Welcome colleagues! to the latest issue of the GANNET. This is the second publication of the renascent news letter that seeks to bring us all together.

In reflecting on the turning of the year, and the decade that has just passed, and in anticipation of the 20s as they come roaring toward us, thoughts readily come to the tumult, division, and rank exploitation in our local and international political scene, deeply affecting us all, as well as the coarsening of our public discourse in recent years, and from which many of us have professed feeling despairing and exhausted.

As the discursive space, through the expansion of our online connection, has opened up discussion of privilege and has broadened the questioning of structural bases of power and ushered in new possibilities for Springs of change, there would also seem to be ‘pushback’ - rejections of aspects of our tendency toward globalisation, the re-emergence of atavistic exceptionalist identities, ‘nostalgic’ dreams of a return to splendid isolation and colonial supremacy, and an accompanying demonising of The Other.

In the stoking of primitive fears and through the politics of hate and division, in the occupying of extreme positions and political stances, and through assaults on objectivity and ‘truth’, some of our leaders have conjured destructive forces reminiscent of those at the void-like heart of the history of European and world war.

Mark Twain is reputedly the source of the wisdom that “History doesn't repeat itself but it often rhymes”, and the sentiments if not the rhythm of WB Yeats ’1919 poem
The Second Coming (first stanza) seem an apt description of times to which we may now be rhyming:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity

As students and practitioners of the group analytic approach, we may be familiar with the discomfort of endeavouring to ‘hold the centre’, resisting the compulsive-repulsive forces that can appear to make complex things seem simple and can so powerfully drive people apart from one another into entrenchment. Although we might strive to work creatively at the edge of chaos, engaging with the ‘anarchy’ of group unconscious material, we do so in the context of the safe and reassuring frame of our dynamic administration. Of course, Group Analysis can’t aspire to providing the psychic container for a confused, traumatised and weary nation, but can make a powerful contribution to the greater holding to the centre that resists travelling to the extremes of Yeats’s ‘widening gyre’.

Interestingly, while drawing together the set of diverse contributions for this issue, we encountered a barrier that to us highlighted the challenges of open and honest discourse. We were to include an article about groupwork with asylum seekers who are survivors of trauma, which made engrossing reading about the power of the group that works with the challenges of race, language and the awful uncertainty that is so much a part of the lives of people that are traumatised in so many ways. We were instructed to withhold the article, however, as the organisation that the group is run at deemed it unsuitable for publication, even in this informal space, raising issues of power and powerlessness, perhaps a mistrust of spaces where dialogue can happen and a sense of unease regarding who owns the work, our conversations or even our minds.

This issue of the Gannet presents a selection of articles and material on some of the current developments in the world of group analysis and group working, and in some ways stand as a steadfast if unheralded response to the fragmenting and factional tendencies so characterising of recent events.

This edition presents fascinating reflections and reads from different corners of the world of group analysis and group working, referencing group working in the clergy, in family therapy, in schools systems, on processes of personal change and growth, as individuals as well as members of complex institutional organisations, and addressing issues relating to power, privilege, race, identity and more, all reminding us of the diversity and power of group analysis and its associates as a tool for us to help each other to continue to help each other.
Alongside all of the above, we include an update of the important work being carried out addressing the need for reform and within our own organisations, in the PPP group, and there is an important invitation to take part in some very exciting research aimed at producing research outcomes that will highlight the effectiveness of group analytic therapy. Do make to read this and take part in this important development.

As before, we thank the contributors, and those they represent, for their generosity in submitting such high-standard material. Together, such contributions and what they represent constitute a hopeful riposte, altogether conveying something of the falconer’s cry (?) and the conviction needed for our times.

To quote Auschwitz survivor and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, “Hope is as peace. It is not a gift from God. It is a gift only we can give one another” (Nobel Lecture, 1981).

- RC, Liverpool, Jan 2020

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Annual Barbara Dick Memorial Lecture
Saturday 21st March 2020
10.00 a.m. — 3.00 p.m.

“On Hoping that Humans will be Calm in their Diminishing”

Presented by Paul Hoggett

This extract from Tony Hoagland’s poem captures something of the unprecedented challenge facing us. As the climate collapses we seem still firmly set on a trajectory which will destroy the unique conditions that made civilization possible 11,000 years ago. Whilst the species will surely survive in some form it may well do so at the expense of our humanity. What is this thing we call ‘our humanity’, why is it worth preserving, and why is it so precarious? Can it withstand the panicked surge either towards the survival of the fittest or towards the lure of salvation via the rapture, genetic upgrading or the colonisation of Mars? In exploring such questions Paul Hoggett will examine how therapeutic insights and practices could contribute to our ‘calming’ in the turbulent times ahead?

Paul Hoggett helped set up, and was the first Chair, of the Climate Psychology Alliance. He is Emeritus Professor of Social Policy at UWE, a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and was the founding joint editor of Organisational and Social Dynamics, the journal of the Tavistock Group Relations tradition. His most recently edited volume is Climate Psychology: On Indifference to Disaster (2019: Palgrave).

Venue: Newlands Estate, 315 Chorley New Road, Bolton, BL1 5BP
To book a place: call 01204 84 0909, or email bethan@groupanalysisnorth.com
The Lecture will be followed by a hot lunch (provided), a Large Group and a short plenary session.
The day will continue at 3.30 p.m. with the Group Analysis North AGM (All welcome)

Cost: £100 or £50 for GAN members and IGA Students
Reflections on Religious Violence, Group Identity and Sibling Rivalry
by Rev. Caroline Worsfold

I recently read Jonathan Sacks book “Not in God’s Name; Confronting Religious Violence” (Hodder and Stoughton, 2015) and was intrigued to discover how much the first part of the book elucidated themes from my Group Analytic training. Chapter headings include, “Violence and Identity”, “The Scapegoat”, “Sibling Rivalry” and “Dualism” (for which read splitting). Sacks is concerned to show how a certain reading of religion, used to justify violence and murder, is not compatible with either a scriptural understanding of God or to be found within the respective scholarly, wisdom traditions of the three Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The lenses through which he addresses the conflict amongst the 3 faith groups are psychology, moral philosophy and game theory. Perhaps the most striking concept is at the beginning of the book where he takes up Hannah Arendt’s phrase, “the banality of evil”, coined as she witnessed the trail of the Nazi war criminal Adolph Eichmann, as a starting point to understand the propensity of human beings to commit atrocities. For Sacks, the word “banal” has an abasing quality of human behaviour whereby nameless bureaucrats were simply implementing orders from above. This is not how Sacks sees the behaviour of jihadists and extremists today. For him “the deadly phenomenon that can turn ordinary non psychotic people into cold blooded murderers of school children and workers, journalists and people at prayer” needs a stronger name and Sacks terms it “altruistic evil”, a phrase he defines as “evil committed in a sacred cause, in the name of high ideals”. He notes that it is a concept that is not uniquely linked to religious groups; secular groups such as Stalin’s Russia, Mao Zedong’s China or Pol Pot’s Cambodia all used methods familiar to religious extremist groups today.

Human beings, he argues, seek meaning and Sacks notes there has been a return to religion as a global force that has surprised Western democracies. But this religious return has a political face to it and in taking over the public space it takes no heed of state boundaries, political institutions or even religious adherence other than its own. In 2014 Isis claimed a Caliphate that cut across several nation states.

Strikingly perhaps, Sacks agrees with Freud and Giraud when he says that religion doesn’t breed violence but violence creates religion. His path to this conclusion is well argued. He notes that religion performs a task fundamental to large groups in that it links people emotionally, behaviourally, intellectually and spiritually into communion and thus into community.

Looking at the rise of groups from early civilisations to now, Sacks argues that whenever people have moved from small groups to large groups, from kinship to associations, religion has formed a major part of that development because of its moral code and sense of order. But he is utterly aware of the downside and unresolved aspects of religion that lead to dangerous behaviours. So religious groups like all other groups are prone to using splitting (good and bad), scapegoating (them and us), envy (superior/inferior) and a host of other group phenomena to establish a group boundary.

