the time this is published, the role may already be taken up by another individual, or it may be waiting to be filled.

To those of you considering taking up roles within the organization, I strongly endorse your doing so! There is no shortage of excitement or challenges facing our organization. I invite those of you who have time, energy and resources to think about applying them to our organization.

There is currently a need to more carefully track our membership, for example. A reconstitution of the Membership Action Group would be highly useful to us and take some responsibilities off the administrators. The collection of dues from our new and renewing membership, as well as publicizing the Membership Directory would be two main functions of this group. Additionally, it seems like a good time for the organization's various Action Groups to assess whether or not there is a want for more members, more available resources and energy to accomplish the tasks at hand.

So, good-bye to writing from the Associate Director role in our wonderful Newsletter! And best of luck to whoever takes up the role next.

- Holly Johnson (hollyjo@valley.net)

STEERING GROUP

In between the twice-yearly Board meetings, the Steering Group meets weekly to conduct the business of SCTRI. Most

of our work involves the development and support of the other subsystems of the organization.

We have increased the frequency of our meetings with the Treasurer, Nina Klebanoff, to twice monthly, with the result that the Steering Group has developed its ability to allocate our financial resources in accordance with our systems-centered values. For example, we have approved an annual allocation of funds for research consultation towards the goal of having SCT become an evidence-based practice. In addition, we have allocated funds for Susan Gantt, in her Director role, to have 6 to 8 organizational consultations a year with Ken Eisold, who previously was hired twice a year as a consultant to the Board.

We have continued to meet regularly with the Conference Co-Directors to provide oversight, guidance and support. The Steering Group has endorsed Ray Haddock and Sven-Erik Viskari as Co-Directors for the annual SCT Conference in 2012 in San Francisco. The group has also endorsed Katarina Billman and Erika Ekedal as Co-Directors of our first European Conference, the SCT Organizational Development Conference in Stockholm in August 2012.

In the past 6 months, the Steering Group has also worked closely with the Associate Director, Holly Johnson, helping to develop this new role in our organization and supporting Holly as she pioneered this role. We have also linked with the new Finance Group as well as the new Work Exchange Coordinator, Peg Lewis, in order to support these new subsystems in our organization.

- Susan Gantt (sgantt@systemscentered.com)

Dorothy Gibbons (dorothygibbons2@yahoo.com)

Holly Johnson (hollyjo@valley.net)

Joy Luther (joyluthersoffice@gmail.com)

Michael Silverstein (silverstein@rowan.edu)

SYSTEM MENTORS

As the System Mentor group we keep an eye on our SCT/ SCTRI system-as-a-whole and are available as resources as needed. Our sense is that the organization has been functioning very well since the last Board meeting and has not required any activity on our part other than keeping an eye on it.

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

Fran Carter (carter2229@aol.com)

Susan Cassano (susancassano@sbcglobal.net)

Susan Gantt (sgantt@systemscentered.com)

Sven-Erik Viskari (sven-erik.viskari@telia.com)

CONFERENCE 2011

The 12th Annual SCT Conference concluded in Atlanta April 1st with expressions of heartfelt gratitude in the large group for a remarkable week of institutes, trainings and workshops. As Co-Directors, we were awash in positive feedback: “great hotel,” “seamless job,” “great learning environment,” “superb presenter(s),” “wonderful dinner/party,” and, our personal

favorite, “best Conference ever.” It really was fantastic from start to finish. Some of the highlights among the experience in leadership of the Conference over the last two years were: influencing and building on the process of working with various subsystems within the system-as-a-whole; bringing all the systems together (Trainers Group, Fundraising Group, Program Planning Group, Web Group, Conference Coordinating Group, administrators, etc.) toward the goal of a fine Conference; overseeing the Conference during the years that it went totally live on the website with most registrations and information being distributed via the web; offering *new* institutes on the weekend; expanding the Intermediate Skills Training to a 7-day training model; providing more training opportunities for seasoned SCT members; having over 40 presenters; influencing and providing leadership in support of the Fundraising Group that raised over \$5,000 for the Yvonne Agazarian Research Scholar Fund; and extending the silent auction into the Thursday night party. We also had the opportunity to play a leadership role in a system change where Conference Co-Directors take up the task for two years with coordination and training with the incoming Conference Co-Directors - bridging the learning curve and insuring continuity in the Co-Directors system.

