

Multiple-Reflection Model of Social Work Practice

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Abstract A new multiple-reflection model of social work is constructed through the discussion of the concept of Hollis's reflection.

First, the reflection that Hollis defined as a careful consideration of conscious and pre-conscious pathological factors in an interior mental apparatus by a transcendental subject in her psychosocial therapy is critically discussed.

Hollis's reflection is a vertical consideration of the inner world and is therefore unable to respond to a circular and reflexive mechanism among vertically and horizontally interconnected mental and social elements of a life world. A vertical and horizontal reflection that explains these dynamics is theorized by introducing the idea of the process of returning light from a surface as the new meaning of reflection, and a new system of social work theory is deduced from this understanding of reflection.

Tomm's circular questioning technique is then introduced into and connected to this theoretical basis. As a result, a clearly defined system of systemic assessment and transformation is composed, with the system skill having greater capacity to transform reflexive deviant activities among elements in the social structure.

This is a new model of reflection-oriented social work practice.

Key words: multiple-reflection model of social work, psychosocial therapy, reflection, careful consideration, reflexive process, circular questions

I. Introduction

Subject I and his/her world are created by a person's reflexive consideration of objects in the world, and the transmission of his/her consideration to others using his/her own words (Yamagishi, 2011). Therefore, encouraging reflection has been an important practice skill for social workers influenced by ego psychology. Such social workers redefined the concept of reflection to intervene effectively in the social maladjustment of people. They shifted the definition of reflection from a reflexive consideration of the patho-

logical unconsciousness level of the mental apparatus to consideration of the preconscious or consciousness level of a personality (Hollis, 1972). Hollis was a flag-bearer of this reflection-focused practice.

Hollis's model extended the range of psychoanalytic therapy to the treatment of social pathology by altering the original definition of reflection, making it possible to consider the individual in his/her social situation mainly in ego-psychological terms. Goldstein, who succeeded the psychosocial therapy of Hollis, pointed out that Hollis emphasized the importance of the dualistic perspective of practice intervening in the mind and outer social world but failed to systematize this dualism (Goldstein, 1995: 173). As Hollis's theoretical base was an ego psychology, which explains the dynamics of

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the mental apparatus rectilinearly and vertically (e.g., insight development), Hollis's model does not have the capacity to explain circular mechanisms operating between personality and the outer social world (Kamo, 1990, 1995, 2000).

After Hollis's conceptualization of reflection, the concept of reflection was defined newly by family therapists in the United States and social workers in Australia, Britain, and Canada, who were informed by postmodern thought.

Andersen designed a new structure of family therapy referred to as the reflecting team (Andersen, 1987). This approach defined the process of solving a problem as multiple reflexive processes between a system of an interviewer and family and a reflecting team (Friedman, 1995). That is, Andersen radically shifted the meaning of reflection from vertical careful consideration of an inner world of a person to a circular reflexive mechanism of the horizontal human transaction process. This is a social constructionism explanation of the generation of a subject's knowledge about the self and his/her world. However, there was no theorization of a vertical reflexive mechanism between elements of a multi-layered meaning structure of a human world (Tomm, 1985). Moreover, Anderson's therapeutic transformation skills were not well defined.

White, who is an advocator of the narrative approach, explained that a person can alter a negative self-image by externalizing and critically looking back on the power of a dominant story that prefigures an adaptation of the person (White, 1990; Kamo, 2013). However, he presupposed an existence of a story. His narrative approach faced the problem of the reification of a story (Kamo, 2013). Therefore, a reflective relationship between behavior selection and story construction was not sufficiently theorized.

On the other hand, in Canada, Australia, and Britain, critical social workers defined the concept of reflection as a critical reflection that directs social workers to objectify and consider critically their own reified and privileged knowledge (Yip, 2006; Pease, 2007). In Japan, this concept of critical reflection informed by Frank-

furt School, from a postmodern point of view, is more influential than Hollis's traditional reflection (Yokota, 2007). The privilege of the transformation theory and skills of the social worker are denied, and reflection is used as a skill for denying the privilege of a social worker. Pease wrote that the professional social worker is encouraged to be critical and reflective about the assumptions underpinning his or her practice (Pease, 2007: 122). However, the center of the discussions was a criticism of the institutionalized knowledge of social workers. Therefore, the method of the social worker relating to problem solving is unclear.

