

Group Dynamics - Behavioral Dynamics of Groups

An Article by Derek Hendrikz © 1999

URL: www.derekhendrikz.com
E-mail: hello@derekhendrikz.com
(T) +27 82 781 4049



Introduction.....	01
The four basic assumptions.....	02
• The Basic Assumption Dependency.....	02
• The Basic Assumption Pairing.....	03
• The Basic Assumption ‘Fight/Flight’.....	03
• The Basic Assumption Oneness.....	04
Organisational structure as a defence against anxiety.....	05
• Understanding Anxiety.....	05
• Defence Mechanisms.....	06
• Organisational Defence.....	09
• The Organisational Structure – Anxiety Defence Mechanism?.....	10
Basic behavioural-dynamics operating within work groups.....	11
• The three basic questions.....	11
• Psychodynamic manifestations.....	12
• The small group, a microcosm of the larger system?.....	19

INTRODUCTION:

The main theory here is that of Wilfred Bion. This theory state that groups are during any time either busy with a task or with basic assumptions. Basic assumptions in its turn are divided into four categories, namely; fight/flight, dependency, pairing, and oneness. This is a very effective method for group analysis. A basic group diagnosis would entail determining how much time (percentage wise) the group spends on basic assumptions and how much time on task (of course we must first determine the task of the group).

Furthermore one can look at the various defence mechanisms that the group uses to avoid pain as well as the structures and symbols that the group uses for the containment of their fears and anxieties. A good start to understanding the behavioural dynamics of groups is to study the four basic assumptions of groups.

THE FOUR BASIC ASSUMPTIONS:

“The term to conceptualise the prevailing state of a group’s ‘*as if*’ life is ‘Basic assumption’. Individuals within groups may be observed to be acting ‘*as if*’ certain relationships existed among themselves or between them and the group leader (Bion, 1961). Basic assumptions operate outside the explicit awareness of group members and are useful in explaining why a group seems to act at variance with its stated mission.”

Bion coined the basic assumptions of the Tavistock model. In his sessions with groups he would play the role of psychoanalyst. His patient would be the whole group and not the individual. His primary task, to bring the unconscious to the conscious. It was with these experiments that he arrived at three basic assumptions that groups commonly hold. It was also through these experiments that he arrived at his theory regarding basic assumption groups and task groups.

The three basic assumptions which groups commonly hold, and which often influence their activity are dependency, pairing and fight/flight. Later a fourth basic-assumption, namely ‘oneness’ was added to Bion’s list of basic assumptions. Bion found that only one assumption is usually held at a time, it could last for only 10 minutes or 10 weeks. These assumptions are discussed below.

THE BASIC ASSUMPTION DEPENDANCY:

This is a state of group disempowerment and helplessness. The group needs a parent figure who can protect and take care of them; or a messiah figure who can save them from their misery. The group also experiences a lot of anxiety if their dependency need is not satisfied. This could lead them to create structures as defence mechanism that can contain this anxiety. A very distinctive objective of the dependency group is they will continually attempt to prevent reality from intruding into their fantasies. If the idealised group leader does not live up to their expectations, they will treat him/her with hostility and rejection. This is almost inevitable since the groups need for a leader is based on the assumption of dependency, and not on task performance.

The Tavistock consultant often experiences this hostility and rejection, since he/she refuses to collude in the group’s unconscious fantasies. The groups situation of not being able to find a person who can fulfil their dependency need, can lead to immense frustration. Sometimes this highly emotional and explosive situation cannot be contained within the group. The group then often deals with this by projecting their dependency need to a higher

authority outside the group. I have once witnessed a group, already one hour into a Tavistock session, proclaiming that they have forgotten to open this event in the appropriate way. Hereafter they then started praying to God to give them strength and wisdom for the day ahead.

The reality of the dependency assumption is that as long as the group continues to defend themselves from reality, no learning nor any work will be achieved.

THE BASIC ASSUMPTION PAIRING:

Pairing is the establishment of some type of meaningful relationship with a perceived powerful individual or by the development of a subgroup in order to gang up against the perceived aggressor or authority. There is also the fantasy that creation will take place in pairs. Bion argued that the relationship is essentially sexual, but the pairs need not be male / female. The fantasy is that a new leader can be born from the relationship. The individual brings unfinished business to the group. This unfinished business is very often related to the individual's family situation.

An example would be where a man at home has no power. His wife dominates and he now uses the workplace to deal with power issues. The reality is that the group cannot satisfy this need, because they are not really his/her family. This causes anxiety and fear. There is also the reality that the task of the group is far removed from the subconscious needs of the group. Pairing holds some relief in the hope that a Messiah will be born to deliver them from their anxieties and fears.