Linking the first part and second part, Sacks takes Giraud’s notion of “mimetic desire” imitation, as the root of violence and agrees with Giraud rather than Freud that it is sibling rivalry, rather than
Oedipal desire where this imitation causes a conflictual relationship. Using early stories from the book of Genesis, Sacks looks at how sibling rivalry has led to betrayal, expulsion and murder.

Whilst these biblical stories, taken at first glance, seem to demonstrate an ugly side of human behaviour and a fickle and judgemental godhead, Sacks invites us to go deeper into the stories. With a labour of love, he invites us pay closer attention - to follow the threads of a story beyond its initial narrative and to listen to the wisdom of scriptural scholars from all three faith groups.

It is the stories of sibling rivalry that fascinates Sacks because the three Abrahamic religions are regularly regarded as siblings - all tracing their roots to Abraham as the father. He starts by looking at the story of Isaac and Ishmael, Abraham’s sons. Sarah, Abraham’s seemingly barren wife, employs her maid-servant Hagar, to bear a child for Abraham. However her rage and jealousy and the degradation she suffers at Hagar’s contemptuous gaze mean that she is prepared to destroy both Hagar and her son in order to regain her position in the household. Abraham unlike Laius (Oedipus’ father) does not want to send his son away yet God insists that he is to send Hagar and Ishmael into the desert. Having sent his oldest son away, Abraham is challenged a second time to destroy the son of his old age, Isaac, son of his wife Sarah, as a sacrifice. Throughout the stories there is a counter intuitive pull of the narrative. We know early on in the story that Isaac is the son to bear the promise of God to the Israelite people yet he is neither the first born nor is he the strongest. Although Isaac is the chosen, our sympathy is for Ishmael and Hagar. God challenges the norms - he chooses the weaker Isaac to bear the promise of God’s chosen nation but God also makes Ishmael a great nation and ancestor of the Muslim faith. In the act of choosing Isaac, God does not forsake Ishmael. Both sons come close to death as children but each survives to be the founder of twelve tribes. Despite the antagonism between Sarah and Hagar and the impact on their sons, in one brief phrase at the end of the story we hear that Abraham’s “sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah facing Mamre” Gen 25.9. The two men have managed to navigate the trauma of their early lives and the envy and despair of their mothers, to stand together at their father’s grave. As Sacks says “Brothers can live together in peace, (as) the counter intuitive narrative implies.”

He then goes on to look at the “supreme instance of displacement; the story of Jacob and Esau”. As the first born, Esau is set to inherit the blessing from his father Isaac but Rebekah favours the younger of her twin sons and helps him to deceive Isaac in order to steal his brother’s birth right. It seems strange that the son who inherits the promises of Abraham to lead a fruitful people has used fraud and deception to receive such a blessing. Sacks traces the story of the two brothers, through Esau’s anger and desire for revenge and Jacob’s flight into an alien land. The episode that is the most well known possibly of this narrative is Jacob’s wrestling with an angel and this takes place just before Jacob plans to meet his brother again, twenty two years after he stole his brother’s blessing. The text says that Jacob wrestled with “a man” and although Jacob prevails and he receives the man’s blessing, Jacob is injured. Jacob now receives a blessing in his own right and believes the man to be God. Jacob names the place Peniel for he says “I have seen God face to face and survived” Genesis 32.31. Sacks points out that Jacob relinquishes the mimetic desire, the jealousy of his brother, of wanting what his brother has - a face, a name, a blessing and recognises that he has to be himself in order to be blessed. Like his father Isaac’s story, God chooses the younger and weaker to be the bearer of the covenant, but the older brother does not miss out. The older brother also receives a blessing; the promise of land and family.

The sibling stories are not all about brothers but the themes of deception, jealousy and revenge regularly reappear in all the stories. Jacob who has deceived his brother is now the victim of a deception. He is indentured to Laban for seven years in return for marrying Rachel, Laban’s younger daughter but on his wedding night Jacob is tricked into sleeping with Leah the older sister.
Jacob has to work another seven years before he is allowed to marry Rachel. Rachel is loved by Jacob but it is Leah who is blessed with children. Sarah and Hagar’s story repeats again until Rachel finally has a child, Joseph. Leah is not the chosen and beloved of Jacob but she is chosen and blessed by God who holds out another narrative to the figures in the story. “God does not prove his love for some by hating others” writes Sacks and that is the essence of his message about confronting religious violence. A superficial reading of these stories might seem that some are winners whilst others are losers but look more deeply argues Sacks and God’s message is one of plenitude: there is blessing for all.

The final story of sibling rivalry is the story of Joseph (and the coat of many colours). Similar themes of envy and attempted murder begin the story but through various group configurations, the book of Genesis finishes with the reconciliation of Joseph with his brothers thus “showing that sibling rivalry is not written indelibly into the human script.” (p.157)

Sacks’ argument that the Jewish people have a special relationship with God will be hard for some to accept but he makes the case that the first stories in Genesis are about archetypes; Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, Noah. A covenant made with Noah is a covenant made with humanity first and foremost. Only then does God make a covenant with a particular people to demonstrate the reality and particularity of God’s love. Holding this tension is no easy place. “There is no single, simple system that will honour both our commonalities and our differences. Tribalism - identity without universality - leads to violence. Imperialism – universality without identity - leads to the loss of freedom and the suppression of the very identity that makes us human. That is why the Bible sets out two covenants...one that honours our common humanity, the other that sanctifies diversity and the particularity of love. And the universal comes first. You cannot love God without honouring the universal dignity of humanity as the image and likeness of the universal God” (p.200). This is the heart of the final part of the book that brings into the foreground a discussion about extremist religious ideology and praxis. Extremists may claim that God is on their side and they are fighting God’s cause but anything that destroys or degrades God’s first love of humanity, Sacks argues, can never be done in God’s name.

There is only the briefest of mentions at the end of the book as to the place Judaism plays in the oppression of the Palestinian people today. Perhaps like Freud who was left with hostile feelings towards his younger sibling Julius who died before his first birthday, Sacks too cannot bear to see how the older sibling (Judaism) oppresses the younger sibling (Islam) in the nation state of Israel.

Yet even with this blind spot, Sacks argues convincingly that there is a connection between violence and religion. He reinterprets scriptural stories familiar to all three Abrahamic faiths in a way that takes seriously humanity’s envy, revenge, deceit, struggle for power but by observing these texts in detail helps us to see that these emotions do not control the final outcome. Sacks encourages his readers to see that the universality of the human person made in God’s image is the first story of the Scriptures and comes before the specifics of any individual faith. It is why he can claim that religious violence can never be done in God’s name.

An ordained Anglican priest, Caroline is chaplain at St Benedict's Hospice in Sunderland and runs 2 monthly reflective practice groups for clergy in the Durham Diocese. Caroline has a small private practice for individual psychotherapy and she sees clergy individually for spiritual direction. The highlight of last year was leading the Ordination retreat for the 18 men and women being ordained and to preach in Durham Cathedral at the deacons and priests' ordination services. This year, she is hoping to pursue research into links between of birth/early life trauma and distress in dying.
Groups in Family Therapy
Developments and Configurations

Here Richard Curtis chews the rag with Dr. Ged Smith, a Family Therapist with more than 30 years of experience, about what excites him about his work and ways in which Family Therapy and Group Analysis overlap and complement one another.

Richard: Has Family Therapy seen a development in how it thinks about interacting with family groups?

Ged:
The changes in Family Therapy have been massive and profound, almost worthy of being called a revolution, in both theory and practice, which of course shape each other. The change has been mostly in terms of power, and the position of the therapist who has come from a position of expert who ‘knows what’s needed’ and gathers enough information in order to deliver therapy to the family, tells them what is wrong and what they need to do. The post-modern ‘power revolution’ concerned with therapy becoming a much more collaborative venture with families and co-construction ways of working and moving forward together.