- Dave Schwing (dave.schwinglcsw@gmail.com)

Mark Johnson (drmarkj@valley.net)

Sven-Erik Viskari (sven-erik.viskari@telia.com)

CONFERENCE 2012

With a very successful 2011 Conference just over, we are already working on the 2012 Conference, April 14-20, in San Francisco. The theme of the Conference is “*Emotional Intelligence for Real World Solutions: Methods for Change in Clinical, Educational and Organizational Contexts.*” We are excited about returning to San Francisco where the local group is warm and supportive and the city beautiful, with so many fun things to do.

As we move through the coming year, we are excited about building our Conference system. If you would like to be a part of our team working on the Conference, or if you have feedback for us, please don’t hesitate to contact us.

We are already making changes for the coming Conference as for the first time proposals for the Conference were submitted online. Thanks to the Web Group and especially Roelof Langeman for making this progressive change possible.

We look forward to seeing so many of you in San Francisco.

-Ray Haddock (rayhad@doctors.org.uk)

Sven-Erik Viskari (sven-erik.viskari@telia.com)

CONTINUING EDUCATION

We have recently learned that the American Psychological Association (APA) has tightened the enforcement of some of

its guidelines when CE providers such as SCTRI are reapplying for renewal of the typical five-year approval status for granting CEs. The tightening has occurred around the learning objectives for trainings not meeting the required, participant-focused objective, what-is-expected-to-be-learned format. In order to be sure SCTRI is meeting the APA standards, the CE Group is in the process of reviewing the learning objectives for the trainings offered under our aegis, both those offered directly through SCTRI, such as the ones at the Conference, and those offered by trainers when conducting trainings on their own.

Thus far we have discovered some areas that do not meet the current APA requirements, and are in the process of developing a plan of correction. We are also reviewing the other standards and criteria needed to be an APA-approved sponsor of CEs, with the goal of certainty that we are in compliance in all areas by the time we apply for our next five-year approval status, which will be in August of this year.

At the present time we do not anticipate any major changes that will affect the membership directly, or the current trainings being offered, although we will be asking trainers to review their learning objectives, evaluation forms, and training content; and to work with the CE Group to be sure they are in compliance. If you have any questions about this issue, please feel free to contact me.

As always, we would love to hear from members who are interested in joining the CE Group, which has a long-standing reputation for being a fun, well-organized SCT work group.

- Dick Ganley (dickganley@aol.com)

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

We have had a busy and successful time since our last report with a number of highlights to name: we have been brainstorming about the place of SAVI in the core curriculum. To that end, we clarified the SAVI track on our website, collected data from a group of trainees at the Intermediate level, and are currently analyzing that data with an eye towards incorporating the feedback and information as we go forward.

We have edited the web descriptions of Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced training tracks for clarity and consistency. We’ve opened up our boundaries to other Action Groups including the Web Group, the Trainers Group, and the Conference Group. In collaboration with the Conference Group, we helped finalize a “Welcome Packet” for first-time Conference attendees. Over the year, we have successfully integrated our old and new members. We now see ourselves as a well-resourced group, with permeable boundaries to new energy and information.

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

Dorothy Gibbons (dorothygibbons2@yahoo.com)

Mark Johnson (drmarkj@valley.net)

Madeline O’Carroll (madmoc1@googlemail.com)

FUNDRAISING

Members of the Fundraising Action Group (FRAG) are extremely pleased with the money raised at the Conference this year for the Yvonne Agazarian Research Scholar Fund. We more than doubled the amount compared to last year, and raised over \$5,000. We worked hard to make changes that would add interest and excitement. We created a “preview” showing of auction items with the final bidding at the Thursday Night Party instead of closing the bidding at noon on Wednesday.