The roles in the pairing relationship is very often a 'Joseph and Mary' situation; one of over-personal and impersonal. Each compensating or strengthening the others weakness. The group is also subconsciously aware of the fact that nobody there can deliver them from their fears and anxieties. "Only by remaining a hope does hope exist' (Bion 1968: 152). I have witnessed many Tavistock sessions where the group cries for leadership, but is extremely reluctant in actually appointing one.

Once again the fantasies brought about by the pairing assumption obscures the groups view to reality. This making it extremely difficult for the group to perform any task effectively and efficiently.

BASIC ASSUMPTION 'FIGHT/FLIGHT':

This defence mechanism is designed for the most basic of human needs namely survival. During the Stone Age the cave person would have the choice of either physically fighting the threat or fleeing from it. Modern groups have sophisticated this defence mechanism in the most interesting ways. The threat is very often the task of the group.

In a Tavistock group the task represents becoming aware of reality as it happens here and the now. The group assumes that it can only survive in its present state by either fighting or fleeing from the task. From Bion's three basic assumptions, a group leader plays the most important role in this one. The group creates the leader, and a lot of times the perceived enemy also.

The leader must lead the group against the perceived enemy, very often the task; and if necessary he/she must help the group to successfully escape the threat. In a Tavistock group it is often the consultant who represents the threat to the group. My hypothesis is that the consultant is the one who tries to help the group understand their reality in the here and the now. It is this same reality that the group perceives as a threat to their current fantasies. By eliminating the consultant the group thus eliminates certain realities from their awareness. This too is a fantasy because it is not really impossible to eliminate reality. This tension between conscious fantasy and subconscious truth creates immense frustration in the group. It is only once the group realises that there is no enemy out there, but only within, that the frustration can be dealt with constructively.

The predominant defence mechanisms during fight-flight is splitting and projection. This enhances the fantasy that there is a struggle between good and evil. By splitting the group can create a good and an evil. Each group in the split believes that it represents something good and the other group something evil. This is where projection comes in. The group takes something that is happening on the inside and places it on the outside. Splitting thus makes their projection possible. The group can now continue to kill time by keeping themselves busy with fantasies of fighting and fleeing from the enemy out there (and ignoring the evil inside). Whilst the group concentrates all its energy on stimulating their fantasies, task performance stays impossible.

Post Script: *The need for this basic assumption can also be seen in broader society. Fantasies about good and evil have been with humans throughout history. The fantasy is that the one group represents something good and the other group something evil. During the last century the world had communism and capitalism. Most movies (if not all) have a good and evil element. The list goes on.*

It is only when there is a mass understanding of our own and the collective subconscious that the need for fight/flight will disappear. In the words of Carl Jung: "It is man's own subconscious that holds the final frontier."

THE BASIC ASSUMPTION ONENESS:

This was not one of Bion's basic assumptions, but was added later as a basic assumption of the Tavistock model. In this basic assumption the group commits itself to a cause outside itself in order to ensure its survival.

Creating a feeling of 'simunye' can also help the group to deal with the unknown. I have often seen groups distinguish themselves from other groups by suggestions of oneness; e.g. "We are academics and academics think differently" or "We detectives have no conflict, the big problem lies with the uniform guys".

This wholeness can also be seen as attempted synergy. It is my hypothesis that synergy is the secret desire of every group. In fact when a group comes together the whole is always somehow greater than the sum of its parts. However the discrepancy between regressive and progressive synergy must be noted. I have seen many groups regress to a point of self-destruction. This I believe to be regressive synergy.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AS A DEFENSE AGAINST ANXIETY:

UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY:

Through evolution humans have developed two distinct ways of dealing with threats; fight and flight. Although still the predominant way of dealing with threats, the fight/flight defence have become much less effective in modern times. In ancient times groups had to cope with immediate dangers, like the attack of a lion, whereas modern people have to deal with threats, such as the fear of being fired for insufficient performance. The threats and dangers of modern man seems to cause stress over a much longer period, this resulting in physical strain which the human body is not built to cope with.

Anxiety can be defined as an intense fear resulting from the anticipation of a threatening event. Once a person perceives danger he/she will experience anxiety. As mentioned, in modern times this could be a continuous state. The types of anxiety that people experience is divided in two categories, namely; objective and neurotic anxiety. Objective anxiety is caused by an external source of danger. Neurotic anxiety is caused by internal dangers arising entirely from within the psyche.

By now we know that external threats are dealt with through fight or flight, but this is not possible with threats coming from the inside. Threats from the inside need to be dealt with through defence mechanisms.

"The conflicts that exist between the id, ego, and superego undoubtedly result in some degree of anxiety or stress. Without a mechanism of protection against this anxiety, it could present a threat to mental health and stability. To deal with anxiety, the ego employs what is known as defence mechanisms. We often use these mechanisms subconsciously in our lives, and it is normal and healthy to do so – to a degree. To use defence

mechanisms in excess is unhealthy. Apart from the fact that they require 'psychic energy', and can eventually become stressful themselves, the excessive use of defence mechanisms may lead to hiding from issues and problems as opposed to dealing with them (also a significant source of anxiety).