R: Co-construction...?

G: Yeah, ways forward together, rather than us [Family Therapists] having the answers. Which is the beauty of Family Therapy, really, because we don’t need the answers. The biggest most important thing that happens is that people hear from each other, and that is what makes all the difference! So we don’t synthesise it or summarise it or condense the conversation or do anything else with it. We just ask questions about ‘what do you think about what you have heard today?’, ‘what difference will it make to your life? what impact will it have on your life and your relationships and on the problem you’re here seeking help for?’ So. Yeah, in a word, it is ‘Power’ - which means a much more collaborative way of working with people. So yes, massive shifts for Family Therapy over the past 30 years.

R: Foulkes said that the individual is an abstraction, and could only be considered in the context of the groups that the individual comes from or relates to. Does that seem familiar to a Family Therapist?

G: Yeah, it’s absolutely fundamental to systemic theory, so much so that we disregard symptoms. When a person who has presented with a personality disorder, or eating disorder, or ADHD, or depression, or anything - we would be far less interested in that, and consider the person as a bearer of the symptom, on behalf of the family - a reflection of what might be going on in the system, which is usually the family. So, by exploring the family dynamics, one can realise how someone is in distress and needs to communicate that distress. People don’t usually say ‘I am in distress. Can you help me? Can you be nicer to me? Can you stop abusing me?’ or whatever. People more typically act out their distress and communicate that distress by smashing things up or going missing, or becoming depressed, or becoming ill, or displaying the so-called ‘problematic’ symptom, that which is problematic for the system.
The client is not the individual, the client is the family, even though there will be a referred person and sometimes a so-called ‘identified patient’, but once we meet them, we wouldn’t be focused on that person or patient any more than we would be on the other people.

R: Group Analysis takes particular interest in the location of ‘the problem’, and looks at the difficulties of the individual as better understood as reflecting disturbances in the network of relationships in the individual’s private life or in the psychotherapy group itself.

G: 'Locate' - that's a good word, because we wouldn't locate the problem in the individual either. A bit like the idea of the ‘symptom’ I mentioned earlier - we wouldn’t see that at all, we would think ‘What is going on in your life that makes you need to have these symptoms? What meaning does the symptom hold for the individual, or in the system?’ The problem is not usually located in the individual, but is to be found somewhere in the context that surrounds the individual.

R: Family Therapy is usually a very brief and focused interaction – can you tell us why this is the case and also explain what Family Therapy says about the developmental processes of growth or systemic change?

G: Well, to the first part, I would say that I would say that I see and experience Family Therapy as a very dynamic therapy where change happens quite quickly, and that’s usually because people have conversations together that they’ve never had before. People say ‘I didn’t know that’, ‘I didn’t know you felt that’, ‘I didn’t know that that happened’. It is the process, the experience of being heard for the first time and being given the space in a safe environment, to share and hear things never heard before, that has a very powerful and profound impact on people, so they leave the room after 60 or 90 minutes changed as changed persons, or in changed relationships. They are all there, saying it and listening to it. They can never be the same ever again with that family because they are all experiencing it together. Sometimes the change to their relationships is so profound and can be absolutely fundamental, and that’s why change happens quickly. Sometimes just one or two sessions is enough because it absolutely gets to the heart of the issue very quickly.

As far as developmental processes or growth in systemic change, what we would observe isn’t anything pertaining to developmental processes in an individual, but we could see development in the communication of the system. This means that a family group as a group might be observed, through the process of the therapy space, to make developmental steps in the kinds of communication that they can be capable of. That is, maybe they can now talk more of the unmentionable topics that have been affecting things from the fringes of the family’s shared
awareness, or can interact with greater acceptance of and appreciation of each others’ emotional experience, or be more mutual and responsive than before.

**R:** In order to achieve that, the safety of the context is a very important part of the frame of the therapy?

**G:** Yes, the safety of the context is paramount. In Family Therapy people need to feel free and hold the power to decide what they might want to say or not say. Sometimes that’s because of family secrets, or something they don’t want to disclose yet in front of family members. Other times it might be to do with past histories of very sensitive material like abuse or something else shameful that they don’t want anyone else to know about yet or ever. So I suppose, this raises a really interesting point about Family Therapy which might have a connection with group therapy.

**R:** Do you notice that the very presence of a neutral observing figure has an impact on the family culture? Do families begin to look at themselves as if through the lens of an impartial observer?

**G:** It’s a very interesting question, because I don’t know what they take away but oftentimes they return and say that they’ve changed things following our conversation and what new perspectives they had opened up to. Many, many times people have come back to report that [at home] when a conflict occurs, they now ask ‘what would Ged do? What would the Family Therapist say if he was here?’ They take me home with them, in their minds.

**R:** Group Analysis, like many other therapies, may be working most effectively when working with transferential material. Does Family Therapy have a similar concept by which to understand unconscious communications? Either within family communications or with therapists?

**G:** Yes, but we didn’t use to. Now, as Family Therapy has become more established, they are welcome as a rich seam of thinking. Although we may never refer to the words of ‘transference’ or whatever, we might enquire about events or dynamics in the family that could be shaped by transferential or projective processes. We may consider them for ourselves, and they could be especially useful in helping us to develop an understanding as to how a family system might be functioning or tending to operate.

**R:** Group Analysis places great value on the phenomenon of ‘free-floating discussion’ in the group, akin to the psychoanalytic tool of free-association. The Family Therapy convention of using an Observing/ Reflecting Team which discusses their observation of the family group seems like an associative tool that group analytic working can learn a lot from, especially in ‘unlocking’ or accessing less conscious understandings of relationship dynamics, or conflicts or impasses.

**G:** We use reflective practices, in reflecting or observing teams, the essence of which is to offer thoughts that may be alternative to the kinds of thoughts or perspectives that the family normally takes up. It’s not just a case of ‘here’s what I heard you say’ but it is about adding new thoughts and associations about the family conversation. These thoughts are offered in a tentative and speculative way, not declaring truths. We do this in a tone of openness to being inaccurate or
wrong, and being disagreed with, and disagreeing with one another. So, it can be a really useful way of opening up new narratives to what may be going on in a family, and introducing ideas and questions that can really open up new territory or break new ground in the way that a family group is ready to think and talk about things. That can be really transforming for families, helping them to understand each others’ behaviour or relationship dynamics in a whole new light.

**R:** We are living in times in which once accepted conventions, around binary sexual and gender identities for example, or racial and cultural norms, are being challenged and subverted and replaced, in some ways violently. In Britain, concepts of what constitutes a family are changing entirely – going beyond marriage, to the very nature of parenthood even - how does Family Therapy respond/ adapt to such tectonic societal changes?

**G:** This is a huge area of Family Therapy, and things are changing rapidly. On any Family Therapy training course, at any level, issues of diversity and equality, and issues related to ‘anti-oppressive practice’, have had a huge presence on the syllabus for a long time, longer, I dare say, than any other therapeutic model that I am aware of. We have an acronym, GRRACCEES which stands for Gender/ Race/ Religion/ Age/ Ability/ Class/ Culture/Ethnicity/ Education/ Sexuality. These are some of the many potential areas where people may be experiencing some form of oppression or marginalising, or even silencing. I am very mindful, for instance, of being a white, working class, British male, which confers power and privilege upon me, most of which I am unconscious of.

However, as a therapist, I need to be aware of the role that such power confers on me. If I meet with a Muslim family or migrant or gay or lesbian family, or any other family grouping, then the ‘Graces’ idea is a very important one to bear in mind. They help to remind to question the notion of family norms or normativity, since I, in my position of privilege, for example, am not the arbiter of what is normal. And besides which aspects of their experience as a family might be beyond my ken or sphere of experience, since I have never known what it like to be a Nigerian immigrant single mother, for example. So paying heed to the ‘Graces’ helps us to be sensitive to those aspects of ‘intersectionality’ and identity which we might otherwise fail to recognise the existence of and properly understand the influence of.