This paper therefore presents a new social work theory that integrates both the interior, vertical and the exterior, horizontal social worlds. Moreover, the dynamics of humanization of material and materialization of human behavior that coevolve the vertical and horizontal transformation of the social world is explained. A procedure of transforming the traditional definition of reflection into an effective changing skill with which to intervene in both the inner, psychological and the outer, social world is then considered.

II. Examination of Hollis's Concept of Reflection

1. Contribution of psychosocial therapy to social work practice

Hollis referred to the importance of reflective consideration in casework in her notable works on psychosocial therapy of 1964 and 1972. One of Hollis's contributions to social work practice was to switch the target of intervention from the unconscious world to the pre-conscious and conscious worlds.

She categorized reflective consideration as follows.

We suggested the usefulness of three major divisions in work of his kind: person-situation reflection, in which consideration is given to the nature of the client's situation, his responses to it, and the interaction of situation

and responses; pattern-dynamic reflection, in which response patterns or tendencies are considered; and developmental reflection, in which attention is centered on developmental factors in these pattern (Hollis, 1972: 109).

At the same time, she abandoned the skill of free association and theorized how reflective consideration might transform the social world. Her theorization of reflective consideration informed by ego psychology should be regarded as a major step forward in the theorization of intervention in social work.

2. Basic problems with the concept of Hollis's reflection

Hollis's problems in theorizing a reflection are summarized as follows. She dichotomized a world into a psychological, inner world and an outer human, material world. Therefore, she could not present a theoretical framework with which to explain a whole horizontal mechanism composed of a human transaction and an exchange of material between people. Moreover, her reflection theory could not explain a vertical mechanism of materialization (reification) of the human world and humanization (reification) of primitive material. As a result, she could not invent an effective reflection skill to transform these circular processes.

2.1. Problems with reflection between an interior and exterior human world

Hollis emphasized the importance of an intervention in social interaction. However, she presupposed the existence of pathology of the interior world (Hollis, 1972: 20). Her method of practice was the eradication of interior pathology based on a rectilinear causality. For Hollis, the client's ability to carefully consider their own interior world is extremely important in changing their defensive and pathological thinking processes (Hollis, 1972).

The theory of reflection in this therapy lacks a clear framework with which to analyze the mechanism of multiple interpersonal processes

and overlooks the circular mechanism through which a life world is generated. Although Hollis emphasized the originality of her casework model, which targeted both a person and his/her situation, her skill in encouraging reflection could be defined as a vertical and rectilinear reflection, which mainly targets the activities in the subject's interior world. Hollis could not dispense with the idea of rectilinear reflection on conscious or pre-conscious factors and, as a result, was unable to construct the reflection theory that is required to explain our life world as the combination of the exterior world and interior world.

2.2. Problems with the dichotomous intervention method for a material and a person

Hollis's definition of reflection does not adequately explain the relationship between the humanization of the material world and the materialization of human behavior in our social world. Such errors of reification have not been solved in many traditional social work approaches.

Traditional social workers who are oriented toward psychosocial therapy consider physical conditions to be objective. On the other hand, they will reify or materialize mental states and argue that mental problems are rectilinearly cured by an improvement in reified material conditions. Alternatively, they will say that the reified material situation is linearly improved by transformation of the reified, materialized psychological world. This judgment can be made by separating the meaning of construction of the individual from the reified material world.

In human transaction, speech acts—as a minimum target for change—are patterned, and then reified and materialized. In other words, a subject sees another's existence as an object. In addition, primitive material is humanized and reified. It is transformed into a useful tool by a person. These two mechanisms coevolve.

Material resources in the world do not have objective meaning. Primitive material cannot have its own meaning in itself. Only when a per-

son gives primitive materials his/her personal meaning and transforms them into his/her own tool based on his/her definition of the mutual relationship arising in a transaction in which subjects reflect on each other, does primitive material get its own signification. For instance, if a married couple has a hostile relationship, both individuals will define a situation such as eating a meal as a scene of battle. To win this psychological battle, each will give their own particular psychological meaning to tableware items or cooking ingredients.