DEFENSE MECHANISMS:

Credits: All quoted sections, except if stated otherwise, are taken from the Sigmund Freud Homepage, *Defence Mechanisms*.

The defence mechanisms were created by Freud and are often called ego defences. Short descriptions of these defences are given below.

Denial:

"This is one of the most common defence mechanisms. Denial is the act of refusing to accept the realities of a situation. This can often prove unhealthy when denial is not soon replaced by acceptance, because the longer the gravity of a situation is ignored, the more serious it can become; for example, if one is in denial of a disease diagnoses, the disease may become worsen as it goes untreated. Disease is perhaps the best example for this defence mechanism, as the diagnosis of a disease is the most common reality, especially in cases where the disease is fatal.

In fact, denial is acknowledged as the first stage in the process of death and dying (the five stages being denial, anger, bargaining with God, depression, and acceptance, in that order)."

After 1994 the SAP was transformed into the ORGANISATION. One of the most observable defence mechanisms during this phase, and even currently, was denial. A large percentage of the members in the service refused the realities of the new dispensation in South Africa and the effect that it will have on the police service. A half a decade has already passed since the first transformation initiative, and many police people are still trying to cling to the values of what use to be.

Repression:

This is when the individual ignores strong emotions by attempting to remove them from his/her consciousness. "This is the most common of the defence mechanisms, and the basis for many of Freud's theories. Repression is essentially forgetting, but it is not as if the information is disposed of permanently; rather, the information is tucked away into the subconscious and has the potential to resurface violently at any moment. The forgetting is used for defence as it protects the individual from consciously dealing with painful circumstances and events. Sometimes the

act of repression is referred to as 'blacking/blocking out'. Certain painful events, ranging from blocks of minutes to hours to days to years, can be 'lost'; no recollection of the experience is possible through conscious effort. Incidents of experiencing or witnessing physical pain and / or violence are often forgotten, but significantly traumatic emotional experiences can be blocked as well."

Displacement:

This is another of the most common defence mechanisms. This occurs as a result of repression. When one is not able to release stress, or satisfy the urges of the id, due to circumstance, the resulting anxiety is often displaced onto another person or object innocent of any wrongdoing and disconnected from the situation. Most commonly, displacement takes the form of outward physical or verbal aggression. For example, a commanding officer that received a verbal maltreatment from one of his superiors might deal with his anger by going back to the office and verbally abusing his subordinates.

A stereotypical act of displacement (one which is truly all too common in society) is that of an individual coming home from a job in which s/he has been dominated and stressed by an employer. In dealing with the resulting anger s/he then abuses his/her family physically and/or emotionally, and demands to be served and waited on.

Regression:

Here the individual deals with internal threats in the same way as he/she has dealt with them as a child. When feeling lonely a person regressing might try to look cute and talk in a baby voice. "Regression is the method of reverting back to a behaviour that was comforting, enjoyable, or protective in youth. Sometimes the behaviour is less 'child-like', in that it demonstrates a youthful innocence or free will, that it is, 'childish', immature and inappropriate. It is commonality of this particular mechanism is much greater in younger individuals.

It is most common for very young children to revert back to behaviours from their infant years when they feel a need to acquire attention, or feel that their sense of undivided love is threatened. An only child would be more susceptible to this, as this 'centre of attention' feeling which they are used to is no longer possible. Events that might bring about such an act of regression in a child are the remarriage of a parent after divorce, or even that parent beginning to date again. Adults are most susceptible to this after severe traumatic experiences, something curling into the foetal position or sucking thumbs, or playing with dolls, etc..."

A workplace example of this would be where a female police official arrives at a new unit and starts behaving towards the male commander as a little girl would have behaved towards her father.

Fantasy:

“Many are familiar with the act of fantasising. Perhaps you work at a stressful and tiresome job, dreaming of the day when you will run the company and get to order everyone around. Perhaps you watch an action movie and envision yourself as a daring hero or heroine. These are examples of fantasy.

Fantasy is a normal and acceptable behaviour, and can be positive in many ways, such as providing a motivation to achieve. However, one must realise that fantasy and reality are two separate entities, and that fantasising will neither resolve conflicts nor bring about self-improvement. One must actively pursue the goals of fantasies in order for them to become realities.”

Rationalisation:

“In rationalisation, one tries to find a reason or excuse for one's behaviour which is more acceptable to the ego and superego. Again, one often fabricates a great deal of information as opposed to facing the reality of a situation. This particular defence mechanism works extremely well as it totally rids the individual of any sense of guilt, remorse, or responsibility; therefore, it must be avoided as it tempts the individual to hide from reality.”