**R:** So ‘heteronormativity’ for example is something that Family Therapy will have paid attention to ahead of the other therapeutic disciplines?

**G:** I hesitate a little to make that claim, but my guess is that we have probably have been, because we’ve been mindful of different models of family for many years. But ‘heteronormativity’ is just one of the number of assumptions about life and relationships which come from the dominant discourses in our society. We have to pay attention to it if we are to be useful therapists who are available to effect the changes that people are asking for but maybe not quite articulating. If we disregard someone who lacks in power, because of a structural inequality in society, because they
are black or gay or unemployed, and say ‘No, forget that, we are here to do therapy, not get political’, then we disregard those factors that impinge and limit people’s opportunities and positions in the family and the wider society.

R: In early century ‘Austerity Britain’, many of the social, cultural and even governmental institutions that have contained and protected people and made sense of public or communal living have been dismantled, or degraded, perhaps leading people to experience ever greater alienation, disconnection and vulnerability. Does Family Therapy see evidence of this in the consulting room?

G: Certainly, poverty is real, and austerity is real, and affects the lives of people in very real ways, and sometimes we need to be humble about our therapeutic effectiveness. If someone is struggling with poverty or homelessness, or other social injustices or difficulties, then there is a limit to what Family Therapy might be able to offer. Some families would benefit more from a three-bedroom house than they ever would from Family Therapy, that’s the reality! Living in a one-bedroom house with 4 people, and the stress attached to that, is a reality that all the Family Therapy in the world won’t change.

R: So there is a limit to the extent that the new perspective (as gained in Family Therapy) can have on a person or family? That reality based circumstances place a limit on how much a problem might be ameliorated?

G: No, I wouldn’t say that. Let’s take the example of someone has had a very abusive childhood, and grows up to be given a diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder. When they come to Family Therapy with their children they may talk about some of their childhood experiences; how they struggled to parent effectively, because they felt bad about themselves, because they had always been criticised and rubbished by their parents as useless and worthless. So many times, older or adult children say ‘Mum, Dad, I never realised that, or knew that, or realised how that impacted you, that makes me see things differently’. So of course there is a limit, but I’d say that even though these issues relate to ‘rotten life syndromes’, I still think that talking about them, and their impact on the family relationship in Family Therapy can make a big impact, because it helps people to realise things for the first time. So no, it can still be hugely important even in ongoing adverse circumstances.

R: And is it possible to say in which directions current developments in Family Therapy are heading?

G: No. If I knew, then I’d be already doing it! Really, I’d say that I would guess that the future will be in doing more of what we are doing now, which is further opening to the influence of other discourses and disciplines. If the First Order of Family Therapy was performing therapy from a position of expert ‘doing’ therapy to the family, the Second Order is collaboratively co-constructing ways forward with families being equal in the endeavour. In the Third Order, there is more awareness of the effects on people of the political and the social forces going on around us - of poverty, austerity, racism, sexual and gender politics, trafficking, economic inequality. So it looks like therapy is developing into being more aware of these issues, bringing them into consideration in therapy, and making therapy more politically minded.
R: So the Third Order is about trying to take cognisance of wider societal currents or events?

G: Yes, but that is what Family Therapy has always done, because that is what ‘Systemic’ means. Instead of zooming in on the problem, we zoom out to look at the society, the context, the system. If the system says ‘You are black in a racist society, or a woman in a patriarchal world, or gay in a heteronormative society’, then we have to be more politically aware in our therapy. Rather than seeing our clients as coming to therapy from a vacuum we need to recognise that they are coming from a complex context to do with disenfranchisement, poverty, austerity, lack of opportunity, all of these things that we, perhaps as people in positions of privilege, might not always understand well but need to be aware of if we are to be useful as therapists. So that’s a direction that I think Family Therapy is heading more. That’s one answer - multi-polarity, being open to and taking up more and more different positions.

Thank you, Dr Ged Smith.

Dr. Ged Smith is a senior Family Therapist who has worked in public sector settings, as well as in private practice, for over 30 years, as a therapist and supervisor. He is the current Deputy Editor of the AFT publication Context, is the UK Representative of EFTA, is a writer and regular speaker and contributor on the FT European conference circuit.

Group Analysis, Mental Health and Learning in a Whole School Environment

By Sean Taylor and Anna Warm

Who We Are/The Background

Our work in the school began as an idea when Anna and I were working in an outpatient NHS psychology department. Our working relationship was well-established through our experience of co-delivering a MBT programme which consisted of once-weekly individual therapy alongside a once weekly MBT group, which we co-facilitated. Common to the assessment process for psychotherapy we were mindful that evidence of having formed a good enough object relationship was a favourable indicator of the patient being able to use an interpersonal based therapy. We noted that teachers and other school staff were frequently referred to by our patients, sometimes as the only safe attachment figures in their personal history. This gave us the impetus for thinking about how the school system, if harnessed to its best potential, can offer much more than educational attainment to young people who are frequently shunned, deemed to be ‘bad’ or naughty. In particular we considered how school systems touch almost everybody in our society and provide an environment where unconscious transference relationships are replayed. Such knowledge brings the possibility of therapeutic benefits alongside educational improvements. Frequent media reports of a mental health crisis in children and young people suggested that a creative approach using psychotherapeutic and group analytic ideas in schools would be timely. From the outset we wanted to explore how we might have an enabling effect on a schools’ environment, including the psychological and physical qualities of capacity and containment that it can offer.
With this in mind we set about seeking a school that would be interested in using our thoughts and how they might fit with their own aspirations for improvement. We were fortunate to find such a school in an inner city area of Manchester. The area is socially and economically disadvantaged and has a very large cultural mix of pupils. Alongside this there is a high level of international new arrivals, for whom English is a second language. Further, the school is located in an area that has a high rate of violent and sexual crimes, drug offences and possession of weapons.

The Broader Model of Approach

Both Anna and myself have substantial experience of working within group analytic models varying from the M.B.T. group mentioned above, to therapeutic community work and running analytic groups. In order to investigate possibilities associated to our thinking we first read a paper by Martha Harris (1968) who, in connection to the Tavistock, began a consultation project with a secondary modern school in London (found in ‘The Tavistock Model, Papers on Child Development and Psychoanalytic Training’, Harris and Bick, 2011). Anton Obholzer’s book, ‘The Unconscious at Work’ (1994) was also an invaluable resource for beginning our work. We also sought out relevant literature specific to schools and the learning environment such as Biddy Youell’s excellent book, ‘The Learning Relationship’ (2006) and ‘The Emotional Experience of Learning and Teaching’ by Isca Salzberger-Wittenberg et al. (1983). With these reference points, our respective trainings and our experiences of working in public service in the NHS, we began the process of developing a model of working.

We thought about the whole school as a mix of large groups functioning together as systems and sub-systems. Experience of working in the school developed our awareness that these systems very quickly become affected by both national and international dynamics. In order for the school to function we developed thinking in connection to Bion’s theory of the container-contained along with the need of a capacity for maternal reverie. Bion cites these elements as central components for growth and learning, described in his book ‘Learning From Experience’ (1962). This complex theory base has a natural affiliation with the objectives of the education system, adding to the understanding and nature of pedagogy within the whole school environment. The notion of integrating this theoretical perspective is quite an overwhelming one to comprehend and something that we were mindful to gauge within reasonable expectations. However, we also wanted to maintain an optimistic outlook where our objective remained to aid the school in reaching its best potential in offering children a good enough attachment (transference) experiences, within which they can learn. In the words of Martha Harris (1968), we sought to develop something practical rather than perfect.

In psychoanalytic terms, the transition into the secondary school setting is significant. Children leave the relatively stable and secure environment of primary school where they work with one teacher in one room for the greater proportion of their day. The degree of containment offered by the school system is reduced by virtue of the fact that pupils find their way from one lesson to another, having multiple teachers in multiple settings over the course of a day. The day is filled with
beginnings, endings and transitions to beginning in another class or setting. The school day can be thought about in connection to Bowlby’s theories, where pupils are exposed to a repetitive process of attachment, separation and loss. Within this the attachment history of each individual child has either equipped them favourably or not. Our thinking was that those children who expressed distress or upset while engaging in the transitional process of the day would be most likely to present with emotional difficulties and the associated blocks to learning.

