Clinical Pastoral Education has a long tradition of placing an emphasis on experiential learning. Within this tradition Joan Hemenway’s classic text, Inside the Circle (1996), has been central in developing the group process component of the CPE. Joan’s impact on the Clinical Pastoral Education process with this book is greater than many make in a lifetime, yet she did not stop there. Instead, she did what few accomplished leaders do. Relatively late in her career she began to explore a new approach to group work, the systems-centered approach, to see what it might hold for Clinical Pastoral Education. This led to her more recent contribution, “Opening Up the Circle,” published in SCT in Action (Hemenway, 2005a) and reprinted with small modifications in the Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling (Hemenway, 2005b). In “Opening Up the Circle” Joan addresses some of the challenges process groups in Clinical Pastoral Education face and re-thinks these challenges from a systems-centered perspective.

Joan’s far-sightedness and willingness to venture beyond what she knew led her to Systems-Centered Training (SCT) developed by Yvonne Agazarian and to apply SCT theory and methods to Clinical Pastoral Education. Joan, who was strong on synthesizing, was drawn to the integrative aspect of SCT. As she put it: “On a theoretical level Agazarian is making an ambitious attempt to integrate general systems theory (von Bertalanffy), psychoanalytic tradition (Bion), field theory (Lewin), communication theory (Korsybski & Watzlawick), and developmental psychology (Erikson)” (Hemenway, 1996, p. 194). Furthermore, Joan recognized the usefulness of systems-centered methods for opening boundaries to difference, a value dear to Clinical Pastoral Education (Hemenway, 2005a, 2005b) and
one that SCT has developed practical methods to address. She also intuitted the usefulness of a group model that not only reduces pathologizing, but also lowers the tendency to personalize one’s own responses or the responses of others (personalizing is often the bane of experiential education). She also understood the usefulness of applying the systems-centered model of role, goal, and context and being clear that the primary goal of a process group in CPE is educational. In sum, part of Joan’s legacy was to suggest and identify ways that SCT “...can make a substantial contribution to CPE group process work” (Hemenway, 2005a, p. 82).

I offer this brief article in tribute to Joan’s leadership in bringing SCT into Clinical Pastoral Education. I will describe an application of systems-centered methods in the organizational context of developing a CPE center.

Brief Introduction to the Theory of Living Human Systems

Interestingly, Joan’s use of the metaphor of the circle to represent the CPE process group is near and dear to the heart of SCT where we often draw a circle to represent a system, with the line of the circle representing the boundary that contains system energy so it can be organized toward a goal. Yet SCT never works with a single circle. Instead SCT thinks of systems in sets of threes and draws a system as a set of three concentric circles. For example, Joan’s circle refers to the process groups within Clinical Pastoral Education. From a systems-centered view, the circle representing the process groups in CPE exists within the circle of the CPE training program, which is in the circle of a clinical pastoral center (Figure 1). All three are interdependent systems with one existing in the context of another and being the context for the third. SCT calls this a hierarchy of systems (Agazarian, 1997)

Thus in a systems-centered, SCT may be seen as a part of a hierarchy that emphasizes that a system in context and illustrates something about the structure and function of a system. SCT defines function at all system levels and function is defined as something that integrates energy/information and something about the structure and function of the others in the hierarchy described above, leading the CPE program will be discussed in detail in the next section.
The Clinical Pastoral Circle

Figure 1. A systems hierarchy defines a nested set of three systems: the middle system exists in the context of the system above it, and is the context for the system below it.

Thus in a systems-centered perspective, Joan's circle is always seen as a part of a hierarchy of circles. The idea of hierarchy emphasizes that a system is never in isolation but is always in a system context and illustrates this as a nested set of three circles.

SCT then defines the set of three circles in a defined hierarchy as isomorphic systems (Agazarian, 1997). Building on von Bertalanffy (1969), SCT defines isomorphy as similarity in structure and function at all system levels. Structure is defined by boundaries, and function is defined by the process of discriminating and integrating energy/information. With isomorphic systems, learning something about the structure and function of one system informs about the others in the system hierarchy. So with the CPE hierarchy described above, learning about the structure and function of the CPE program will lead to understanding the similarities in the structure and function of the process group as well as the CPE center.
Expanding the Circle

Overview

This article describes a systems-centered consultation with a CPE center that contracted with me to work with them in team development. This synopsis illustrates some of the systems-centered methods used in any organizational context and discusses how these systems-centered methods were used to address some of the particular issues that clinical pastoral education centers face. This article expands from Joan’s focus on applying the systems-centered methods to CPE and its supervisory process by bringing in an illustration of using the systems-centered approach in an organizational context.

How the Consultation Started

The newly appointed director of the clinical pastoral center contacted me to consult with the staff. One of the members, Kathy (pseudonyms are used throughout this paper), had been complaining about the new director’s behavior. Kathy had accused the new director of inappropriately communicating her frustration and anger to Kathy. The director agreed that she had lost her temper with Kathy and contacted Human Resources for help with the staff. The human resources department met with the staff. Subsequently, the director, with the endorsement of the staff, hired me to work with them as a consultant. Importantly, this all happened a few months after the new director had been appointed to her role, an appointment met with mixed feelings by the clinical pastoral staff. The previous, recently retired director had been very popular. The staff was suspicious of the new director and resentful of her appointment.

Introducing the Team to Systems Thinking

I began the work by introducing the idea that the system they had developed had more to do with how they were able to work together than anything else. I then introduced the idea that a more effective (a team) effort and communications depended on particular people, is essential to their success. I also discussed with the staff the idea of all living systems are dynamic, and “keep out” their new leader. I emphasized the change had to be seen as a system function to ensure it remained effective. In both of these areas, it was important to think about the systems and not individuals. I see their resistance to the change in any change in any change and structure in the organization.