For example, a female police official is departmentally trialled for missing an excessive amount of days at work without explanation, and for poor work performance while she was on the job. The real cause of the problem is the woman's alcoholism, but she rationalises that it was due to the fact that her commander hated her, the other officials felt threatened by her ability, and that the police discriminate heavily on the basis of race and sex.

Reaction formation:

“With this defence mechanism, the individual attempts to compensate for an unacceptable impulse by displaying the TOTAL OPPOSITE of that impulse in great excess. One can often identify the presence of a reaction formation by an incredibly extreme portrayal of emotion, especially if there seems to be an instantaneous change.

For example, as often seen in young children, a boy finds a female classmate to be attractive, and grows to be quite fond of her. Afraid of the fact that his male friends may laugh at or insult him for admitting his desire, he becomes verbally and even physically abusive to her, and begins to treat her with such disrespect that it's as if she is the embodiment of all that angers him. He may even convince himself that he actually hates the girl. However, through the pressures and anxieties that would have come with admitting his desire are now absent, his desire remains latent and unresolved.

It is for this reason of a failure to bring about resolution that reaction formations can prove to be dangerous.”

Projection:

Basically a projection is making something which is happening on the inside appear to be on the outside. "Projection is similar to denial in that one is unwilling to accept the realities of one's own self. In projection, the faults and shortcomings, the taboo urges, of an individual are seen not as present in one self, but rather in others. Often, it is the urge to perform an unacceptable deed, the will of the id, which the super-ego will not permit an individual to perform, which is seen as present in others. One's inability to commit an act, and the urge's subsequent repression, can manifest itself this way."

I recently visited a crocodile farm and learned that crocodiles never attack other animals from land. When a crocodile perceives danger it immediately goes to the water. The water is known territory to the crocodile, it knows that it can attack from the water at 60 k/p/h and then pull its prey back into the water where it can be drowned. This is the way that crocodiles are programmed. Humans are no different. We are programmed to consciously deal with any perceived danger by means of fight or flight. This satisfies our most basic need, survival. As crocodiles deal with perceived danger by moving to the water, we deal with internal threats by projecting it to the outside. There we can see it and deal with it by means of fight or flight, as we are programmed to do. Unfortunately a threat on the inside has to be dealt with from the inside.

If not, the threat will continuously be projected to the outside, thus keeping the group or individuals in a constant basic assumption state.

In the ORGANISATION you often hear these examples; "It's top management that doesn't allow us"; "Members are lazy" or "In this new South Africa nobody needs to work". Another example is an office worker considering going home earlier in the afternoon, because nobody will notice. After thinking about it the employee decides against it. Suddenly, s/he begins to notice that all the other employees are doing just that: going home earlier than they are supposed to.

The effective group or individual has a clear understanding of the boundary between the self and the outside world. This statement also holds true for the Tavistock consultant. If this boundary is blurred action is most often based on non-realities and distorted facts.

ORGANISATIONAL DEFENSE

As we have ego defences against anxiety there are also social defences. This is more a collective strategy to combat anxiety. The European theorist Jacques had a specific hypothesis that within the life of an organisation the defence against anxiety is one of the primary elements that bind individuals together.

Organisations can thus also convert internal anxiety into fear of an external threat. Departments within organisations often preserve its belief in its own good by splitting off its own bad parts and feelings, and projecting them onto another department. Jacques also believed that one of the things that causes group cohesion in organisations is their defence against anxiety. Furthermore he believed that individual members uses organisations as defence mechanisms against their own anxieties. In a nutshell it can be said that organisations and their structures become containers for anxieties.

THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE – ANXIETY DEFENSE MECHANISMS?

The Organisation has a very over-bounded bureaucratic structure. The conscious reason from top management will be that these structures are there for discipline and control. The first question that jumps to my mind is whether this is the way that adults would want to be treated. My hypothesis is that people join the Organisation in a state of dependence, still needing a parent figure. Anxiety is caused by the thought of having to function independently, making own decisions, taking responsibility for own actions, etc. This anxiety can be contained within an over-bounded bureaucratic Organisational structure. In this type of structure there is always a parent / child relationship. No situation or decision can be dealt with, except if there are rules and regulations dictating every fine detail of the action. Once again the ritual task performance culture creates a structure within which members can contain their anxieties.

The dependency paradigm is also quite evident in the language that police people use; e.g. “Hello ouboet”, “Hey pappie ek het darem vinnig gery”, “Ma maar ek is nou honger” or “Ja boetie, wat wil jy hê?” or “As ons dit nie doen nie gaan ons pak kry”. Functional police people often refer to the Organisation as ‘Fivas and sons’, Fivas referring to the police commissioner (or father) and sons to the rest of the people working there. In all these examples there are referrals to some authoritative figure within the family set-up. Police people who enter the Organisation are discouraged from using their initiative and discretion (children should be seen not heard). People leaving the Organisation usually go to similar bureaucratic structures like universities or other state departments.