We also replaced the raffle at the party with an interactive “Heads or Tails” game that inspired much dancing and revelry as game bracelets were shed one by one until one winner took the grand prize. Our sincere thanks go out to all those who gave so generously, and to those who contributed such wonderful items for the auction. We truly could not do it without you!

If you are interested in becoming a member of FRAG, please let us know.

-Susan Beren (sberen@nyc.rr.com)

Verena Murphy (vmch99@hotmail.com)

Elaine Pratt (pecat67@earthlink.net)

Debby Zeigler (dzconsult@aol.com)

OD EUROPEAN CONFERENCE 2012

We are excited to have pinned-down the location for SCT’s “First European Organizational Development Conference” to be held in Stockholm, entitled “Putting Systems Thinking Into Organizational Practice,” 29-31, August 2012!

Now it’s time to start thinking about what you want to present at the OD Conference. Take the opportunity to come to Stockholm and share your ideas and experience with others at a new and unique event. Deadline for proposals is September 1st.

- Katarina Billman (Katarina@billmanenggquist.se)

Erika Ekedal (Erika@humannature.se)

RESEARCH

Rich O’Neill is thrilled to report that the paper “*Systems-Centered Functional Subgrouping Links the Member to the Group Dynamics and Goals: How-To and a Pilot Study*” is in press. It explores functional subgrouping in SCT weekend training workshops and will appear in the June issue of *GROUP: The Journal of the Eastern Group Psychotherapy Society*.

Work continues on another paper exploring functional subgrouping in the SCT Conference Large Group, and on a third paper documenting the development of a new functional subgrouping scale - the “*How this Group Works*” Questionnaire.

Jale Punter reports on a proposed European study called “*Systems-Centered Group Therapy in the NHS for People with Enduring Mental Illness: SYSTEMS, A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial*.” This research proposal was developed in the UK by a team including university

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academic partners and a patient consultant, with the clinical sites planned in south west London with Jale Punter, and in Sheffield with Ray Haddock. The project design was presented at the SCT Conference research workshop in Atlanta. The study aims to gather clinical outcome data and information on the feasibility of study design, for a 12 week psycho-educational and process group intervention for patients with enduring mental illness. The group process will also be studied with a number of measures. They have submitted a grant application for £240,000 (over \$400,000) to cover research costs, the outcome of which will be known in July 2011.

- Verena Murphy (vmch99@hotmail.com)

Rich O’Neill (oneillr@upstate.edu)

Jale Punter (jalepunter@doctors.org.uk)

SVENSKA SCT-FÖRENINGEN

The Swedish SCT Association continues its efforts to grow by small steps. One significant step in our development was that our Association, for the first time, took full responsibility to organize the annual workshop in Stockholm. Susan Gantt continues to take up the role of trainer and also supports leadership development in our system. Erika Ekedal and Sven-Erik Viskari were our “local” staff during this 4-day workshop (3 days on building a systems-centered group and 1 day with an organizational development approach titled “*Building Emotional Intelligence in Work Groups: Linking Functional Subgrouping and Interpersonal Neurobiology*”).

We are very satisfied with the result, and this year we had some Finnish attendees for the first time, in addition to people from Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

At the workshop we had an annual Board meeting to conform with the laws in Sweden. The annual meeting elected the Board members for the upcoming year and for the moment our Board members are: Erika Ekedal, Maria Åkerlund, Margreth Reiniusson and Sven-Erik Viskari. At this time we have about 30 members, and we are thinking about different ways to organize the energy we have in our system in a functional and useful way. The next open meeting will be a summit where we will invite the whole membership to join us on the telebridge for conversation.

Best regards to you all from “Svenska SCT-Föreningen.”

-Sven-Erik Viskari (sven-erik.viskari@telia.com)

TRAINERS

Over this past year the Trainers have been discussing the three intermediate training sequences of Skills Training, that lead from the Mentor Training to the Authority Issue Group, and finally to Licensing.