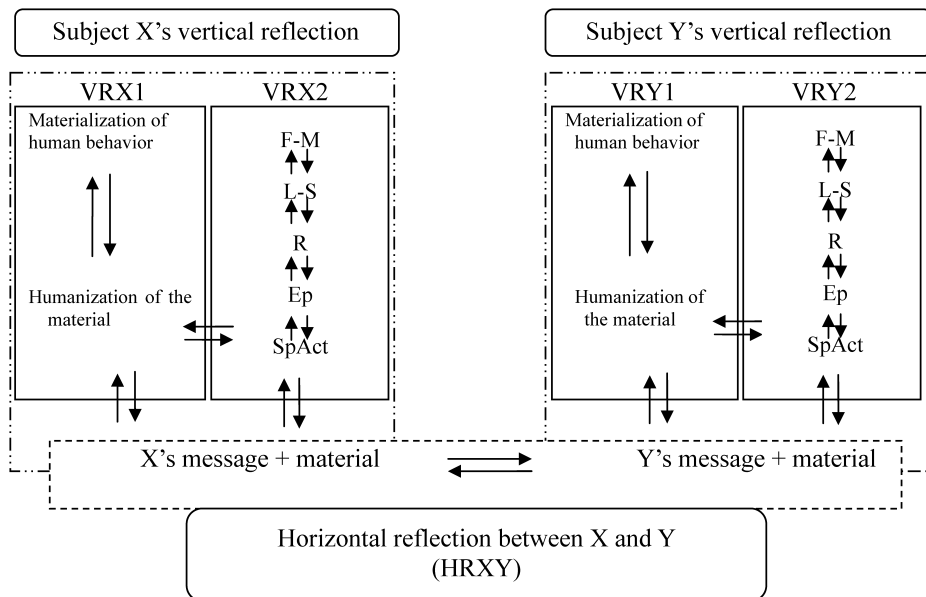
III. New Multiple-reflection Model of Social Work (MRMS)

1. Theoretical framework

The theoretical consideration of a structure and dynamics of a human system from a viewpoint of social constructionism is outlined as follows.

A social system is defined as a horizontal structure of human transactions following shared and private rules. A receiver constructs a mean-

ing of information sent by a sender according to his/her constitutive rule (Tomm, 1987b). The meaning is then sent back to the first sender directed by his/her regulative rule (Tomm, 1985). On the other hand, behavior selection rules and meaning construction rules are produced in the interpersonal transactional process. The world composition rule is generated in this mutual reflection process. Each of these embedded rules in a multilayered meaning system acts conversely as a pre-figurative context of a primitive behavior selection. A reflexive mechanism exists between various levels of vertical structure. The horizontal and vertical rules constructing mechanisms operate as a contextual force that develops a human world. A change in a person's behavior triggers a transformation of the vertical feedback loop of a meaning structure (Figure 1; VRX2, VRY2) and horizontal transaction loop (Figure 1; HRXY). Moreover, these double feedback loops co-evolve throughout the transformation process which is humanizing meaningful material, and which results in the actualization of a human behavior (Figure 1; VRX1, VRY1). Therefore,



VR: vertical reflection; HR: horizontal reflection

Figure 1 Multiple Structures and Dynamics of Reflection

Table 1 Differences in Reflection between Psychosocial Therapy and the Multiple-reflection Model of Social Work

	Psychosocial therapy	Multiple-reflection model of social work (MRMS)
Linguistic meaning	Careful thought about something	Process of returning light or something else from a surface
Definition of reflection	Careful consideration	Process of reflexive activity between people
Dynamics of reflection	Rectilinear	Circular
Structure of reflection	Single (vertical)	Double (vertical and horizontal)
Object of reflection	Individual in his/her situation	Dual process of reflexive activities

there are triple reflexive mechanisms that are a target for change.

2. Difference in the definition of reflection between psychosocial therapy and the MRMS

The difference in definitions of reflection between psychosocial therapy and the MRMS is explained in Table 1. Reflection in psychosocial therapy refers to a rectilinear and vertical process of careful consideration by an individual person (Hollis, 1972). It does not include the process of reflexive activity between several people. Reflection in the MRMS refers to a set of circular reflexive activities among elements in a system that develops both horizontally and vertically. This new MRMS theory, influenced by social constructionism, can also explain the multi-layered dynamics of a human transaction.