An interesting phenomena is when members attempt to minimise their anxiety regarding individual responsibility. Powerful internal conflict is then experienced between the responsibility demanded by his/her work and his/her wishes to avoid this burden by acting irresponsibly. This intra-personal struggle is then often projected into interpersonal conflict. This system have been going for many years now, and since there is no profit connected to its outcome it can be artificially be kept alive for decades on end. As new members enter the system they are forced to introject the Organisations defence system which leads new members to experience a considerable degree of pathological anxiety.

As Bion has shown. The work group ceases to operate when anxiety and other emotions cause the group to work in one of the basic assumption modes. This is highly evident in the ORGANISATION. From 140 thousand members, only \pm one tenth are at any time busy with matters of safety and security. On an average station of 50 people only 4 are out on patrol vans dealing with issues of safety and security. There are currently more Captains in the ORGANISATION than there are Constables. The list goes on.

BASIC BEHAVIOURAL-DYNAMICS OPERATING

WITHIN WORK-GROUPS:

THE THREE BASIC QUESTIONS:

Below are three questions that would you as ORGANISATION middle manager to determine whether group-dynamics are functional or dysfunctional in your work-group.

QUESTION 1: WHAT IS THE PRIMARY TASK OF MY WORK GROUP?

This question seems much easier to answer than it is. This question does not only require you to determine what it is that your work group is doing, but mostly the common mission towards which your work group is working. This mission is the desired reality that defines your Organisation's reason for existence. Thus, defining the primary task requires thinking first about what this intended or desired 'different state' is, and then about how the system (group, department or Organisation) proposes to bring this about.

In many bureaucratic Organisations work-groups find it difficult to bring their task in line with the Organisational purpose. The question arising from this is: 'why would Organisations establish departments which do not bring them any closer to their core business?'

One answer could be that such a department is being used as a container within which certain painful aspects of the Organisation can be ignored. The work-group is thus being used by the Organisation to thrust certain unpleasant facts regarding their own incompetence out of their awareness. In other words the group has become a defence mechanism which the Organisation is using to defend the consciousness and their awareness against reality. This inevitably limits the manager and his/her work-group's awareness of their role in the total system. A police example would be the Anti-Corruption Unit. They have been singled out to contain the morals of the Organisation.

Post Script: *After this question it would be good to relate the groups task to the task of the larger Organisation.*

This would help the group to test the validity of their task definition.

QUESTION 2: HOW DOES OUR WAY OF WORKING RELATE TO THIS TASK?

An effective way to deal with this question would be to look at the rules, regulations and policies that regulates your group's way of working. One should also look at the physical behaviour of your group. Are these things in any way related to the task of the group? If the group's way of working does not relate to the task, it can be helpful to ask, "What are we behaving as if we were here to do?" Identifying this as-if task can provide clues about the underlying anxieties, defences and conflicts that have given rise to the dysfunctional task definition and to the associated dysfunctional boundaries.

To be personally effective in our roles, we need to be clear about the task we have to do. Furthermore we must be able to mobilise sufficient resources, internal and external, to achieve it. Lastly it is important that we have some understanding of how our own task relates both to the task of the system in which we are working and to the task of the institution as a whole.

QUESTION 3: HOW WELL ARE WE DOING?

This question helps the group to begin to think about how they might engage differently with the task at hand. Most working-groups ask this question on a regular basis. It would be unfortunate if groups would ask this question mutually exclusive too the other two preceding questions. In fact the first two questions pave the way for the 'how well are we doing' question.

PSYCHO-DYNAMIC MANIFESTATIONS:

Below is a description of some of the dynamics that could possibly be manifested within your workgroup. Study and learn these various dynamics with the intention of identifying and understanding them back at your workplace. *Please note that the descriptions below are merely short summaries. In order to get a full understanding of these dynamics you will need to engage in further reading. To aid you in this I have included a reading list.*

The avoidance of pain:

This dynamic deals with the defences against difficult emotions that are too threatening and too painful to acknowledge. Sometimes these emotions are a response to external threats such as change. On the one hand the

Organisation knows that it has to continuously change in order to survive, but on the other change is characterised by uncertainty, and uncertainty causes anxiety. Change is one cause of anxiety and there are many others. The competition between departments or individuals is another cause of anxiety. The Organisation needs to contain this anxiety.

This is why the subconscious purpose of many departments is being a sponge that has to absorb the anxiety of the Organisation. This causes threatening emotions, which these departments deny by continuously justifying their conscious task. It is also a way of strengthening their fantasy that what they are doing is worth their while. Denial is probably the most popular way of avoiding pain. This involves pushing certain thoughts, feelings and experiences out of conscious awareness because they have become too anxiety provoking. The following type of questions can be asked to diagnose your work group's avoidance of pain.