Some clarifications we made include the requirement for consultation as trainees finish their first step of Skills Training and then throughout the Intermediate training track. One reason for this additional piece in training is to ensure that trainees are getting support and feedback as they apply their skills in

organizational, clinical or educational work settings.

Members move from Foundation to Intermediate level training (transitioning from using skills on oneself to practicing applying them on others) based on readiness, for which we clarified the following criteria:

Foundation members move to the Intermediate level when they have worked in an SCT experiential group sufficiently to have learned:

1. to subgroup, recognizing the fork-in-the-road between explaining and exploring;
2. to work with SCT techniques to undo their own anxiety, tension, depression, and outrage;
3. to recognize their pulls to compliant and defiant roles and role locks;
4. to develop a sufficient awareness of their own authority issues to be able to contain and explore them, rather than act them out;
5. to develop a good ability not to take others and themselves “just personally;”
6. to recognize and shift from a person-centered to a member perspective.

To move from Foundation to Intermediate level training, members are required to have a basic working knowledge of systems-centered theory, methods and techniques.

The Authority Issue Group (AIG) will be starting a new three plus year group at next year’s Conference AIG meetings will be held in Atlanta.

In preparation for the start of this new group, Susan Gantt, Rich Armington and Fran Carter (leader of the Mentor Training), as well as Dorothy Gibbons (leader of the Skills Training) convened an informational meeting at the Conference to give information about the requirements for membership in the AIG. Any trainee who wishes to apply for the AIG will need

to have completed both the Skills Training and Mentor Training. For those wishing to apply for AIG and have not yet completed Mentor Training, Fran gave information about two upcoming opportunities (this September and November) when the Mentor Training will be offered in York, England and in Philadelphia, before the start of the AIG in 2012. Please see the website for more information at www.systemscentered.com.

- Rich Armington (armington@gmail.com)

WEB GROUP

The Web Group is focusing on making the website more user-friendly and integrating it into the work of SCTRI.

We are pleased to report nearly 95% of Conference attendees used the new online registration option to select workshops and pay registration fees! This dramatically lightened the workload on the administrative system. We also hope it made the registration process easier! We are working with the 2012 Conference system, so proposals for workshops can also be completed online.

You can now log in as a member and stay logged in forever! Visit the home page to access the current Newsletter and past issues. One click will link you to the telebridge calendar, directory of members and links to videos and upcoming trainings.

Our plan this year is to update the look of the website. We are working on this with the Web Vision Group (Fran Carter, Susan Gantt, Holly Johnson and the Web Group members).

-Chetan Borkhetaria (cborkhetaria@gmail.com)

Tom Carmichael (tomcarmichael@hotmail.co.uk)

Rowena Davis (rowenadavis@btinternet.com)

Roelof Langman (roelof.langman@gmail.com)

Kathy Lum (admin@systemscentered.com)

Dave Schwing (dave.schwinglcs@gmail.com)

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR CONFERENCE 2012!

*“Emotional Intelligence for Real World Solutions:
Methods for Change in Clinical, Educational & Organizational Contexts”*

San Francisco

Pre-Conference Weekend Institutes:

April 14-15, 2012

5-Day Conference:

April 16-20, 2012

Watch the website for program, conference & registration details this fall

www.systemscentered.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

Recent Honors:

Yvonne Agazarian has been invited to be the Institute Opening Plenary speaker for the AGPA Annual Institutes to be held in New York City on March 5 & 6, 2012. Congratulations Yvonne! This will be a wonderful event for our membership to attend!

Jim Peightel became a fellow of the American Psychiatric Association at the May 2011 APA Convocation in Honolulu. Congratulations Jim!

The Group Psychotherapy Foundation of the American Group Psychotherapy Association awarded the 2011 Alonso Award for Excellence in Psychodynamic Group Psychotherapy to Susan Gantt and Paul Cox for their work co-editing the special issue of the *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy* "Neurobiology and Building Interpersonal Systems: Groups, Couples and Beyond," noting that "Your focus on the integration of interpersonal neurobiology with theories of group psychotherapy provide us with an opportunity to understand more fully the unique context that group work offers for rewiring the human brain. Viewing this process through the lenses of attachment theory, Systems-Centered group method, and couples group work, this special issue of IJGP eloquently links the lore of group psychotherapy with the science of neurobiology."