Our next step was to set up a functional subgrouping pattern, i.e. one in which systems-centered method would support exploration of the new director’s style and the role of systems-centered method as an education tool for integrating his work. I then used functional subgroups to consolidate the new director’s work with the team dynamic in any change and structure in the organization.

Functional Subgrouping

Systems-Centered The function of any living human system can transform through the process of understanding differences, differences in
The Clinical Pastoral Circle

took together than anything else. Thus, being able to work together more effectively (a team goal) would require changing the behavior and communications they used that maintained that system. This idea, that change requires changing the system rather than particular people, is essential in a systems-centered approach.

I also discussed with the team the inevitability of mixed feelings whenever there is a change in leadership. The reality is that all living human systems try to “keep in” the “old” and the familiar, and “keep out” the “new” and different. This reality contrasted with the task of finding out how to relate to and support their new leader. I emphasized that the energy of “keeping out” or resisting the change had more to do with how living human systems function to ensure stability than with the particular people per se. In both of these communications, I was training the team to think “systems” and not just people. For example, learning to see their resistance to the change in leadership as a common system dynamic in any change began to lay the foundation for not taking their feelings about the change or the leader only personally.

Our next step was to establish an effective communication pattern, i.e. one in which information could be exchanged and would support exploration of their particular challenges in adapting to their new director. To this end, I introduced them to the systems-centered method of functional subgrouping, a communication tool for integrating differences and resolving conflicts. We then used functional subgrouping to help the team integrate and consolidate around important changes, especially the “difference” of a new director and the necessary differences in learning to work with her.

Functional Subgrouping

Systems-Centered Theory puts forth the idea that the essential function of any living human system is to survive, develop, and transform through the process of discriminating and integrating differences, differences in the apparently similar and similarities in
Expanding the Circle

the apparently different (Agazarian, 1997). Functional subgrouping puts this theory into practice: members are first taught to say “anyone else?” once they have made a contribution so that others who see it similarly can join and build on the idea or experience they introduced.

For example:

Sam: I am interested in seeing how Tanya (the new director) will be as a director. I know her in other ways but not as a director.

Consultant: Ask “anyone else?” so the group knows you are done and can then build on what you have contributed.

Sam: Anyone else?

Judy: I am curious about that too and a little excited. Anyone else?

Dick: I am both excited and anxious.

Consultant: And then say, “anyone else?”

Dick: Anyone else?

Sandra: I’m a little apprehensive too; hard to know how it will go, (pause), oh, anyone else?

Often, as groups are learning this process, someone then comes in and says, “Yes, that is a good idea, but....” The emphasis on the “but” signals a difference. When this happens, the member and the group are taught to hold the difference until all the information that is similar to the first idea (or subgroup) has come into the work group. For example, continuing with the above:

Jonathon: Yes, it is an unknown, but I am more concerned about Steve’s leaving.

Consultant: You and a very important almost certain that hold onto that one curiosity and application of exploring one and the apprehensions.

Over time, members group ready for a difference” is then introduced else?” so that all those who are looking for answers of the issue

Within each subgroup share their view, they discuss the other subgroup exploration creating a climate within the similarities. A whole can develop from the two subgroup comparisons can be used as reflections and that for fighting (Agazarian, 1997).

For example, as the apprehensions, and anxieties Some were anxious from information about the future, an uncertainty the team was explored their concerns again to identify that some the impact that not having their discomfort members began to recognize discovering that in both s...
about Steve’s leaving than I am about Tanya taking over.

Consultant: You have introduced a difference, Jonathon, and a very important one for the team to discuss, and it is almost certain that others will have the same concerns. So hold onto that one. Once we have finished talking over the curiosities and apprehensions you can then start the discussion of exploring these concerns. Who else has the curiosity and the apprehensions?

Over time, members with a difference learn to ask, "Is the group ready for a difference?" When the group is ready, the "difference" is then introduced and followed by the question "anyone else?" so that all those who relate to and resonate with the difference and have information can contribute their part to the group’s understanding of the issues.

Within each subgroup, as members explore with those who share their view, they discover "just tolerable differences." In turn, the other subgroup explores their side, by building on similarities and creating a climate where differences are more easily tolerated within the similarities. At some point, integration occurs between the two subgroups as members discover their similarities with those in the "different" subgroup. At this point, the group-as-a-whole has developed from simpler to more complex, and the differences can be used as resources rather than used as ammunition for fighting (Agazarian, 1997).

For example, as the first subgroup explored their curiosities, apprehensions, and anxieties they began to recognize differences. Some were anxious from their negative predictions and speculations about the future, and others were apprehensive from the uncertainty the team was facing. In turn, the second subgroup explored their concerns about Steve’s leaving. This subgroup began to identify that some concerns came from speculations about the impact that not having Steve would have, and others recognized their discomfort with the uncertainty. At some point, members began to recognize the similarities across the differences, discovering that in both subgroups there were those who noted the
Expanding the Circle

pull to speculate, as well as the inevitable challenge of living with the uncertainty at the edge of the unknown.