Added to the attachment dynamic outlined above, by the time they reach high school (age 11) children are most usually judged to have reached sufficient capacity to make their own way to and from school. With this freedom and autonomy there is a much greater opportunity for young people to encounter different circumstances, attitudes and values. Examples include the possibility of visiting the home of friends, where they will notice similarities and differences in the living conditions and conduct of family members. This freedom opens up a developmentally useful (triangular) space, though equally it can present young people with experiences of threatening and/or disturbing ‘other’ positions or view of the world. This can reflect both favourably and negatively on the young person’s own home life. With this in mind our thoughts became focussed upon Oedipal conflicts and resistances to growth. At the same time we noted that regressions to more primitive ways of functioning will be a likely retreat for pupils and, in their counter-transference, for the staff teams working with children of this age. Without wishing to add too much complexity to the dynamics outlined so far, we also recognised that exposure to a broader social situation is likely to stimulate healthier frustrated feelings such as jealousy and more destructive feelings of envy. The latter being a damaging state of mind that significantly inhibits any person’s ability to learn. From a broader social and political perspective we noted a landscape where the pressure for regression from persecutory survival anxieties in public service provision. In connection to schools this has taken the form of an overwhelming level of reforms such as changes to the teaching curriculum, exam systems, budgetary limitations and the pressure towards joining the school academy programme; all this happening during the period of austerity since 2010.

Taking all of the above into account we felt our work in the school would be best managed by modelling ourselves as a parental couple. We took the extent of primitive projective processes seriously and considered that they would have been too difficult to contain without the continual availability of a third position. We had come to truly appreciate the value of this in our experience of working together to contain some very disturbing dynamics in the MBT programme. As time has progressed we have come to consider the ‘parental couple’ approach to our work as being a central characteristic of the work.

The Development of our Model in Connection to an Identified Task

We initially met with the recently appointed Head Teacher and her Deputy Head. We treated the engagement phase in much the same way as we would in a clinical setting. We wanted to know whether our school leaders could be curious about and make use of our clinical thinking, which linked individual experiences to group and organisational processes. In turn, we were also keen to begin an understanding of how difficulties in the school became manifest as conscious and
unconscious dynamics. Similar to a clinical assessment process we offered simple interpretations or formulations to see whether the leadership pairing could relate to them meaningfully.

Consciously the school wished for input to support them in working with pupils who experience fairly severe behavioural difficulties. Quickly it was apparent that the Head Teacher and her Deputy understood that pupils’ behaviour was a manifest communication of psychological disturbance. At a less conscious level we were put in touch with the multitude of overwhelming experiences encountered in the day-to-day work of the leadership team. Initially our conversation focussed on instances of mental health/behavioural issues in children; the school leaders also spoke about budget pressures, staff management and disciplinary procedures, pressures from political reform, inspection regimes, liaison with external agencies (national and international) and the demands of maintaining the day-to-day safe physical environment of the school. We began to understand how this collection of demands and concerns form the basis of the learning environment or school ‘setting’. We thought about this as both an external (concrete/conscious) landscape and the internal (unconscious) mind-scape of the leaders. Our thoughts linked how the leadership teams conduct their knowledge, experience, authority and power to the containing environment developed for educational attainment. While this is a somewhat impossible task to quantify it is something that can be understood in terms of large group dynamics or Earl Hopper’s notion of Social Unconscious (2003). In the midst of this the primary task of the school is to enable academic achievement in pupils. This achievement is measured by means of academic progress (Progress 8), which is published in comparative national tables. Alongside this there are the more widely known exam league tables also published publicly. These tables represent something that are potentially glorifying or shaming of the school’s functioning. The school leaders communicated their compassion for pupils and their strong commitment to nurturing a healthy environment where pupil interactions with each other and their teachers can be developmentally healthy.

Collectively, our initial meeting was concluded with a feeling that we had a good fit. We were excited that we could get a chance to develop our initial thinking alongside colleagues who shared a passion for developing a mentally healthy school environment. The powerful feeling of overwhelm and emotional upset communicated in the meeting became part of the data from which we formulated an understanding of the experiences of the school at that point in time. We described ways in which an ongoing consultation model could transform such feelings of distress into something more comprehensible, making them a productive and hopeful element of school life. We proposed that it would be possible to work with key aspects of the school system, from which increased levels of internal containment would have an ongoing developmental benefit. We proposed the use of work discussion groups, specific consultation exercises. In addition to this we offered a space of support to the headteacher. This support took the form of providing her with a space to digest conscious and unconscious organisational dynamics in a neutral and confidential space. We clearly communicated a realistic sense of hope in our formulation as the Head Teacher told us that it had ‘brought a tear to her eyes’ when she read it. From this point onwards we agreed upon a whole school approach to developing a ‘healthy mind’ school culture.
Integration into Systems Within the School

Our next phase of involvement began with an away half-day. The Head Teacher organised for us to meet with departmental heads across the school’s systems. With this as our frame we developed an agenda for the day. Structured into this was a space to hear about staff experiences, therefore offering some initial receptivity and containment within a median group setting. We communicated our methods of working in action, providing a group setting rather than sitting around a table or speaking from a lectern. We were keen to communicate the nature of the expertise that we could bring to the school, part of which was the value of being naïve to their systems and holding a ‘not knowing stance’. Simultaneously we were mindful that the nature of the teaching environment is one of knowing and imparting knowledge to learners, going about our communication in a careful manner. We did not want to become identified with a denigrated position of stupidity or ignorance, at the same time we did not wish to put ourselves forward as idealised and omniscient objects.

There were unconscious invitations for us to take both idealised and denigratory positions over the course of the afternoon. Despite this, our background reading and experience allowed us to navigate our way through this narrow path of ignorance and expertise. We managed to communicate the notion that it is in the best school’s interest to develop their skills and networks for containing and working with psychological disturbance/emotional blocks to learning. We proposed this as a way of working rather than investing in a specialist, external to the system, ‘bolton’ psychology and psychotherapy provision. Our opinion was formed from the knowledge that ‘bolton’ systems tend to be relied upon as a means of taking away the ‘difficulty’ rather than promote experiential learning, containment and ability. We hoped that this value would come to represent a core belief in the culture/ethos of the school. In connection to this our thoughts turned to Bion’s thinking once again. In ‘Experiences in Groups’ (1961) he describes how a Basic Assumption Group (or organisation) avoids dealing with the truth of their difficulties by falling back into a pairing, fight-flight or dependent position. Such groups form a collective phantasy around an unconsciously shared belief that sustains a ‘safe’ status quo. Safety in staying the same is preferred to the anxiety of grappling with the reality of what is happening. In the school system this might look like an unwillingness to consider new approaches because they feel so angered at the effects of austerity or reform (Basic Assumption-fight-flight). Alternatively they might form an idea that resolution will come under the auspices of a future government, a better pairing (Bapairing) between managers and government policy. The final risk might come from an unconscious investment in the idea that pupil’s mental distress should best be met by an outside expert, such as some service provided by a bolt-on service. In our minds this would form an unhelpful position of dependency (Bapairing) and risk maintaining the status quo.

By promoting the idea of work discussion groups we wished to avoid the limits of an adhesive learning environment. Instead we promoted the idea an introjective environment where knowledge and skills can be acquired from each other, from the group as a whole, from the process of being in a group over time and from our clinical expertise as facilitators. Esther Bick (1968, 1986) notes that being held by a thinking or containing body allows for incomprehensible experiences to be developed and safely learned from. Conversely, adhesive identifications tend to limit true growth because, in a precocious way, it acts as a cover for the failure to convert incomprehensible...
experiences into new learning. For growth to occur there is a necessary period of dependence upon a containing/thinking object. The object is internalised in a process that acknowledges a need for frustration/anxiety to be held at the same time as positive experiences are taken in by means of identification.