“What are we excluding from our reality and why are we doing it?”

“What is hurting us emotionally?”

The paranoid-schizoid position:

Paranoid refers to badness being experienced as coming from outside oneself and schizoid refers to splitting. Splitting is the process of dividing feelings into different elements. Splitting is most often accompanied by projection, which is locating feelings in others rather than oneself.

“The projection of feelings of badness outside the self helps to produce a state of illusory goodness and self-idealisation. This white and black mentality simplifies complex issues and may produce a rigid culture in which growth is inhibited. Every Organisation has boundaries between insiders and outsiders. Splitting and projection exploits this natural boundary.

“Sometimes splitting occurs between groups in the institution. Structural divisions into sections, departments, professions, disciplines and so forth are necessary for Organisations to function effectively. However, these divisions become fertile grounds for the splitting and projection of negative images. The gaps between departments or professions are available to be filled with many different emotions – denigration, competition, hatred, prejudice, paranoia The less contact there is with other sections, the greater the scope of projection of this kind. Contact and meetings may be avoided subconsciously to preserve self-idealisation based on these projections. This results in the institution becoming stuck in a paranoid-schizoid projective system. Emotional disorder interferes with the functioning of an Organisation, particularly in relation to tasks which require cooperation or collective change.”

Often departments have a subconscious competition of who is going to be the dominant department. Maybe the dominant party can use the minority to be bullied and tortured, thus taking its own impurities, putting it in

another place where it can be dealt with more easily. This is very much a situation of the Germans and the Jews. The Germans stood for an Arian race, but they had many impurities within themselves. Hitler himself did not even fit the Arian description. The Germans placed the Jews in camps where they were tortured and killed. The hypothesis is that by hurting the Jews the Germans were dealing with their own impurities. They could live out the fantasy that they represented something good and the Jews represented something evil. Communism and capitalism is another example of splitting which facilitated projection. I believe that divisions in Organisations and work-groups sometimes fulfil the same function as the communist and capitalist has fulfilled for the world during the largest part of the previous century. Each group creating it's own containers for the people working here. These fears and anxieties are then projected onto the other group, creating the fantasy that they represent something good and the other department something evil. The two groups also ensure this split by avoiding contact with each other.

Survival:

The struggle for survival is probably the greatest known dynamic. This survival instinct is very much alive within Organisations. In the ORGANISATION there are limited promotional posts available. Capital, human and financial resources are also limited. The success of one police official could thus be felt at the expense of another. The survival anxiety of the less successful official stimulates an envious desire to spoil the others success. This usually takes the form of active sabotage, mostly by way of counter-proposing suggestions made by the successful official. The game of survival is very much one of being in control of resources. Promotion in the ORGANISATION will make resources in the form of money, power and authority available.

It is however important to bear in mind that people need just as much to survive psychologically as they need to survive physically. The psychological survival of people has a lot to do with dealing with unfinished business. A person who joins the ORGANISATION in a state of dependence because of unfinished business in the family situation could very well subconsciously be replacing the senior officer with a parent figure. This is a way of surviving psychologically.

Projective identification and counter-transference:

Projective identification refers to a sub-conscious inter-personal interaction in which the recipients of a projection react to it in such a way that their own feelings are affected. They thus unconsciously identify with the projected feelings.

Counter-transference is the state of mind in which other people's feelings are experienced as one's own.

The community projects their feelings of insecurity onto the ORGANISATION. The message is that there are bad elements that cannot be trusted and that these elements need to be policed and disciplined. In response to this projective process the police start experiencing these feelings as their own. There is some evidence that projective identification is at work. If one just looks at the incredible hierarchy and the processes that have to be followed, it speaks of a reasonable amount of mistrust and insecurity. The station commissioner reports to the area commissioner, who then has to report to the provincial commissioner, who then has to report to one of the top 19 commissioners, who has to report to one of the deputy commissioners, who has to report to the national commissioner.

Recently a C.E.O. has been appointed in the ORGANISATION; not even to speak about all the politicians on their return policing the police. This behaviour is likely to remain obscure until the Organisation achieves a conscious realisation that they have become trapped in a counter-transference response to a projective process.

“It is also through the mechanism of projective identification that one group on behalf of another group, or one member of a group on behalf of the other members, can come to serve as a kind of ‘sponge’ for all the anger or all the depression or all the guilt in the group. The group may then launch the angry member and management, or a depressed member may be unconsciously manoeuvred into breaking down and leaving. This individual not only expresses or carries something for the group, but also may be used to export something that the rest of the group then need not feel in themselves. Similarly, a group may carry something for another group or for the institution as a whole.”