Introducing functional subgrouping was an essential part of this early work that helped develop the consulting system. This choice was very deliberate in that SCT emphasizes the importance of a team learning how to communicate so that all differences are legitimized as information for the team to use. This enables the team to work in a way that integrates differences as an ongoing part of its work. The idea of learning to use their differences as resources made sense to the team as they recognized how easily they could have ended up split between the pull to Steve on one hand and the anxiety over change on the other, and with their reactivity to each other’s differences becoming the focus. Instead, they ended up recognizing that the human pull to speculate moved them away from learning to live with the uncertainty of change. They were then able to shift their speculations into important reality questions that helped clarify the current reality. Those that had been “speculators” developed a pathway for testing reality and collecting data, and those tuned into “uncertainty” were able to mobilize their curiosity and help the team recognize and support each other around the inevitable apprehension in a time of change. Shifting away from the human tendency to react to difference and toward building a way to use differences as resources was easily compatible with clinical pastoral values. The team quickly understood the value of functional subgrouping and learned to use this systems-centered tool whenever different points of view emerged.

The developmental challenge was to build a functional communication system that potentiated the team’s development. The reality context was the work of integrating a new director. This early work to establish the norm of functional subgrouping supported both goals. This norm of using functional subgrouping to explore differences built a foundation that served the team well early in the work and later. For example, as the team developed and began working with the issues related to authority and to fight/flight, the ability to explore the two sides of an issue lowered the pull to fighting and helped the team surface and explore all of the perspectives.

Establishing functional subgrouping was also important for Kathy’s dissatisfaction. Kathy’s differences or criticism of Kathy and the new director whole system. From a position of watching or “cheering” the functional subgrouping, Kathy learned to bring them as information for resolving this difference alone.

Before describing the phases of a center system the phases framework for the system phases framework.

The Phases of System Development

As mentioned earlier, the human system has a natural tendency to relate and work than the phase of a system’s behaviors and communication phase and system context.

In beginning a conscious system, a consultant builds a new system and the team that uses the phase of system development. The development of the consultant and then guiding a change process tracks both the development of the team and the consultant as work context.

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Establishing functional subgrouping early with the team was also important for Kathy, the member who had voiced the early dissatisfactions. Kathy had previously been the sole voice for differences or criticism of the new director. This old pattern had left Kathy and the new director holding the “fight energy” for the whole system. From a systems-centered perspective, Kathy had been in a role that contained the defiance and authority issue for the team, a role the team implicitly supported their passive behavior of watching or “checking out” rather than contributing. Using functional subgrouping changed this old pattern and the team members learned to bring in their own dissatisfactions and explore them as information for the system. Kathy was no longer left holding this difference alone.

Before describing more of the consultation, it is important to introduce the phases of system development as the systems-centered change strategies used with work groups always link to the system phases framework.

The Phases of System Development

As mentioned earlier, SCT begins with the premise that the living human system has more to do with how people in the system relate and work than the people per se. To this end, SCT diagnoses the phase of a system’s development by identifying the individual behaviors and communications as outputs reflective of the system phase and system conditions.

In beginning a consultation with a work group, the systems-centered consultant builds a consulting system containing the consultant and the team that can support the team’s development. SCT uses the phase of system development as a map for both guiding the development of the consultation system and for diagnosing and then guiding a change process within the team. The consultant then tracks both the developing consultation system consisting of the team and the consultant, as well as the system of the team in its work context.

Building on Bennis and Shepard (1956), SCT has identified
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three major phases of system development: authority, collaboration, and integration. Each phase has identifiable challenges essential in system development. The challenge in the authority phase is to learn to give and take authority; in the collaboration phase, to learn to use differential resources collaboratively; in the integration phase, to learn to use one’s knowledge in role, goal, and context.

Borrowing from Lewin’s (1951) force field model, SCT has operationally defined each phase of development as a force field of driving and restraining forces that represent the quasi-stationary equilibrium or balance of the system in each phase of development (Agazarian, 1994; Agazarian & Gantt, 2003; Gantt & Agazarian, 2007). Driving forces move a system toward its goals, and restraining forces compete with the goals. Change strategies are then developed to weaken the restraining forces that compete with development, freeing the driving forces to move the system forward along its developmental path.

Influencing work groups in their developmental process is especially important in that SCT has hypothesized (Gantt & Agazarian, 2007) and Wheelan (2005) has demonstrated that a work group’s phase of development correlates with its degree of productivity and efficiency. In Wheelan’s research, there is a positive correlation between productivity in work groups and greater phase development, and a negative correlation between productivity and less phase development.

Developing a systems-centered consultation system always begins at the beginning: developing the system of the team and consultant working together toward the goal of the consultation. Inevitably, this requires weakening the restraining forces of flight and developing a communication system that can communicate.