To order a copy of the journal (Oct. 2010, Vol. 60, #4), contact Kim Williams at Guilford Publications. Email Kim.Williams@guilford.com or call (212) 431-9800 x242. Cost \$27.50.

Awards Presented at 2011 Annual Conference

Dave Schwing & Mark Johnson – *For their initiative in pioneering our new conference leadership structure*

Jale Punter – *For her leadership in SCT research efforts in the UK*

Dick Ganley – *For his outstanding SCT video production work*
Candace Stoughton & Chetan Borkhetaria – *For their initiative in a survey exploring how we communicate to others about SCT*

Peter Kunneman, Roelof Langman & Lotte Paans – *the Dutch Organizing System – For bringing SCT to the Netherlands*

Rowena Davis - *For her efforts in developing the UK training system*

Madeline O'Carroll – *For her efforts in developing the UK training system*

Holly Johnson – *For developing the Associate Director role and pioneering the E-News*

Ray Haddock – *For his efforts in developing the UK training system*

Juliet Koprowska – *For her efforts in developing the UK training system*

Roelof Langman – *For his continued leadership in the Web & Web Vision Groups*

Susan Cassano – *For her leadership in the "Cash for Ash" campaign*

Nina Klebanoff – *For her leadership in pioneering our Treasurer role and developing our financial group*

Steve Weinstein – *For his work in the DJ role that makes the music that makes our party*

Elaine Pratt – *For her contributions to the "Cash for Ash"*

Joy Luther – *For her steadfast leadership and vision in SCTRI*

Recent Members' Publications

Gantt, S.P. & Agazarian, Y.M. (2011). Highlights from ten years of a systems-centered large group: Work in progress. *Voices: The Art and Science of Psychotherapy*, (47)1, pp. 40-50.

Gantt, S.P. & Agazarian, Y.M. (2011). The group mind, functional sub-grouping and interpersonal neurobiology. In E. Hopper & H. Weinberg (Eds.), *Social unconscious in persons, groups and societies: Volume 1: Mainly theory*. London: Karnac Books.

O'Neill, R., Smyth, J.M. & MacKenzie, M.J. (2011). Systems-centered functional subgrouping links the member to the group dynamics and goals: How-to and a pilot study. *GROUP: The Journal of the Eastern Group Psychotherapy Society*, 35.2, pp 105-121.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Editors Note: Astute readers of the *Systems-Centered News* will notice that John is ahead of the curve here, as Yvonne is asking for member input on just this subject in her "Emerging Theory" column in this issue.

What's in a Name? A Potential "Bottom-up" Path to Refining the TLHS

-John Straznickas (john.straznickas@med.va.gov)

As it is currently used in SCT practice, the noun "person system" is too often negatively colored by the defenses described by the verb "personalizing." We know that engaging the "person system" is essential to maximizing SCT-centered work. Yet learning to recognize and reduce the pain and isolation of defensive "personalizing" is also a core aspect of SCT training. This is not a simple discrimination. A hypothesis is that the SCTRI membership will be energized if the shadow of confusion regarding person information is reduced.

Viewed through this hypothesis, Yvonne's effort to better discriminate what we call the personal structure containing the life force from the destructive aspects of personalizing is

of critical importance. But which other word can we use to contain the raw “green stuff” energy of the life force? The term “individual system” is currently being beta-tested in the newsletter and at the recent conference. One additional “bottom-up” path is for SCT trainers to explicitly test out various alternate terms for the “person system” in their training groups. Then as the SCT Trainers Group, they can process their data and determine the most functional new term(s). The Trainers Group could then forward their “best terms” on to Yvonne and the SCTRI Board for any possible change in the “theory sheets.” Some potential other terms to try out include “primary system,” “personhood system,” and “core-self system.” No matter what (if any) new term is found, the exploration process will help the SCT membership better discriminate the person system’s enlivening force from the pain-filled defensive action of personalizing. With this clearer difference, SCTRI will be better able to access and relate to the unique and energetic qualities of its members.