3. Reflection and the process of world generation in the MRMS

Cronen and Pearce developed coordinated management of meaning (CMM) theory from a viewpoint of radical social constructionism. This is a sophisticated social theory that defines a social system as a stratified structure composed of layered levels of embedded rules for meaning construction; levels include the content of utterance, relational meaning of utterance (SpAct), episode (Ep), interpersonal relationship (R), life script (L-S), and cultural pattern or family myth (F-M) (Cronen and Pearce, 1985: 71–72; Cronen, Pearce and Tomm, 1985). Each level functions as a context to transform other levels of meaning

construction. For example, if a sender's information has the capacity to redefine a reified receiver's rule for defining an episode of transaction, this new rule for defining the episode operates as a context for reconstructing the receiver's rule for the level of relationship definition. This is a vertical reflective loop that operates among elements in a layered structure (Figure 1; VRX2, VRY2). The rules that direct these vertical meaning constructions are referred to as constitutive rules (Tomm, 1987b). Although the above explanation has been put forward in CMM theory, which refined the circular and vertical world construction theory, it does not have a great ability to explain dynamics at a horizontal level (Oshita and Kamo, 2011).

The receiver sends a message to the earlier sender directed by a rule of utterance selection depending on the constructed meaning of the utterance. This is a horizontal reflection loop. Through repeated transactions, common regulative rules that direct behavior selection emerge. Both rules are shared and reified by members of transactions.

In this process, primitive material is transformed into an instrument for adaptation and receives a humanized meaning. For example, a present sent by a lover is converted into a humanized material that means an intimate relationship to the receiver. At the same time, a shared rule of meaning construction demystifies primitive human behavior and situates it within an existing category of social behavior. In this way, a primitive human behavior is materialized and reified.

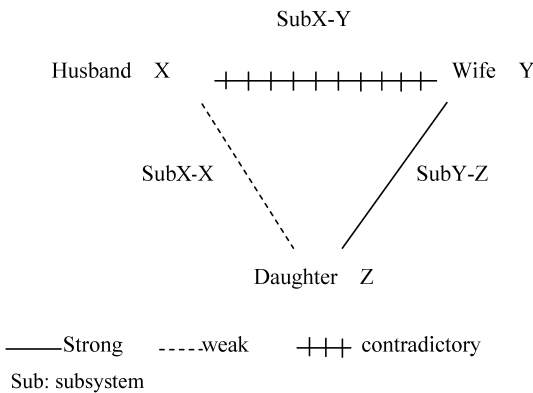


Figure 2 Eco-map

4. Structure and dynamics of problem situations

To construct a new paradigm of social work, the duality of interior and exterior worlds should be abandoned and a unified social theory that calls upon the techniques of social work should be invented.

A problem situation generates an ecosystem that is composed of the interconnected subsystems of a social system (Figure 2). A system is usually analyzed from the structure of subsystems and the dynamics operating between subsystems.

The rule in one subsystem is created in the sequence of the elements (M and S) in Figure 3. This is a mechanism of horizontal reflection controlled by the regulative rule that directs the behaviors of members in a social system (Tomm, 1987b: 169).

Techniques that describe this horizontal reflection activity to the client are used to help them visualize the dynamics of the structure of a transaction system and to clarify the differences between each element. To change one minor element in this sequence triggers the alteration of the whole horizontal world.

A change in horizontal reflection means a change of vertical reflection at the same time. Constitutive rules in six embedded levels containing the activity of utterance selection totally change the embedded rule system by changing one element of one level. In brief, the change of

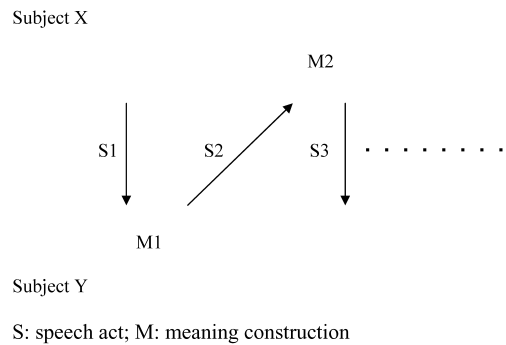


Figure 3 Horizontal Sequential Data

utterance selection triggers not only the alteration of the whole horizontal world but the alteration of vertical rules. This double complementary reflection mechanism affects the mechanism by which the humanization of primitive material and materialization of primitive human behavior take place.

