
HAKOMI AND THE Q-SORT TECHNIQUE

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Carl Rogers was one of the founders of Humanistic Psychology, also called the third Force in American psychology. His client-centered approach rejected the deterministic view of human beings espoused by both the Behavioral and Psychoanalytic Schools, and was based on a trust that the client's actualizing tendency would emerge if the therapist provided an atmosphere of genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and empathic understanding. In such an atmosphere, the client would move in a direction of constructive and growthful changes, including increased self-awareness, self-confidence, and flexibility. In Hakomi, these self-motivated growth and healing tendencies are discussed under the unity and organicity principles.

Since Rogers' theory was based on experiencing the client directly in the present interaction, without diagnosis, judgment, or labels, Rogers refused to administer standard psychological tests to his clients. He did want to qualify the changes that took place during therapy rather than accept on faith that the therapy was effective, so he used a measure called the Q-Sort Technique devised by William Stephenson in the early 1950's. Instead of categorizing a client as "normal," "neurotic," etc., this technique simply compares the client's view of his or her Real Self, a self-report of who he or she is in the present, to the client's view of his or her ideal self, who s/he would like to be. This assumes the client can accurately describe both a Real Self and an Ideal Self, and if the therapy is effective there is a greater discrepancy between the two before therapy than after. In this way, Rogers evaluated the effectiveness of therapy without judging or imposing labels on the client.

The Q-Sort Technique generally consists of 100 items, each printed on a card. The client first sorts the cards into 9 different piles ranging from "Most Like" to "Most Unlike" me as I am now. That's the Real, or Self, Sort. Then he or she repeats the process in terms of "as I'd like to be now," the Ideal Sort. The whole process can be done before, during, and/or at some point after therapy, and the sets of scores compared.

I recently had to devise 100 items for a Q-Sort for a class in Appraisal in Counseling, and was seeking some way of coming up with items that would cover a broad range of developmental issues, and life strategies for dealing with them. I had also been trying to integrate my academic coursework with my Hakomi training so I came up with the idea of using the eight Hakomi character strategies as the basis for the 100 items. In doing so, I assumed the person reading the items would not necessarily have any prior experience with Hakomi, so the items may sound unsophisticated to those knowledgeable about Hakomi.

A list of the items is found in Appendix A. The items include four from the Sensitivity Cycle--one for each barrier--and twelve for each character strategy, distributed in the following manner:

<u>#</u>	<u>Items</u>	<u>Category</u>
2		Strengths
2		Relationships
1		Feelings
2		Body
2		Strategy under Stress
1		Fears
1		Energy
1		Thought

This was done to insure similar dimensions were included from each strategy. Since the strategies are too complex, and in "real life," too individualistic to crystallize into twelve items, they were used more to get a broad range of developmental issues and basic life strategies than to specify the eight character strategies in a complete and precise way.

One way to analyze the results is to correlate the initial Real Sort with the initial Ideal Sort, and compare the correlations with those of a post-therapy Q-Sort. Since I had a limited amount of time within which to do this, and was not using the technique to evaluate the effectiveness of ongoing therapy for me, I focused on identifying issues that appeared from discrepancies between the Real and Ideal sorts when I used the Q-Sort myself. I did this by taking all the items in the Most and Quite Like categories for the Real Sort, and then noting where those same items appeared in the Ideal Sort. I then did the same for the Ideal Sort. The whole process was an interesting experience in self-awareness. I was especially intrigued to find what items coincided in the Most Like and Quite Like categories for both Real and Ideal Sorts, and what items were in those categories for either the Real or Ideal Sort, but in a very different category, such as Quite Unlike, for the other.

There are a number of ways this Q-Sort could be useful and compatible with Hakomi Therapy. For a therapist interested in having a measure of the client's self-perceived degree of change, the Q-Sort Technique provides a nonviolent, nonintrusive way of doing so. Although I do not believe all the change that is taking place can necessarily be evaluated by a cognitive self-report, the Q-Sort may be helpful in reflecting the changes that have been consciously integrated. Rogers often asked clients to repeat the Q-Sort a number of months after therapy had ended, hoping for a sense of the stability of the changes, and how the client was continuing to grow and integrate seeds planted during therapy.