The initial work with this team focused on weakening the flight communications or the flight subphase restraining forces, which shifts the system out of stereotyped social communications into functional communications (see Figure 2).
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Figure 2. The systems-centered® approach to development in work groups: A force field depicting the driving and restraining forces in each of the phases of system development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase of Development</th>
<th>DRIVING FORCES</th>
<th>RESTRANING FORCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority Phase</td>
<td>Developmental Goal: Create reality-testing culture ↜ Forming functional subgroups, asking “Anyone else?” ↚ Exploring ↜ Specificity, bottom line ↚ Data, reality-testing</td>
<td>Implicit Goal: Don’t rock the boat, play it safe ↜ Maintaining social status communication, personalizing, stereotyped subgrouping ↜ Explaining ↜ Vagueness, redundancy ↜ Speculations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flight Subphase</td>
<td>Developmental Goal: Explore differences in context of the work focus Subgrouping around differences ↜ Recognizing and acknowledging frustrations ↜ Collecting data about hesitations ↜ Making alternative proposals</td>
<td>Implicit Goal: Do it my way, repel invading differences ↜ “Yes, but” communications ↜ Complaining or blaming oneself, personalizing frustration ↜ Blaming others, reacting to differences or withdrawing ↜ Discharging in righteous outrage, indignation, sarcasm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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| Role Locks with Peers Subphase | Developmental Goal: Develop functional work  ➔  role relationships with peers  
Clarifying work relationships with peers  ➔  Descriptive language ➔ | ← Implicit Goal: Manage issues of dominance and control  
Creating one-up/down relationships  
Personalizing language that induces role locks |
| Role Locks with Leader Subphase | Developmental Goal: Make a working relationship  ➔  with one’s leader  
and discover one’s own authority  
Clarifying differential role responsibilities  ➔  Learning to work with the leader one has  
Giving and taking authority  ➔  Bring in what one knows & negotiate with leader ➔ | ← Implicit Goal: Sabotage authority, avoid responsibility, maintain status quo  
Complying or defying leader instead of task focus  
Making a case against the leader or organization  
Blaming the leader, overtly or covertly  
Denying one’s own authority, or one’s own competence |
| Collaboration Phase | Developmental Goal: Use differential resources of members  ➔  while working in an interdependent team  
Contribute to positive work climate while exploring  ➔  differences in the apparently similar  
Exploring similarities in the apparently different and work  ➔  out a functional collaboration  
Take up team role ➔ | ← Implicit Goal: Personal style at the expense of teamwork  
Focus on friendship at expense of work, avoid differences to preserve affiliation  
Denial of similarities and 1 insistence on working alone  
Go it alone or resist autonomy |

From Gantt and Agazarian (1986), a trademark of Yvonne Agazarian, Research Institute, Inc., a non-profit organization.

Role, Goal, and Context

In addition to introducing role work with the clinical pastoral education context, various contexts throughout the members were involved. In this subsystems that contained subsystems, we worked by drawing circles in which clinical past...
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integration Phase</th>
<th>Developmental Goal: Work in role, goal and context with common sense &amp; emotional intelligence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working in role and contributing to the goal &amp; climate of the context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using emotional and intellectual intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Common sense reality-testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintaining a sense of humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seeing the bigger picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using emotional knowledge in decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using the spirit of the law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                   | Implicit Goal: Self-focus at expense of system-focus, knowledge at the expense of common sense or context |
|                   | Blurring roles, ignoring goals & context, or only orienting to self-centered goals                 |
|                   | Avoiding reality, resist intuition or reasoning                                                    |
|                   | Losing common sense                                                                               |
|                   | Losing perspective, personalizing                                                                  |
|                   | Self-focused at expense of context                                                               |
|                   | Decisions without heart leading to ill-informed implementation                                     |
|                   | Legalistic, letter of the law                                                                     |

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Role, Goal, and Context

In addition to introducing functional subgrouping, the early work with the clinical pastoral team focused on clarifying the various contexts throughout the health care system in which team members were involved. This began by identifying the various subsystems that contained clinical pastoral services within them. We worked by drawing circles to represent all the relevant subsystems in which clinical pastoral services existed. For example, we
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drew one circle for geriatric services and another for oncology. Not surprisingly, drawing a circle for each system context that contained pastoral care services filled a large board. By creating the visual picture, we could all see the complexity of their system.

Once each context was named, the team identified the goal of each context and the role or roles that clinical pastoral services had in each specific context. The identification of roles in each system context was a very important piece of work for the team. Identifying the roles enabled the team to begin the essential work of separating role and person and seeing the role as linked to the context and goal. The person’s job is to contribute energy to the system via their specific role in the context. Introducing this task early on was very important in that we also used this process for the team to identify its strengths. This task provided an easier context for changing the communication norms than the presenting issue of a disgruntled, suspicious team. Much later in the work, the team developed a similar picture of the various contexts to help the team diagnose a problem in terms of whether it was primarily a problem related to a single context or to communications across the boundary between contexts or subsystems. It was also used later to clarify the lines of authority and accountability between system contexts.

Establishing the role, goal, and contexts also enabled the team members to appreciate the challenges they all had in changing roles with each other as they changed context. For example, in the context of the CPE supervisors’ meeting, the member in the role of CPE coordinator had the authority, responsibility, and accountability for student evaluations. In another meeting context, this same member was in a peer role with members that she had authority over in the CPE context. Learning to recognize the role shifts necessary in changing contexts facilitated their work together in each context and enabled the team to learn to support the authority roles in each context, irrespective of who was in the role.

In this process of identifying the array of contexts, each with its own goal, and the pastoral care roles within each context, the team practiced functional subgrouping and learned to build on each other’s contributions, thus learning to explore similarities and differences and developing a good climate for working together. It also provided a context for the team to lower the restraining forces of noise as described below.

Taking Noise Out of “Tal

Functional subgrouping in a way that makes each member feel integrated as energy and information for the human tendency to differentiate is important in working with noise. “Noise” is like static that makes it harder to hear the other member competes with the greater flow of information.

SCT works with the idea that noise and communication increases to the extent that there is communication. SCT building on the work of Simon and Weaver (1964) who identified two forms of ambiguity and redundancy. Nonverbal and vocal, transfer is inversely proportioned to communication. Simon and Andon’s (1964) model of communication. Simon and Andon’s (1964) model of communication.

Part of the early work was to identify restraining forces of noise and effective communication in order to change (see Figure 2). This figure suggests the noise of the communication enables a work group to develop a tolerance for ambiguity. Encouraging the team to focus on and on weakens redundant noise, which weakens the tone of the listeners quit listening to ...
also provided a context in which the consultant worked with the team to lower the restraining force of "noise" in their communications as described below.