These two mechanisms generate reflexively a meaningful life world. In brief, our social world is a world constructed by the languages of storytellers in a communication system. Their stories acquire the power to reify their verities of explanations of the world in a patterned communication process. In other words, we cannot construct a world without the work of reification. Reified thinking, both of the materialization of human behavior and the humanization of the material, coevolves in a human world. Therefore, the framework of social work that separates the mental and the material worlds and substantializes this dichotomous classification is incorrect.

5. Techniques of intervention

A client's negatively constructed world is a picture drawn using language as a pigment. To redraw this negative image, a new language is introduced. This is a language that decomposes the (story) picture into its primordial elements and generates the construction of a new story by selectively choosing from those elements or by altering the meaning of an element. By this procedure, the reified negative meaning of the client's world disappears. Metaphorically speaking,

the application of this stipple method of painting changes the meaning of a world. Primordial elements in the transaction are the meaning construction of utterance, utterance selection, and expectation of response to others.

If the client clarifies these primordial elements of the vertical structure using effective intervention techniques, new reflexive activity between elements in the vertical structure begins. In addition, it extends to an alteration of the horizontal structure, because these two aspects transform reflexively. Moreover, these two transformations spread throughout the entire ecosystem.

Actualization of the potentially transformative force of reflexive transaction is a principle in any intervention. The techniques are derived from the theorization of vertical and horizontal reflections as well as the humanization of primitive material and the materialization of human behavior. Tomm systematized skills that activate reflection to alter human transactions according to this social constructionism social theory (Tomm, 1985, 1987b; Kamo, 2011). However, his theorization of transforming a co-evolving mechanism between the human and physical world was weak. To construct a refined technical theory of social work, it is necessary to theorize skills that transform a co-evolving deviance-amplifying mechanism between the person and the material. The transformation method derived from above-mentioned reflection theory is explained below.

5.1. Descriptive circular questions

To begin with, the sequence of problematic transactions is examined by the social worker to obtain sequential data about meaning construction, utterances, and expectations of response, which are primordial elements of a horizontal transaction, using descriptive circular questions (Tomm, 1985: 35–36; 1987a). Let us assume quarrels between X (husband) and Y (wife) often occur at breakfast.

Husband X's data of a quarrel episode are clarified using descriptive circular questions. X constructs a new sequential world composed of elements of a meaning construction (M) and

speech act (S), as in Figure 3 (Oshita and Kamo, 2011: 44–45). This is a new framework with which to explain horizontal reflexive activities between elements in a system. Reflexivity takes place in this sequence of reality construction activities.

5.2. Reflexive circular questions

On the basis of data of the problematic episode constructed by a client, the social worker's transformation strategy is to encourage the client to activate a potential force that modifies the problematic sequence of transactions using reflexive circular questions (Tomm, 1985, 1987b, 1988). The asking of reflexive circular questions is a technique that aims at transforming the meaning of a received message or experienced episode to solve a problem. By introducing a new context for change into the levels of meaning, a new loop of reflexivity develops and self-transformation begins in the meaning structure.

For instance, the social worker may be able to interact with client X as shown in Table 2.

Of course, it is possible to choose other levels of context instead of the episode level as a target of intervention.

5.3. Vertical and horizontal transformation processes involving circular questions

The question circularly and reflexively modifies a vertical feedback loop of amplification of the problem among levels of meaning structure. The transformation of X's former definition of the described episode is sent back to a level of the speech act rule through the use of reflexive circular questions and a reflexively exerted force then modifies the speech act rule in a structure of embedded levels of context. This question has the ability to help the client identify a new speech act that has the potential to solve the problem (horizontal loop of reflexivity). Moreover, through this question, the client is given a chance to examine what kind of behavior might be capable of changing a problematic episode in his/her life world.

If X had actually helped his wife with her

Table 2 Process of Modification of a Client’s Complaint Using Reflexive Circular Questions

Subject	Sequence of message	Explanation of technique used by SW and transformation generated by X
SW1	Let’s recall a happier breakfast scene than this scene from the past.	This is a temporal difference question.
X2	An awful quarrel did not happen on Tuesday morning last week.	Generation of a new definition of the breakfast scene.
SW3	Could you explain that scene in more detail?	The targets for change here are the different elements between this happier episode and the problematic episode. Vertical and horizontal reflection is encouraged by this question.
X4	I helped her with the housework on Monday evening.	Generation of past solution activities between X and Y (horizontal loop).
SW5	What would have happened in the morning quarrel if you had helped your wife with the housework the day before?	This is a temporal difference question. It offers a context that requires the client to look back on a sequential process of reality construction in an exceptional problem-solving episode and identify changeable elements in a problematic sequence. This question activates the horizontal loop of reflexivity.
X6	The quarrel might not have occurred if I had helped her with the housework.	X’s helping behavior is identified as a solution activity for the problematic sequence by X.