The depressive position:

This position is where the group values every point of view and a full range of emotional responses is available to it through its members. Such a group is more able to encompass the emotional complexity of the work in which they share, and no member will be left to carry his/her fragment in isolation.

In a depressive position member's emotional states are made more bearable by the group's ability to receive and understand these emotions. The group can bring about change if they can tolerate the feelings of members long enough to reflect on them, and contain the anxieties they stir up.

It is crucial that the Organisations has the ability and the willingness to contain projected feelings stirred up by ambiguities until its employees are ready to use an interpretation. If this is not done, the Organisations interpretation of such ambiguities might be experienced as yet another attack. “However, when the timing is right, some of the projections can be re-owned’, splitting decreases, and there is a reduction in the polarisation and antagonism among members themselves.

If one looks at the amount of current conflict between unions and police management there is not much evidence of the existence of the depressive position in the ORGANISATION.

This concept of the group or Organisation as container for individual anxieties and emotions is essential for Organisational survival, growth and change.

Power:

This dynamic refers to the ability to act upon others or upon Organisational structure. One also has to differentiate between external and internal power. The first is derived from what the individual controls and from the sanctions one can impose on others. The latter is derived from the individual's knowledge and experience, strength of personality, and what their state of mind is regarding their role.

The problem that some groups experience, is their perception that power is located outside themselves. This leaves the group with a sense of powerlessness.

This ORGANISATION has located a lot of power in the Organisational staff-functions. They are the ones with the contacts, the ones who can arrange things within minutes. The line-function often find themselves incapable to arrange even the simplest thing. The situation that we have in the ORGANISATION is that our line-functions have authority without power, and the staff-functions have power without authority. This leaving the members confused and most often leads to work related stress.

“Authority without power leads to a weakened, demoralised management. Power without authority leads to an authoritarian regime. It is the judicious mix and balance of the two that makes for the effective on-task management in a well-run Organisation... A sense of responsibility without having adequate authority and power to achieve outcomes often lead to work-related stress and eventual burn-out.”

Leadership:

“Leadership and management are also terms that are often used interchangeably. It is true that they have a “headship” function in common, but management generally refers to a form of conduct by those in authority that is intended to keep the Organisation functioning and on-task, while leadership also implies looking to the future, pursuing an ideal or goal.

Furthermore, leadership by definition implies followership, while management does so in a much lesser degree.

Work-groups often have both a leadership and a follower-ship problem. This problem sometimes emanates from a manager who tries to manage from a position of equality, presented as ‘democracy’. Such a manager avoids

decisions by telling members of staff that they should solve their own problems. He/she also avoids the managerial role by doing functional work most of the time. This misguided attempt to avoid rivalry and envy leads to the undermining of his/her authority and capacity to hold overall perspective and ability to lead. This will also strengthen any rival's authority since he/she will be more than willing to play the leadership role. This problem could be solved once the manager starts a process of consistent and clear monitoring of the primary task. This of course necessitates the primary task to be clearly defined.

Rivalry, envy and jealousy often interfere with the process of taking up either a leadership or follower-ship role. "...it is clear that envy in institutional processes is one of the key destructive phenomena, particularly in relation to figures in authority. Envy results in a destructive attack on the person in authority, with resultant spoiling of the work arising under the aegis of that person's authority. Very often groups use projective identification to unconsciously set up one person to lead the envious attack against the figure in authority. The result is then the leader and attacker are locked into a lose-lose battle while the other members of staff take on the role of distressed and helpless onlookers. The manifestation of this particular dynamic not only gratifies unconscious wishes but also attacks the pursuit of the primary task. This 'anti-task' phenomenon is currently quite evident within the ORGANISATION. As middle management facilitators we find it quite common, especially in the first phase of training. Here middle managers spend most their time complaining about top-management and about their next promotions. It is my opinion that the rank-structure accompanied with the immense amount of duplications of posts to a large extent contributes to envy, jealousy and rivalry.

Another difficulty is the charismatic leaders in Organisations. Everything usually goes quite well while this leader reign, but the problem starts as soon as this person leaves the work-group.

The subordinates are then usually left in disarray, and at the same time may withhold follower-ship from the person appointed as a replacement, disabling this person from both leading and managing.

On-task leadership:

Leadership is directly related to the pursuit of the aims and of the primary task of the Organisation. It is the primary task of the Organisation that serves as a marker against which the direction and functioning of the Organisation can be monitored, or to effect the necessary adjustments to this course of functioning. The leader's authority to lead by monitoring and adjusting the work-groups course of functioning is thus ultimately derived from the primary task of the Organisation. "It is only through a consistent and clear monitoring of the primary task, that it is possible to develop and maintain on-task leadership, to avoid the abuse of power, and to keep at a relative minimum the occurrence and spread of basic assumption activity in the Organisation. This also implies that, as the

primary task changes, so leadership and followership roles may need to change. For example, in an operating team the head-surgeon is usually the leader; but if the patient stops breathing during an operation, the anaesthetist needs to take over the leadership until the breathing is restored (Turquet 1974).