It might be a worthwhile undertaking from the client's point of view, in terms of an experience of self-awareness, to use the Q-Sort the way I did for myself. The client and therapist could discuss the issues that emerged, and work with any that seemed particularly pertinent to the client, using mindfulness, accessing memories, and other Hakomi techniques.

The Q-Sort Technique was designed to avoid labelling and boxing in the client. Using it to pin down the client in terms of a particular character strategy would be a misuse of it, substituting static test results of eight generalized strategies for the live experiencing of a unique and complex person. It would, however, be interesting to note whether particular strategies did emerge from the Q-Sort, and whether those strategies corresponded to elements of a client's strategy that a Hakomi Therapist observed during the overall process.

I found the process of doing the Q-Sort personally interesting, bringing into awareness more aspects of how I think I am now, and how I'd like to be. The issues I identified from my self-administered Q-Sort did seem to relate to certain character strategies which I've been aware of during Hakomi training sessions. Yet they seem far from a complete picture of me. I would feel violated and reduced if someone were to say "This is who Cori is," rather than acknowledging these issues as aspects of a much more complex process that is continually emerging.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF Q-SORT ITEMS (Total Number Items = 100)

STRATEGIES

CATEGORIES	SENSITIVE/WITHDRAWN	DEPENDENT/ENDEARING	SELF-RELIANT	TOUGH/GENEROUS
STRENGTHS	Perceptive, extremely sensitive to vibes around me. Active imagination.	Easily tune into others' needs & feelings. Affectionate.	Good at getting things done by myself. Rely on own resources rather than turning to others for help.	Stay cool under fire. In groups, seem to end up in leadership role.
RELATIONSHIPS	Wary of others. Feel I don't belong.	Want more than others seem to give me. Feel left behind a lot.	Willing to help others in need. Tend to be independent but enjoy company.	Don't need others' approval. Help others more than they help me.
FEELINGS	Feel unwanted & alien.	Often depressed.	Uncomfortable if have to depend on others.	Feel strong & independent, don't worry much.
BODY	Cold hands & feet. Frequent headaches.	Body slumps downward a lot. Body feels weak & drained.	Body resists collapse. Body is wiry.	Feel more powerful in upper 1/2 of body. Breathe in upper chest, chest often expanded.
STRATEGY UNDER STRESS	Withdraw into self a lot, especially if overloaded. Wish people would leave me alone more.	Give up easily when things get hard. Under pressure, turn to others for help.	Braced for challenge. Function better alone.	Don't let others have power over me. Intimidating.
FEARS	Afraid of falling apart.	Afraid I won't get enough.	Afraid of needing others.	Hardly ever afraid.
ENERGY	Feel highly charged but held in.	Low energy.	Body feels energetic, with a rigid layer on surface.	Energy in body on alert & ready.
THOUGHT	As a child, often thought I was adopted or from another planet.	Often think I can't do it.	Think I'd be let down if I asked others for help.	Think others would manipulate me if I showed my true feelings or any weakness.

STRATEGIES

CATEGORIES	CHARMING/SEDUCTIVE	BURDENED/ENDURING	INDUSTRIOUS/ OVERFOCUSED	EXPRESSIVE/ CLINGING
STRENGTHS	Charming & entertaining in a low-key manner. Good at maneuvering around obstacles, especially other people.	Reliable & persevering. Extremely loyal.	Appreciated for my achievements & high energy level. Productive.	Enthusiastic & stimulating to be with. Lively & expressive.
RELATIONSHIPS	Often feel cunning on the inside, while appearing cooperative to others. Surprised when others accuse me of being manipulative.	Tend to slow down if others try to hurry me. Often get stuck in double bind between doing what I want vs. doing what would please other person.	Get frustrated & impatient when others delay, work too slowly. Often too busy & focused on getting things done to socialize.	In relationship, continually look for proof that other person cares about me. Wish I could get the attention I need in my close relationships.
FEELINGS	Suspicious that others are trying to get power over me.	Feel anxious, burdened & dragged down in many social situations.	Often feel frustrated & unaccepted for who I am, apart from what I can do.	Very emotional, feelings seem to bubble out all over the place.
BODY	Flexible, smooth body. Speak with soft, smooth, seductive voice.	Movements are generally deliberate & self-conscious. Body is muscular & compressed.	Body proportionate & coordinated, with some degree of overall tension. Move in determined energetic manner.	Top 1/2 of body more rigid & tighter held than bottom 1/2, which is softer & looser. Eyes wide & bright.
STRATEGY UNDER STRESS	Turn on the charm when I want something from someone. Scheming is best way to get what I want.	Don't like to be hurried or pushed. Tend to delay if uncertain.	Hard to stop <u>doing</u> & just relax. Persist at what I'm doing until it's finished.	If I think someone close is going to pull away, I get very emotional & try to hold on to them. Show excitement to get attention & attract others.
FEARS	Afraid others would prevent me from getting what I wanted if they knew what that was.	Fears that I'll make a mistake or fall out of favor with loved one if I act on own initiative.	Afraid I wouldn't be taken seriously & treated equally if I were more spontaneous, emotionally expressive, & less task oriented.	Afraid of being distanced by loved one(s).