SW: Social worker; X: husband

housework the previous night, his wife may have modified her attitude toward her husband following such behavior. She may have adopted a different behavior herself the next morning. This corrected rule of utterance selection operates as a context to reflexively construct a new image of her husband. In brief, when circular questions are used skillfully and give the client a chance to practice solution activities, the capacity for horizontal and vertical transformation can extend reflexively through the client’s whole life world.

6. Transformation of the reified human and material world

A traditional social worker considers causality to be real existence, and tries to analyze the problem according to this metaphysical theoretical presupposition. For example, some social workers explain unthinkingly that a person experiences life problems if he/she cannot get enough

resources necessary for adjustment. A material condition is actualized first and it is defined as a cause of problem generation. Personality is then actualized. If two variables are connected, a causal explanation of problem amplifying (solving) is completed. This is a method that establishes causality between a material condition and an adaptation of a person.

The material separated from the mind does not exist, whereas a co-evolving reification mechanism does exist in the human world (Kamo, 2011). Hiromatsu dynamically explained the structure of the world using the concept of the subject and the object that have a double characteristic with surprising rigor. In a social transaction, a primitive person is reified and formed as a role performer. At the same time a primitive material is reified and transformed into a human tool. Briefly stated, a person is materialized and a material is humanized in a human transaction. The human world is produced by these two syn-

chronizing reification mechanisms (Hiromatsu, 1972). This philosophical theory frees practitioners from the restraints of the dominant narrative that dichotomizes a structure of a world into a subject who constructs a world and an object that is used as a resource. Additionally, the philosophy frees social workers from the restraint of the stiffening linear causal law.

In the case above, food and tableware were useful materials that allowed the married couple to get past their quarrelling. If an old rule of utterance selection or episode definition can be modified by skillful intervention using circular questions, a new rule for the materialization of human behavior emerges. X and Y can newly categorize and materialize their utterances. Moreover, tableware acquires a new humanized meaning.

These two dynamics of generating meanings of the world are transacted reflexively. It is a precondition of the construction of a new social work model that such reified narratives that dichotomize the mental and material be refuted. The theorization of a social work practice that provides practitioners with a methodology to transform the dynamics of reflexive transaction between the materialization of human behavior and the humanization of the material is a most urgent problem for social work theorists. The process of humanizing the material always accompanies the process of the materialization of the person. Moreover, in the transmission process of these messages, X and Y are formed respectively as a subject of new recognition and practice activity. Thus, if a client can reflexively identify the deviant-amplifying mechanism that develops in the humanization of the material and the materialization of human behavior in the social world, his/her problem will be solved.

This new theoretical framework of social work that theorizes a co-evolving mechanism between a self and others and between a person and a material is well able to explain the transformative process of a human world. Kamo outlined a method of social work intervention based on this reflexive mechanism (Kamo, 2006, 2007, 2011).

In the case analysis of an abused child and its family, Kamo intensively described co-evolutional dynamics of the problem solution process between a meaning reconstruction of a cellular phone and a transformation of the communication pattern (Kamo, 2006).

IV. Conclusion

In this paper, we first criticized Hollis's definitions of reflection as the careful consideration of an interior and exterior world. Concepts of reflection that have contexts of consideration different from those of Hollis were then critically examined. Following this critical examination, a unified theoretical framework was described according to a new reflection theory that defines a social world in terms of horizontal and vertical reflexive activities among its members.

Moreover, this unified theory was integrated in such a way that it could explain the co-evolving mechanism between horizontal and vertical loops as well as that between the humanization of the material and the materialization of basic human behavior. Tomm's technique of circular questions was adopted as a technique with which to transform deviance through horizontal sequences of reflexive activities and the dynamics of a vertical structure. By connecting this new integrated reflection theory and the technique of circular questions, a system of social work was constructed.

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