Taking Noise Out of "Talk"

Functional subgrouping enables a system to organize information in a way that makes it more likely that differences can be integrated as energy and information for the system, instead of settling for the human tendency to react to and exclude differences. Reaction to differences often puts "noise" into a communication process. "Noise" is like static on the telephone line, the more static, the harder it is to hear the other person. Noise in a communication system competes with the goal of communication, which is the transfer of information.

SCT works with the idea that boundaries open to information and close to noise, and that the capacity for successful communication increases to the extent that the system filters noise out of its communications. SCT builds on the work of Shannon and Weaver (1964) who identified two sources of noise in communication: ambiguity and redundancy. In their theory of communication, Shannon and Weaver demonstrated that the degree of information transfer is inversely proportionate to the degree of noise in a communication. Simon and Agazarian (1967, 2000) identified contradiction (e.g., "yes, but") as a third source of noise in communication.

Part of the early work in the flight subphase is weakening the restraining forces of noise in communications in order to build an effective communication system in which information can be exchanged (see Figure 2). Introducing functional subgrouping manages the noise of the contradictory "yes, but" communication and enables a work group to legitimize the exploration of both perspectives. Asking a member to be more specific weakens the noise of ambiguity. Encouraging the "bottom line" when someone is talking on and on weakens redundant explanations that close boundaries as listeners quit listening to communications that are redundant.
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Highlights of the Team’s Work
Through the Phases of System Development

The early work was largely related to the authority phase where the goal is to learn to give and take authority. This begins by first establishing a reality-testing culture, and then learning to work with the reality of frustration and use the energy in the frustration and anger for work. This lays the foundation for learning to shift from personalized roles to functional work roles and to make a functional, supportive relationship with one’s leader.

In this situation, the goal in the early flight subphase work was to weaken the restraining forces in flight (Agazarian, 1997; Gantt & Agazarian, 2007) and develop a reality-testing system that would enable the team to take up the reality challenges of working with a new director. Team members learned to modify their communication patterns. They learned:

- To move from vagueness in their communications to specificity and to ask each other to be more specific
- To shift from overly redundant explanations to the bottom line
- To refrain from “yes...but” and make room for the difference in a different subgroup
- To undo “mind reads” of each other and to establish reality-testing, for example, saying, “My mind read is that you are frustrated with this idea. Is that true?”
- To shift from complaints to active proposals, for example, changing a communication from “We never make up our mind on things.” to “My proposal is we make a decision today on this one.”
- To undo “leapfrog” thinking where negative predictions about the future are made by remembering the failures in the past and leapfrogging from the past to the future without clarifying the reality of the present.

Most significantly, over time the team moved away from a norm of passive compliance with the director in the meetings while gossipping and complaining membership in the meeting to learn how to build the member or “citizen” of forces of passivity, contribute to the team by

As the team developed, forces typical of the flight phase then became especially legitimate parts of work, the inevitable part of a team that the team brought. This led to the temptation to influence the working Donna and Kathy who was the slowness of the work they could help the team

This work built the roles and role locks. Working the roles various team members became “complainer” or “checklist” issues that Kathy’s director brought. This set the framework for learning challenges related to

Recognizing the temptation to influence the team to shift from blaming the director for the bad times the they wanted her to be different, to let time, the team strengthened the director and came to value particular resources in developing the team learned to recognize the director’s liabilities. For example, taking on more than compliantly when the di
The Clinical Pastoral Circle
gossiping and complaining outside the meetings, to active team membership in the meetings. It was particularly useful for the team to learn how to build their team actively and to contribute as a member or “citizen” of the team by weakening the restraining forces of passivity, compliance, and complaining behaviors that contributed to the team being different from the team they wanted.

As the team developed their skill in weakening the restraining forces typical of the flight phase, they shifted into the fight phase. It then became especially important for the team to recognize and legitimize the inevitable frustration that comes from working as part of a team and the concomitant differences team members bring. This led to the team’s learning to use the energy of frustration to influence the work of the team. For example, in one meeting Donna and Kathy were able to recognize their frustration with the slowness of the work in the meeting and were able to see how they could help the team work more efficiently and stay on task.

This work built the foundation for the next phase, the phase of roles and role locks. Working with roles enabled the team to undo the roles various team members had taken for the team like the “complainer” or “checking out” and instead to reclaim the authority issues that Kathy’s defiant, rebellious role had contained for the team. This set the framework for beginning to recognize the ongoing challenges related to the issues of giving and taking authority. Recognizing the inevitability of the authority issue enabled the team to shift from blaming the director to seeing their responsibility for the director they helped create. The membership responsibility was learning to work with the director they had rather than the one they wanted her to be. This enabled the team to shift from passivity, complaining, and criticizing her leadership or waiting for her to be different, to learning to work with and support her. Over time, the team strengthened their working relationship with the director and came to value and appreciate her contributions and particular resources in developing the department. Equally important, the team learned to recognize, compensate for, and work with their director’s liabilities. For example, one of the director’s liabilities was taking on more than she could do. Instead of going along compliantly when the director volunteered for tasks that were not
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specific to her role, team members learned to speak up to address this and to take on the tasks themselves.

In the work with roles and role locks, the team understood how they had passively supported Kathy taking on the role of challenging or complaining about the director, and they recognized how their passivity kept them from learning about their own challenges and responsibilities for working with their leader. Team members also developed their capacity to take an active member role and understood that not taking one’s member role or citizenship in the team made it easier for all to fall into the personalized roles that hijack the work context. For example, taking either a “complaining” role or a “passive” role not only sabotaged taking one’s team member role but also simultaneously created a complaining climate where frustrations increased and individuals went into personalized roles in response. The shift from complaining to proposing moves one from person to member, using the resources one has as a person to actively take citizenship in developing the team and working with the leader.