POETRY

When I Finally Stopped Thinking

By Michael Robbins

When I finally stopped thinking
that I was the center of the Universe

I thought the moon would disappear from the midnight sky
that the sun would cease to rise and set
the wind stop blowing
and the fish stop swimming in the sea.

It was devastating when nothing happened.

But then again,
I was only five
and still took myself quite seriously.

When I finally stopped thinking
that I was the center of MY Universe
the wind blew my mind all the way to Pluto
the waters of my blood sang hallelulah
and my nerves sparkled with the light of the sun.

By then I was 35
and it was time for miracles to happen.

When I finally stopped thinking,
period,

you opened the door to your secret room
invited me in
and ravished me
until I realized
that very idea of me or you
or a separate universe
was utter
nonsense.

Three Circular Tales from the Empty Well

By John Straznickas

They say dead men tell no tales.
But what of men who fall into wells?
Their nails can still scratch lines on the dry round walls.
They’re too shaken by the fall
To call out.
And it’s improbable for them to crawl out.
So their fingered runes
Are a way to sound out their discordant tunes.

**

And it’s a wail of a tale.
But empty walls echo.
And wails can become albino
With a peg-legged captain in locked pursuit.
But the wail in that chase is lost.
This unheard wail hangs like an albatross
Dragging down a different mariner to the bottom of the well.
And in his ancient way of dying,
Perhaps he stops trying.
Maybe that’s why dead men stop telling tales.

**

I fell into a well –despair.
It hurt down where
The pain and hurt of the past reside.
But that black hole, my dark sole held one surprise.
The twinkling light that burnishes
Is not for bright well wishes.
The redeeming light in that stale air
Is not hope, it’s our minds’ Aware-
Ness-tled in the knowledge
I am not alone.

**

A home is a system.
A system is not a home.
Well-rounded words from a former well-wisher.

Welcome New SCTRI Members!

Alberto Albeniz, Stratford-Upon-Avon, UK

Lorie Barber, New York, NY, US

Hans Hofman, Zoetermeer, Netherlands

Akane Kamozaawa, Sapporo, Japan

Konrad Magnus, Eiksmarka, Norway

Stephen McGahee, Hammonton, NJ, US

Karen Miller, Atlanta, GA, US

Ole Rischel, Copenhagen, Denmark

Rebekka ter Voort, Leiden, Netherlands

Richard Uski, Undersåker, Sweden

Wilson Villamar, Providence, RI, US

Systems-Centered[®] Training and Research Institute Membership Application/Membership Renewal 2011

Membership Benefits:

- Bi-annual newsletters & monthly E-News
- Membership directory
- Membership section of SCTRI website
- Peer mentorship & consultation
- Lower fees for annual conference & training groups
- Free monthly drop-in study group on the phone

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

- Move to the Intermediate level of training
- Participate in the SCTRI Action Groups
- Apply for a license to use the SCT trademark
- Be eligible for work exchange (WEX)

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

The membership year runs February 1 – January 31

Directory Information:

Please check all that apply: SCTRI New Member SCTRI Renewal

- Yes, I want to continue to receive a printed copy of the directory
- No thank you, I prefer not to receive a printed copy of the directory & will use the online directory
- Yes, add me to the SCTRI email listserv so I can stay up to date on what's happening
- Yes, I am willing to house/host visitors from out of town or overseas
- Do not change my current listing in the directory (fill in your name & payment info below)

Name: _____ Degree: _____

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Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Fax: _____ Email: _____

Discipline: _____

Specialties and Areas of Expertise: _____

Dues (more or less*): Introductory New Member Rate: **\$125** Renewal: **\$200** Full-Time Student: **\$50**

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

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

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

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

Signature: _____

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

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and Intermediate Skills Training

FALL WEEKEND SCT WORKSHOP - PHILADELPHIA
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MENTOR TRAINING - PHILADELPHIA
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