This is a different experience of dependency from the Ba-Dependent position, which project all of the power, knowledge and responsibility onto the other, therefore preventing the development of thoughts, knowledge and skill from within.

In parallel to the process outlined above we hoped to weave this philosophical view of learning into the ‘DNA’ of the school. By promoting the possibility of thinking we wished to build its value into a nodal point of the social unconscious of the organisation. In doing so we hoped that the teaching style of the organisation would value the notion of introjective growth rather than adhesive or wrote learning methods. In itself we feel that this is a sign of emotional maturity in the organisation allowing for more health learning experiences with the pupils.

We note that our proposals contrast with the, mechanical, bolt-on, culture of outsourcing that has evolved in the UK over recent years. Our hope over time is to demonstrate that growth of a healthy culture can improve productivity, resilience and effectiveness in an organisation, ideas based in our knowledge of unconscious group processes.

Broader Systems in the School and the School as Part of a Broader System

The school operates within a broader social and political context, something that directed us to shape our approach around current political thinking. Norman Lamb’s ‘The Future in Mind’ (DOH, 2012) is particularly helpful, communicating the need for access to psychological support and expertise. This reinforced our belief in the value of supporting the growth of knowledge and experience in the whole school system. Integration of ‘healthy mind’ skills and knowledge into everyday practice, across a whole school system, can make things a better for everybody. In connection to this publication our thinking developed along lines where awareness of disruptive behaviour being a communication, not just an evacuation of ill feeling, promotes the availability of a healthy, transformative, mind for pupils, parents and teachers alike. From this point of view the health and wellbeing of the school leadership team would be integrative to our approach. We had originally hoped to develop a work group for the leadership team. This did not manifest but we did keep regular contact with the Head Teacher in a way that was supportive and maintained an analytical understanding of happenings in the school. Our contact with the Head provided thinking space and supported the continuity for our approach in a top-down manner, complementing the bottom-up approach we were implementing with staff in the work groups.

Transforming Children’s and Young People’s Mental Health Provision (DOH, DfE, 2017) proposes that Child and Adolescent Mental Health should become more closely involved with School services. The paper emphasises the need to develop a whole school approach where mental health leads have “oversight of the whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, including how it is reflected in the design of behaviour policies, curriculum and pastoral support, how staff are supported with their own mental wellbeing and how pupils and parents are engaged”. This is a
welcome development, however, defining mental health is a significantly complicated task that even long serving professional might struggle to define, especially in the context of a whole school approach. We feel that this is an area that psychoanalytic and group analytic thought has much to offer. In particular, group/systemic thinking provides a paradigm from where inter-departmental issues can be considered in a developmentally healthy manner. The propensity for splitting dynamics to be re-enacted rather than thought through will be high. Especially so in times where workers are highly anxious and fearful of job losses linked to austerity or persecutory observations from inspection regimes. Other inter-organisational across boundaries such as work Police, Child Care Social Workers, Looked After Children and CAMHS brings further complexity to this dynamic between colleagues and team members who might identify with ‘in’ or ‘out’ group dynamics.

Working with Staff

As mentioned above the Leadership’s awareness of the critical importance of relationships meant that, during the first term of our work there were no demands to race ahead in ‘delivering’ something that had yet to be formed. Time was allotted for us to get to know staff and build relationships with the whole system. In much the same way as is necessary in clinical work, we had to allow sufficient space for ambivalent feelings in staff members to be acted out. When people didn’t keep their times with us we made it clear that we would remain available and would value the chance to understand what prevented staff members from getting to see us. As we targeted the key nodal points of the school, network relationships developed into the provision of supervision to some key personnel. These staff members stood out because their role put them in touch with the most distressed pupils or situations. We developed supervision space for the Safeguarding Leads, the Mental Health Lead and the Pastoral Care Lead, part of whose role is to oversee Special Educational Needs and Disability provision (SEND).

Beyond the role of focussed supervision other key ares in the school were recognised:

- Behavioural and Attendance managers.
- Physical Barriers to Learning lead.
- Autistic Spectrum provision lead.
- English as a Second Language workers.
- Resilience workers.
- Heads of Year.
- Pastoral Care Managers
- Community Liaison.
- Inclusion team.
- School counsellors and resilience workers.
Once again this points to the breadth of our task, something that the understanding of group analytic principles brought great relief. Our proposed developments in the whole system needed to fit with the existing culture of the school. To do so we needed to become sufficiently aware of the school’s history and key developmental events and traumas. In doing so we have gradually become acquainted with the social unconscious or whole school matrix of the school. It is this careful work that we feel to be the medium where sustainable development can take place.

We initially developed three work discussion groups from the people listed above. As described above, our guiding principle was one where the internalisation of a good enough container would allow workers to communicate their own experience of containment in connection with colleagues, and in turn with pupils. Two out of the initial three groups we established have survived. They have matured into long-term work discussion groups each between 3 and 4 years old. Our original intention to enable the school to develop its own internal resource, applying psycho-dynamically informed methods, is beginning to come to fruition. Staff who have had close involvement with us are beginning to think about the ways that they can start to offer some group-based support for other members of staff. Most notable is their commitment to an understanding that thinking space is an ‘intervention’ in itself. The drive to ‘do’ and ‘deliver’ interventions is now recognised as something that can be a defensive and counter-productive manoeuvre. One or two staff members are expressing curiosity about under-taking some introductory training of their own, recognising this a part of their own development.

The third group folded in its infancy. Interestingly, it was our only single-department group and it was made up of staff from an area within the school who work closely with international new arrivals and refugees. The group had the potential to be very interesting, however it was also a group that was working with some of the most traumatised pupils and families. Many of the pupils and family members had limited command of the English language. The role of this staff group is to translate and negotiate with family members as well as to support the learning of pupils where language difficulties are a barrier to learning. The role often puts staff members in conflict with families who also belonged to the staff member’s culture of origin. Many of the dynamics within the group were difficult to contain as, perhaps as a parallel process to their work with the pupils, difficult experiences tended to be expressed somatically or in a pre-symbolised/non-verbal form. There was a great feeling of anxiety in that group and they struggled to be curious about their feelings in connection to their work. In retrospect, we probably should have waited until our work in the school was more solidly established before embarking upon work with this area of the school.

We have recently developed a second ‘third group’ with staff from the Autism provision part of the school. This was requested due to some difficult staffing issues that had arisen. It is our second attempt at working with a small and dedicated staff team within the school. As their first term draws to a close they are showing signs of engagement in our work. As might be expected with the area of speciality, once again there is a high level of ‘non-metabolised’ material in the group. Where things seem to be different is that our establishment in the school is more solid and there being a broader level of understanding about the nature of our work within the school’s management systems.
Conclusion

This is a growth model based upon our ability to promote a culture of thinking rather than doing. For this to happen we have needed to develop an understanding of how it is that the school got to be where they are now, to understand their historical context so to speak. In ‘The Art of Group Analysis in Organisations’ (2014) Gerhard Wilke notes the need for both continuity and change in the organisational setting. He also helpfully notes that cultural change happens ‘one conversation at a time’. Both are concepts that support the possibility of comprehending such a huge task as we began and continue to embrace; a containing thought for the overwhelm that we as external consultants have constantly been in touch with.

Sean Taylor is a Psychodynamic Psychotherapist registered with the British Psychoanalytic Council. An individual therapist in private practice, he is also co-founder of InMind Consultancy under whose umbrella the work in this school has taken place. Sean is also a tutor on The Tavistock and Portman’s ‘Foundations of Psychodynamic Psychotherapy’ course in Manchester. Further to this he is on the Board of Trustees of Group Analysis North. Contact email - inmind.consultancy@gmail.com

Anna Warm is a Clinical Psychologist working in the public sector as well as in private practice. Anna has extensive history of interest in research and organisational matters, in addition to her interest in individual and group-based clinical practice.