Perhaps most important, the team developed beyond their early stereotype of “being personal” in a way that maintained “niceness” but actually interfered with taking up their work roles or citizenship in the team. The team began to work to discriminate the personalizing that interferes with work when personal feelings are brought into one’s member role in supporting the goal of the work group. For example, in one meeting, several members recognized that personalizing their frustrations led them to withdraw and go into passivity. Instead, the “frustrated” subgroup was able to bring in their frustrations and see how the information contained within their frustration was relevant for the team and its current task. As the team worked through its authority phase and relinquished the idea that being close was the goal, the team actually developed enormous satisfaction and felt closer as they learned to collaborate in their work roles supporting the goals of CPE. This marked a further development in the team, as they shifted into the collaboration phase where they were able to work explicitly with the tension between affiliation and work.

The major work in the collaboration phase is to manage the personal roles of either the expense of the work or the thing that interferes with the work of the team. Agazarian, collaboration phase issues challenges of changing roles in the work group, specifically when in the work group a man recognizes that they held a view when their “friend” is no longer in the context and not part of the process in the meeting. In this context, the work included contributing exploration to support the role of team members learned if it was not the role of the team members to learn more and more difference in the team meetings with greater complexity, much less personalization.

The second major aspect of the ongoing work of recognizing the impact on the team and avoided the realities of a professional functioning. The team also supported this role by getting other accountable to use the different methods of complaining and their own way.” Though the preferences of many team members, at times this would need to be the system of the team and the work.

In the integration phase, moving from person to person...
personal roles of either the pull to affiliation and friendship at the expense of the work or the tendency to do it one’s own way and go it alone that interferes with the team or collaborative role functioning (Gantt & Agazarian, 2007). This team’s first work with collaboration phase issues deepened their understanding of the challenges of changing roles as the context changed from friendship to work, specifically by separating from the friendship roles when in the work group context. For example, several members recognized that they held back from bringing in a different point of view when their “friend” was advocating for a particular decision. This led to understanding that “friend” was not a relevant role in the work context and not a functional role in the decision-making process in the meeting. In fact, the “friend” role when out of context interfered with taking one’s “member” role in context where the work included contributing one’s views in service of a thorough exploration to support the decision-making. “Friend” might be a relevant role once again at lunch following the meeting but was not the role that supported the goal of the meeting context. As team members learned increasingly to make these role transitions, more and more differences emerged in the discussion and were integrated in the team meetings. This enabled the team to make decisions with greater complexity and depth of understanding, and with much less personalizing.

The second major aspect of the collaboration phase work was the ongoing work of recognizing the “do it my own way” role and its the impact on the team. The team identified how this role avoided the realities of accountability and undermined the team functioning. The team also understood how they had implicitly supported this role by going along with it and not holding each other accountable to use team membership behaviors, while simultaneously complaining and gossiping about members who “did it their own way.” Though this role reflected the personal work style preferences of many team members, the team was able to see that at times this would need to be modified in order to build the working system of the team and the collaborative roles.

In the integration phase the major work is the ongoing task of moving from person to member to use what one knows in one’s
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role, goal, and context. A useful example of this occurred when this team was working on its strategic plan:

The team was working hard on this over several sessions. During one meeting several members became notably quiet. Eventually, one member spoke up, announced that she was bored, and then asked if she had a subgroup. Two other members joined, and as they explored their boredom together they discovered that they were reacting to the tediousness of the work and withdrawing in frustration. As they continued to talk this over, they recognized the team had lost its original passion for its plan and was getting mired in the details without any heart in it. Once this subgroup understood this, they recognized that their challenge was to keep the team’s passion and vision alive, a goal whole-heartedly supported by the team.

The team understood in greater and greater depth the citizenship challenges of bringing what one knows into one’s role to support the goal of the context. In this work, the team was also able to recognize the relevance of acknowledging frustration so that the team could assess whether the frustration was an inevitable byproduct of the work or reflective of a system solution that put unnecessary stress on its members.

New Members, Recycling through the Phases of System Development, and the Authority Issue with the Consultant

During the last year as we were beginning to see what work needed to be finished before discontinuing the consultation, two events occurred that had a strong influence on the team’s phase and functioning. First, a large number of new members were added to the staff. From a systems view, this always introduces a challenge. Systems function to survive, as well as to develop, and when “survival of the familiar” is threatened, the system works to keep the “old” intact. This often results in finding creative ways of keeping

new members out, while learning the existing group’s typical dynamic. In this case, the new members triggered the team’s natural phase of development. Such aspects of the development be addressed more thoroughly.

In this same time period, another event, which involved a crisis in the supervisor, had often taken the team two years earlier. This time, the team was ready begun addressing the role. The crisis occurred in a sub-phase conflict so the team was aroused and readily available.

In my consulting role, I first saw how the problem of scapegoating Helen as the one who had not been full of energy and the systems that maintained this, and the belief that getting along was the “old” intact. This often results in finding creative ways of keeping

the team’s identity. It is exactly this sense of threatening survival that is prevalent when the team then accepted the consultant’s plea to end the consultation. The new subgroup had found its place without recognizing
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new members out, while the new members often resist their task of
learning the existing group norms. This team was no exception to
this typical dynamic. In addition, and predictably, this influx of
members triggered the team through a revisiting of earlier phases
of development. Such a revisiting is often very useful in that as-
pects of the development that were not fully worked initially can
be addressed more thoroughly with greater resolution made in each
of the phases.