The organisation in the mind:

This dynamic refers to the idea of the institution that each individual member carries in his/her own mind. These ideas of the different members may also be in contradiction with each other. There is also a collective 'Organisation in the mind' shared by everyone. One person can see the Organisation as a place where he/she can get power and popularity and another can see it as a place that can fulfil his/her dependency need. Collectively the ORGANISATION trainers of Management Development could subconsciously see the centre as a hospital for managers. It could then be our subconscious task to cure the patient (ORGANISATION middle management) or to train the warriors (also middle management), thus ensuring Organisational survival. In the case of this example there is the danger that the whole team shares a sense of powerlessness in its relative inability to cure the 'patient' or to train the 'warrior'. This in its turn could lead to various defence mechanisms operating within the training centre.

"Gordon Lawrence (1977) has shown that whilst an Organisation may have one publicly stated idea of its primary purpose or mission, there are often also hidden conceptions at work. Put simply, there is the level of 'what we say we do' but there are also levels of 'what we really believe what we are doing' and also 'what is actually going on'. Members of the Organisation may be quite unconscious of this third level.

The institution as a container:

Organisations often provide a sense of psychological and emotional containment to individuals. This enables a member to project parts of the self that he/she does not want to be aware of into other more distant parts of the Organisation. He/she thus simply thrusts unpleasant facts out of his/her consciousness. Splits between departments within Organisations often serve as very convenient containers to project inherent laziness. It's always the other group doing nothing or being lazy. In the ORGANISATION the uniform branch will talk about the wonderful life that detectives have. Detectives will complain on having to retake the uniform branches statements the whole time, etc. In the larger I would say that the ORGANISATION contains a tremendous 'need for dependency' for its members. Wearing uniforms, calling people on ranks, having clear instructions on every single issue (even toilet paper has a SAP code) provides structures in which people find certainty, reduce choices and also avoid the

responsibility for decisions. "In all of us, there is the impulse to work and there is the impulse not to work. Where can this impulse not to work be located?

Very conveniently, in the department or office down the hall, or in the other building; they are the lazy ones, or the reason we are not doing well at this moment. This is one unconscious reason why we form and join Organisations: to provide us through splitting and projection, opportunities to locate difficult and hated aspects of ourselves in some 'other'. On the one hand we can say that the police is still very much an old fashioned institution, not at all geared to operate in the 21st century; but on the other we cannot deny the psychological containment that this Organisation provides to the community. The popular over-emphasis on cost-effectiveness in the public sector often obscures the psychological task of this sector. "In the case of the police, the public are now called 'customers'. While no doubt an important change in the sense that the police are trying to view us in a different way and asking us to do likewise, this can bring with it a different problem.

We need the police to be available, psychologically speaking, for the protection of certain of our attitudes towards authority. Indeed, accepting these projections, working them through, and handing them back to society at large is part of the task of the police. If the police see themselves only as providing a service, and do not realise that psychological containment of tensions within society is also a central function, there is likely to be an increase in disorder rather than a reduction. If the police are no longer available in this way to society, they will not provide the necessary sense of authoritative containment.

THE SMALL GROUP, A MICROCOSM OF THE LARGER SYSTEM?

The main presupposition here is that what happens in the small group is a reflection of that which happens within the larger system. The best way to investigate this question is to take that which is sub-consciously happening within your workgroup and compare it with that which is happening in the larger system or Organisation.

Denial is one such dynamic that is usually reflected in the larger Organisation. This is a flight from reality and happens largely subconsciously. Before 1994 the SAP College for basic training spent ± 80% of the time on drilling people disciplining them into the ways of the Organisation. Here students have learned not to think for themselves, that it is a great sin to be disobedient towards authority and that sustaining the structures (containers) of the Organisation is the greatest form of discipline. In fact the Organisation was giving the message to newcomers that this is how what is really going on is ignored, and that if the newcomers pretend along, they could soon be one of the family. This can be called collusive group denial of the work difficulties. Another way in which the Organisation defends itself against the difficulty of its work, which is the provision of safety and security to the community, is the establishment of time-wasting committees and the maintenance of the bureaucracy. In this way face to face contact

with the community can be avoided. Any system is made up of smaller components; and it is the task of these smaller components to help the larger system survive or in the case of Organisations, to maintain the current status quo. This inevitably necessitates the smaller system to contain something of the larger system.

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URL: www.derekhendrikz.com
E-mail: hello@derekhendrikz.com
(T) +27 82 781 4049