STRATEGIES

CATEGORIES	CHARMING/SEDUCTIVE	BURDENED/ENDURING	INDUSTRIOUS/ OVERFOCUSED	EXPRESSIVE/ CLINGING
ENERGY	Use my energy moderately & subtly.	Have fair amount of energy, but feel held in & ambivalent.	High energy, generally steady & directed.	Lots of energy, often impulsive & uneven.
THOUGHT	Don't think I've done anything wrong when others blame or accuse me, so I don't understand where they're coming from.	Only way to avoid blame or punishment is to delay or avoid taking action.	Think I need to be accomplishing something to be recognized & accepted.	Think I'd be disappointed & hurt if deeply involved emotionally.

Little or No Trouble with
or Concern About:

Q-Sort Item

Insight Barrier	Gathering information and getting clarity on what I need at the moment is not a big problem now.
Response Barrier	Respond & take appropriate action without feeling real stuck, or acting too hastily.
Nourishment Barrier	Get satisfaction out of what I do.
Completion Barrier	Comfortable with managing several things, recognizing when each is finished, resting & savoring satisfaction before moving on to next item.

APPENDIX B: INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE Q-SORT TECHNIQUE

PREPARATION

1. Write out each of the 100 items on a separate file card. (96 items will be on the character strategies, 4 will be on the Sensitivity Cycle.)
2. Make sure cards are shuffled before each sort.

ADMINISTRATION

1. The Real or Self Sort: Ask the client to sort the cards into the 9 piles according to how well the statements on them describe how he or she is now.

I found it helpful to first do an approximate sort, just sorting the cards without worrying about how many were in each pile, then to sort them further putting the right number of cards in each pile.

The piles are as follows:

Pile #:	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9
Descriptor:	Most Unlike	Quite Unlike	Fairly Unlike	Somewhat Unlike	Neutral	Somewhat Like	Fairly Like	Quite Like	Most Like
Number of Cards in pile:	5	8	12	16	18	16	12	8	5

2. The Ideal Sort: After the cards are shuffled, ask the client to repeat the sorting process, only this time sorting the cards according to how he or she would like to be now.
3. Doing this procedure can be an interesting exercise in self-awareness by itself. The therapist and the client may want to notice how this whole process is for him or her in a mindful manner.

ANALYSIS

1. Look for large discrepancies, where an item is in very different piles in the 2 sorts. For example, in "Quite Like" for Real, and "Most Unlike" for Ideal.

I tend to be especially interested in items that are in the top few categories, Most & Quite Like, for either or both the Real and Ideal Sorts, as these reflect items the client most closely identifies with.

I also find it interesting and useful to look for clusters of particular strategies. For example, if many of the items for Self-Reliant are in the Most or Quite Like categories, or the items for Tough/Generous tend to be in the Least Like category, that may be useful information to be aware of when working with this client.

2. How closely the Real and Ideal Sorts correlate before and after therapy can be compared by doing pre- and post-therapy Q-Sorts. (This is a more complicated procedure, which I won't describe here, but which can function as a measure of therapeutic change and effectiveness.)

FURTHER COMMENTS

Doing the Q-Sort is time-consuming.

The therapist could either be there with the client, or give him or her the cards and instructions for doing it alone. (I tend to be distracted and feel pressured when someone is watching, so I preferred to do it alone.)

These instructions are only meant to be a helpful guide. So, play around with it. Do whatever seems interesting and appropriate to make it a useful and enjoyable experience in the therapy. There is a vast range of material in the literature for those wanting to delve deeper into the Q-Sort as a method of testing.