In this same time period, a second significant event occurred
which involved a crisis with a student and supervisor. Helen, the
supervisor, had often taken an “outsider” role since joining the
team two years earlier. This had been supported implicitly by the
team for some time, though just prior to the crisis, the team had al-
ready begun addressing the problems in supporting this implicit
role. The crisis occurred as the team was also re-working the fight
subphase conflicts so that the scapegoating energy was strongly
aroused and readily available to target Helen.

In my consulting role, I required the team to look at the system
first to see how the problem was a product of the system, rather than
scapegoating Helen as the problem. Shifting to the system level did
in fact contain the scapegoating, and not surprisingly drew the frus-
tration and anger toward me in my consultant role instead. This
proved useful in that over several months the team’s anger with me
enabled the team to take on a deeper exploration and understanding
of the authority issue. In this process, the team recognized a dich-
otomy that had not been fully resolved between their pastoral value for
people and the systems view that I continued to introduce. The pas-
soon that maintained this split was fueled by scapegoating energy
and the belief that getting rid of the perceived threat would maintain
their identity. It is exactly this kind of belief—where differences are
seen as threatening survival and the leader is the perceived threat—
that is prevalent when the authority issue is active.

The team then acted out the authority issue by making a deci-
sion to end the consultation without consulting the consultant! The
defiance was no longer contained in passive acting out. The defiant
subgroup had found its voice. Unfortunately, ending the consulta-
tion without recognizing and understanding the authority issues
that fueled the precipitous decision would undercut the team’s learning to take their authority rather than rebel. This was particularly important as several team members were taking on new leadership roles in the program, making the issues of giving and taking authority especially salient.

A final meeting with me as consultant was arranged to bring closure to the consultation process. The meeting started with a strong pull to end with polite appreciation, without real ownership of the team’s defiance or of the authority issue in spite of my best efforts to call attention to these. Ending in this way would have sabotaged the consultation. I continued to challenge the team, emphasizing that the kind of ending they did with me would have a big impact on what they would be able to do on their own. A senior member spoke up to support my leadership on this and was supported by the team. This was significant in that the team was then able both to take effective leadership via this member and to cooperate with my leadership to make a very significant closure. In doing so, the team was able to recognize the personalized roles reactive to authority that various members took that were supported by the team and that kept these team members resentful, passive, and acting out. By the end of this session the team was able to realize and integrate both their appreciation of my leadership and their hatred of the strength with which I took authority. The team and the director discussed that the ongoing challenge was for the team to continue to weaken the personalized roles they used when the authority issue was active. A number of members identified the specific personalized roles they would need to weaken and understood how these roles actually prevented them from actively supporting leadership and leader roles. The team voiced their challenge and eagerness to try doing this on their own, to take their own authority to influence and develop the system they wanted, and to support leadership in their leader and each other, rather than passively or actively defying the leader and sabotaging leadership throughout the team.

In addition, the director recognized that the force of the authority issue would now fall fully on her role without the role of the consultant to contain some of it. The director identified her apprehensiveness about this and her challenge to contain the authority issue whenever it was aroused until the team could take back whatever the authority issue contained for them. This was clear to

the director and the team, and the team was doing just enough strength to take authority in the team and each other.

Summary of the SCT Hypotheses

In describing this system, presents aspects of the the systems-centered practice (Andresen & Agazary, 1994). Suggests how key tenets of its SCT methods can be a useful tool to hypothesize presented in this case:

- The system has a function than the context and the system.
- Changing the context and the system changes the system.
- Functional subsystems are used in a way that the system is lowered integrated as result.
- Identifying the developmental stage.
- Change stratégies will increase the stress in a controlled manner.
- Operationally defined as a force field that enables a sequence of events that link to the pattern.
- The force field provides a map of opening restraining.
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the director and the team, as all could see that in the closing ses-
sion the team was doing just that with me: they were learning their-
strength to take authority in their member and leader roles with the-
team and each other.

Summary of the SCT Hypotheses Illustrated in this Case Example

In describing this systems-centered consultation, this paper-
presents aspects of the theory of living human systems and its sys-
tems-centered practice (Agazarian, 1997) with an organizational-
workgroup (Gantt & Agazarian, 2005/2006). This case example il-
ustrates how key tenets of the theory of living human systems and-
its SCT methods can be applied with workgroups. The SCT hy-
potheses presented in this discussion are summarized below:

- The system has more to do with how the people in it-
function than the people per se.
- Changing the communications and behaviors that main-
tain the system changes the system.
- Functional subgrouping shifts communication patterns-
in a way that the impact of reactivity to differences on a-
system is lowered and the differences can be more easily-
integrated as resources.
- Identifying the phase of system development defines the-
developmental context for change.
- Change strategies linked to the phase of system devel-
opment will increase the likelihood of change and lower-
the stress in a change process.
- Operationally defining each phase of system develop-
ment as a force field of driving and restraining forces-
ables a sequence for introducing change strategies-
that link to the phase of system development.
- The force field of the phases of system development-
provides a map for guiding change strategies by weak-
ening restraining forces rather than by increasing drive.
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- Change is more easily achieved by weakening restraining forces than by increasing drive.
- Building the consulting system builds the context for consulting to the team.
- Clarification of role, goal, and context increases the resources for taking one's role in context and lowers the pull to take oneself just personally.
- Learning to shift one's role as the goal and context change lowers personalizing.
- Taking “noise out of talk” increases the likelihood of successful communication and information being available for development and work.

Thus, this case discussion of a work team in an organizational context illustrates some of the essential SCT methods and hypotheses that are used to influence and foster the development of living human systems in work contexts.