HOW TO RUN A GROUP

A SHORT COURSE ON GROUPWORK SKILLS

Groups can be scary places for group facilitators as well as group members. Learning about the basics can offer confidence and new skills. The course is designed as an introduction to groupwork skills – focusing on particular areas that are designed to give you the knowledge, understanding and practical skills necessary to go about setting up and facilitating an effective group. It offers a supportive environment and an opportunity to learn about the fundamental skills required in facilitating effective groups.

Overview of the Course:

- Basic introduction to group theory. Understanding why some groups flourish and others flounder.
- What a group facilitator’s role is.
- Understanding boundaries, creating and maintaining them.
- Managing conflict.
- How groups affect the facilitator emotionally.
- How to manage how members relate to each other, and you, within the group, so that these help rather than hinder the group task.
- Managing endings in groups.

Who is the course for: The course is designed for those working with groups in a variety of settings, including mental health and other health related services, drugs and alcohol recovery services, therapy, counselling, probation and prison services, social care, children and young people’s services and education providers. It will also be of benefit to those who wish to develop a greater understanding of team and organisational dynamics.

Venue: Newlands Centre, Bolton
Course Fee: £310.00 for self funding (option of £77.50 x 4 monthly payments) and £380.00 for organisations
Course Dates: February 27, March 5, 12, 19, 26, April 2, 2020.
Course Times: Thursdays from 4.00 p.m.—7.30 p.m.
For more information or an application form please contact: Bethan Mareinos, Administrator, Group Analysis North
e-mail: administrator@groupanalysisnorth.com
Or visit our website: www.groupanalysisnorth.com

Reader of Issue No. 14, celebrating the 30th anniversary of GAN, will recall that Andy Foden was energetic and big-hearted enough to run a fundraising 30 mile route on the 10th June 2019. Andy, on getting his breath back, has issued the challenge for members to match his 30 mile contribution by donating to GAN’s treasury sums of money of any size so long as they are in multiples of 30! Dig in. Thank you Andy.

Anniversary donations accepted by GAN by contacting the Office.
Power, Position, and Privilege within the IGA and Beyond

In November 2018 the National Power, Privilege, and Position (PPP) working group was set up as part of the National Training Management Committee, and over a year later, it’s wonderful to see that the group is making strides towards amplifying existing voices of difference among us and widening our doorways to let other voices in.

The PPP group came together to consider key areas within the institution where issues of difference could be better addressed and held in mind. The areas currently being explored are: the curriculum, student lived experience, access, inclusion and retention, and training governance. We have met four times over the last year in different venues across the UK and are committed to remaining open to anyone who feels able to contribute their time and efforts, for as little or as much as they feel able.

Some of the work already undertaken includes creating a bank of literature written by range of authors on issues of PPP, such as papers on black feminism, intersectionality, whiteness, sexual orientation, gender, and disability. This bank includes contributions from both within and outside of group analysis and clinical practice, and we hope to make this available via a shared folder online in 2020. Should you have any suggestions on interesting pieces to include, please do get in touch.

We have also set initiatives in motion to collate people’s experiences in order to understand the emotional, physical, and psychological impact of feeling ‘different’ whilst on the training and beyond. This data may help us to better recognise disturbances within our foundation matrices that are not currently being noticed and/or worked with, thus potentially improving training experiences and retention overall.

A thoughtful questionnaire has been produced to help inform our work around training governance and make changes at a systemic level, such as addressing the composition of our Training Committee; reviewing the selection processes for admissions, teaching staff, supervisor and training group analysts (TGA), and course directors; reviewing and developing current processes for audit and monitoring; and developing teaching staff, supervisor and TGA training and competence. All of this work is being done with an openness to working with notions of internalised oppression and the social unconscious.

If you are interested in coming along to a meeting, your input would be welcome. The group is open to IGA students, groupwork practitioners, and qualified group analysts, and our next meeting will take place at the IGA in London on Friday 31st January 2020 from 11:00 am – 3:00 pm. For further information and to register your attendance please contact Chair Anthea Benjamin at sleekpurpose@aol.com

I myself embarked on my journey at the IGA because I was drawn to the idea that within group analysis, advice does not get dispensed by someone in authority but is rather co-created by the group as a whole. This feels particularly pertinent to the work of PPP as the more influences we have on our endeavour to enhance the IGA training, the better our work will reflect the current needs and desires of those within its reach.

Jacinta Kent – Jan 2020
Waking up and becoming more conscious is a never ending task. Let's try and keep talking. I cannot
know what is right for you but I do believe if we connect through conversation we can find our
personal truths.

The Cost of Compromising to Belong

By Libby Nugent

I think most Clinical Psychologists are drawn to [the] profession for restorative reasons: our
individual, family and community wounds have taught us the impact of unattended pain. Part of my
private practice I have made available to provide therapy to trainee clinical psychologists during
this life-changing chapter. I have witnessed the stepping into this professional identity from a
behind the scenes view. In addition to this, I have also at different times provided group reflective
practice to assistant and aspiring clinical psychologists, supervision to trainee clinical psychologists,
therapy to qualified clinicians as well as individual and group supervision. My therapeutic approach
is systemic and narrative and I am currently in the training process to become a group analyst.

The trainees that have come to me for therapy have typically wanted to make sense of different
parts of their identity whilst in the context of training. The hidden or marginalised parts that do not
fit the assimilated white, female, straight, young, able-bodied, identity of the clinical psychologist
 caricature. Non assimilated identities have included: being black; being brown; having a religious
faith; uncertainty around sexuality; being working class; carrying a mental health diagnosis/ lived
experience of the mental health service; fertility problems; loneliness; being a rape survivor and
survivor of complex childhood trauma.

I am sharing these details to make the point that I am in a relatively potent position regarding
observation of the psyche and culture of clinical psychology training. I hope sharing my reflections
on our culture is taken as an additional part of this work and provides a degree of advocacy
regarding some things that need to change for the better in our profession.

In this therapeutic work what often gets discussed is the tension between the different parts of the
self. What I have come to think of as the good girl versus rebel dilemma. The good girl identity
wants to be seen as reasonable, a scientist-practitioner, who is kind and thoughtful and fits in to CP
culture. She wants to keep her head down and make the most of opportunities with minimal friction.
She has a propensity for avoidance. The rebel is full of feeling, heart ache, pain, anger and
aggression; she wants to tell everyone how her life really is and who cares if everyone thinks she’s
too much; she has a propensity for self-righteousness. My witnessing of CP culture is that it is
likely to encourage a compromise be made between the two positions: a bit knocked off from each
part and ideally the worst bits: have a voice, speak your truth just as long as no-one is made to feel
too uncomfortable. ”The culture will not learn if people are shamed” is what we are told. “So how
do I find the right balance?” is so often the question posed by trainees.

My Mormon childhood (white supremacist and misogynistic) also gave me the narrative that I must
compromise to belong: I could have my ideas and my frustrations with the community but being
kind and thoughtful were highly valued characteristics and as such I needed to find a middle road.
So I could be opinionated and give feedback about the misogyny but not so much to cause another
too much discomfort and certainly not shame. Or rather not to cause the superior white male shame.
It likewise would not have occurred to me to think that a person of colour would be anything other
than pleased for me to be prioritised over them. Their servitude was my reward for being nice.
Should a person of colour have tried to give me feedback regarding how they were experiencing
any of my entitled behaviours. I would have assumed they were truly overreacting - that would have
implied I was somehow a racist and I was far too good and nice to ever be that.
I left the Mormon community as I wanted to be seen as a whole person. This turned out to be quite different from what I was anticipating. Through having a psychoanalysis I have found how important it is to honour all the different parts of my life fully and the danger of cultures that do not contain anger but instead demand compromise and assimilation. Through experiencing this analytic relationship I learned the difference between containment as an expression of a need to control and containment as an opportunity to engage and allow for change.