Building Teams in Clinical Pastoral Education

Though one case example can not be generalized to all situations, several issues in this systems-centered consultation may be useful for understanding the particular challenges that clinical pastoral centers face in their development.

The first relates to the challenge for clinical pastoral educators in integrating their value for the person with the challenge of shifting from person to member and taking citizenship in one’s team. Orienting a team towards one's personal feelings without awareness of role, goal, and context often leads to emotionality at the expense of emotional intelligence (Gantt & Agazarian, 2004).

In this area CPE faces a challenge similar to many human service agencies: how to use process for the sake of developing a task-oriented system and accomplishing its task, not for the sake of process itself or emotionality.

From a systems-centered perspective the challenge is how to build human systems that not only develop and do the work that they were designed to do, but also those that contribute their knowledge, that develop or contribute better human systems-centered emotional intelligence. The “bored” members are out of job, but that is also problem-solving. If being bored had been part of the team's functioning she would likely withdraw to her role as a bored team member. If her being bored had been allowed to “fix” her so she was needed and not a personal reaction to the system, then she would take the personal reactions into information leading to development trends in the group. This is the tendency that many groups are not which means the system's self-awareness is not always relevant in clinical pastoral centers.

This same issue has emerged in our organization. Systemic training and education programs rely on some years to understand the systems. The process is explicit training, personal knowledge gained in the team context and contribution to the goal of the context. Gaining the knowledge in context enables teams to lower their self-awareness, to take ourselves or each other for granted, and to be able to do one’s work as a team. The challenge then is to use the energy, including emotionality, of the context or, pu
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...erved by weakening restraining drive. stem builds the context for nd context increases the re- e in context and lowers the omanly as the goal and context increases the likelihood of nd information being avail-

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similar to many human ser-
the sake of developing a its task, not for the sake of re the challenge is how to elop and do the work that they were designed to do, but also simultaneously develop the people that contribute the energy, including the emotional energy or knowledge, that develops the system. This is the heart of systems-centered emotional intelligence (Gantt & Agazarian, 2004). The “bored” members example described earlier illustrates this well. If being bored had been personalized by the member herself, she would likely withdraw and eventually become a marginalized member. If her being bored was taken personally by the team, either a fight would ensue or the team would work hard to see how to “fix” her so she was not bored. Instead, translating one’s personal reactions into information for the context strengthens the development potential for the system and simultaneously weakens the tendency that many experiential education programs unwittingly evoke of personal exploration at the expense of the role, goal, and context. Joan Hemenway (2005b) referenced herself in her discussion of how the lack of role and goal clarity impacts the functioning of the CPE process group. Thinking isomorphy, it then makes sense that issues of role clarity and role confusion may be relevant in clinical pastoral programs at all system levels: the clinical pastoral center, the CPE program, and the process group.

This same issue has certainly been a developmental process in our organization, Systems-Centered Training and Research Institute, which relies heavily on experiential education. It has taken some years to understand that an essential step in the education process is explicit training in how to translate the increased personal knowledge gained from experiential exploration into the system context and contribute it in one’s member roles to support the goal of the context. Gaining personal knowledge in experiential exploration is often so gratifying that the motivation is low for making the shift from gaining or sharing personal knowledge to using the knowledge in context. Yet it is moving into context that enables teams to lower the tendency to self-absorption, where we take ourselves or each other just personally. This move is essential to being able to do one’s work, meet one’s goals, and develop one’s team. The challenge then becomes how to bring in one’s personal energy, including emotional energy, in a way that it supports the goal of the context or, put another way, how to bring one’s person...
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into role in context (Gantt, 2005).

Second, for this team, clarifying the roles and contexts led to surfacing the implicit power hierarchy related to the differences in roles between clinical supervisors and staff chaplains. This enabled the team to undo the stereotyped hierarchy and clarify the functional hierarchy and division in roles. This undid an implicit embedded authority issue that may have relevance for other clinical pastoral centers.

Finally, dealing with the issues related to giving and taking authority was central in this consultation. At a general level, this was not surprising since most organizations either flourish or flounder based on how well authority issues are managed. More specifically, this team worked hard to clarify and understand the authority and responsibility vested in the director’s role and the ways in which they supported or undermined her authority. The director learned to be clearer and more explicit as to when she was delegating her authority to the team for decision-making versus asking the team to advise her but retaining her authority for the decision. Many of the team members recognized that they operated with high autonomy in their roles most of the time and were resentful when external authority intervened. They learned to separate their personal reactions to authority from their responsibility as a team member to support the director, and to make sure that information they held as a difference was integrated as information for the team. It is also possible that the humanistic values CPE holds dear make it harder to confront the inevitable authority challenges in relating to the realities of hierarchy. In fact, this may be similar to the confusion to which Joan alludes in Inside the Circle (1996) when she talks of the dual influence of the humanistic and psychoanalytic influences in the history of CPE.

In concluding, I offer this paper about how a systems-centered approach can be used in a team development process as an appreciation of Joan Hemenway’s voice, which represented the willingness and capacity in CPE to be open to differences and to embrace them and explore them.

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Functional Subgroup
Angelika A. Zollfrank

At the end of one supervisory training session, I turned to Joan and saying: “The individual circle itself is infinite. It takes up the voice of the one who is about the loss of her life, her unique life and for life itself.”

Many of Joan Hemenway’s needs are a holding environment for a small process group that began in 2003. I have been involved with Joan, and my role was an early attempt to involve multiple understandings of supervision. Beginning in 2003, and now, I have been involved with SCT with the goal of applying supervisory practice.