I have a love of dreams and faerie tales and I thought I would bring two here as a way to continue my conversation with whoever is reading this.

Here is a dream I had following my own qualifying as a clinical psychologist and a faerie tale that I’ve spent considerable time contemplating:

The Dream:

I am in a campervan being driven by a clinical psychologist supervisor. We are driving in a neglected part of our community. On the side of the road I notice a beautiful woman. She is smiling at people and busy doing tasks to tidy up the area. The woman is dressed as a Geisha. People in the road observe her from a distance. As the vehicle moves closer to her I realise the Geisha dress is a very shoddy costume and is in fact disguising a white man who is filled with pain and rage and behaving violently sometimes to himself and sometimes at others. For every tidying up action “she” does, “he” undoes. People around are pretending they don’t see him and I am reminded of the story of the emperor who had no clothes.

The Faerie Tale:

An insecure emperor, who cares too much about how he appears to others, hires two weavers. The weavers claim to make the most beautiful clothes in the whole world. In actuality, the weavers are tricksters who convince the emperor they are using a special magic fabric that appears invisible to anyone who is either incompetent at their role or hopelessly stupid. Of course no one can see the alleged fabric but everyone who is invited in to view the weavers work pretends that they can for fear of appearing unfit for their role. Finally, the weavers report that the suit is finished and they mime dressing the emperor who then marches in procession before his subjects. The townsfolk uncomfortably go along with the pretence, not wanting to appear unfit for their positions or stupid. Finally, a child in the crowd blurts out that the emperor is wearing nothing at all and the cry is then taken up by others. The emperor realises the assertion is true and continues the procession - still naked. (Wikipedia,2019)

I have come to invest importance in these images to both my personal and professional identity. I will leave it to you to have your own associations but hopefully it is apparent why the symbolism might be relevant.

I think if we genuinely want the system to change we need to take head on this dominant culture as a collective. We must not continue to leave people in marginalised subgroups with the tasks of self care and the burden of rescuing this culture that is too insecure to listen. To do this I think we need to take seriously the intersectional complexity of our relationships; and embrace nuanced feelings, experiences and conversation where we can all see ourselves as both oppressed and oppressors.

If the profession really wants to engender equitable change my experience shows this is not an academic task. This is where I am in agreement with those that suggest CP culture would benefit hugely from providing compulsory analytic reflective space, for training staff and individual or
group therapy for trainees. In this way we can begin to grapple with the hidden parts of ourselves and each other. I appreciate that may seem a strong position but how else do we start to see the unseen.

Libby is a practising Clinical Psychologist and a current trainee on the Manchester Qualifying Course. The above article was originally posted as a blogpost on the web location below: http://www.libbynugent.com/blog/4594595094/An-Open-Letter-to-Clinical-Psychology/11373104?preview=Y;use_flash=1

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**Research Plan for Development of ASK Outcome Measure specific to Group Analysis**

Dear GANNET readers,

I quite fortuitously had a conversation with Richard Curtis one of the GANNET editors who asked if I had anything to share in the next edition of GANNET, and I thought it would be a great opportunity to introduce an initiative I have been working on with two other colleagues for the past year now. We are about to forward this to all of the members of the IGA, but we wanted to introduce it here in GANNET so that you have the potential to participate in this interesting project.

We want to introduce the development of an Outcome Measure (named ASK) named after the authors (Ashton, Stocks and Kyriakopoulos) is specific to group-analysis.

Some of you will know that I am passionate about research, and have been an active researcher for most of my professional life, and so I am delighted to be involved in a project which is about providing research outcomes for Group Analysis. ASK is an outcome measure specifically developed to measure the effectiveness of Group Analytic Groups, and in a National climate of all services being asked to evidence the effectiveness of the work they are doing it is a prime opportunity to introduce such a measure in evaluating the work we all do as Group Analysts in our everyday work.

For those of you who don’t know me: **Angela Lawrence** is a Consultant Psychologist, Psychotherapist, and Group Analyst. She has worked in the NHS for over 20yrs, and has specialised in working with patients who have experienced insecure attachments, and or extensive trauma during their developmental years. She has previously sat on and Chaired several committees at the BPS (British Psychological Society). She teaches on Doctoral Clinical Psychology Training programmes, for Psychotherapy Institutes, and on some IGA courses. Her teaching specialties are in Attachment Theory, Personality Disorders, Working with extensive Trauma, Group Analysis, and Mentalization. She is an advanced Mentalization Practitioner. She trained in MBT at the Anna Freud Centre in London, and has been using an MBT model for over 15yrs. She applies MBT within a Group Analytic frame in several psychotherapy groups that she currently runs. She works in a Dynamic Psychotherapy Service within the NHS providing both individual Psychotherapy, and Group Analytic groups. She trained as a Group Analytic Supervisor at the IGA in London and currently supervises 5 analytic psychotherapy groups in her department, alongside running reflective practice groups in other services.

She has an extensive background in research spanning over twenty years, and currently leads on Research both within her Trust and at a National level.

One of her passions is to raise the profile of Group Analysis within the NHS and in other external clinical environments, and she would like to see Analytic Psychotherapy groups being offered in every GP practise throughout the UK. Let’s see if we can do this!

To give some background regarding my other colleagues: **Helen Stocks** has worked in the NHS since 2009 in various primary and secondary mental health settings. She graduated from the Teesside University Counselling Psychology Doctorate in 2017. Following graduation she worked as a Counselling Psychologist
in Doncaster as part of Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Trust. She now works at Leeds Community Mental Health Team under Leeds and York Partnership Foundation NHS Trust. Helen has an interest in therapy outcome measures, particularly those therapies with a psychoanalytic component.

Tony Ashton is a group-analyst who trained on the Manchester Diploma Course and who, having qualified in 2005, has worked within a Specialist Psychotherapy Service in Wakefield, West Yorkshire and now exclusively, within the Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Service set within the Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys Mental Health Foundation Trust, which covers a large part of North-Eastern England. Over this past twenty years he has worked mainly in developing and conducting Foulksian Long-Term Group-Analytic groups within this location and latterly helped to promote research into the proven efficacy of group-analysis.

We are all involved in the launch of a new outcome measure to measure the effectiveness of Group Analysis (ASK) and we are currently promoting its use at a nationwide level in several services across the UK. Please see the information provided below. We hope you will want to be part of this ambitious national project, but equally we feel it will benefit your service at a local level, and we already have preliminary findings that prove the efficacy of group analysis, and the beneficial effects this has on patients.

Where many Psychotherapy services are facing potential cuts, and in many cases closure, we need to bring a clinically proven response which matches numerous other research analyses like that of CBT so that we can have a more measured and diverse clinical offer to patients presenting with extensive levels of psychological distress within many services. We want Group Analysis to be a model which has a much wider perspective in the NHS generally, and we hope this project will enhance this.

We know that there is currently little evidence or research analysis relating to Psychoanalytic therapy, and also Group Analysis at the moment, and that CBT has dominated most research forums for quite some time now. However, this position is changing, and there have been a number of very recent studies being presented which will somewhat change the tide of this situation, and most of the evidence being produced shows significant efficacy of Analytic work across many spectrums of care. We want to be part of this growing body of evidence, and we hope that you will be interested in rolling out the use of this outcome measure in your own departments.

This project began as a research project for Helen Stocks, then a Psychology Trainee (now qualified) and was undertaken in collaboration with Teesside University and Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys Mental Health Foundation Trust (TEWV) and specifically with Tony Ashton, a Group-Analyst working within the Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Service. Since then, I have joined up with Tony and Helen, and we have formed a working party to further develop this initiative.

**PHASE ONE**

This involved Helen meeting with two focus groups, one made up of group-analytic patients (past or present) and the other made up of group analysts and using open questions establishing what outcomes specific to group-analysis could be established and so later, consistently measured.

This Patient Reported Outcome Measure (PROM) is now nearing completion and after a period of further revision e.g. at several meetings, and a recent meeting of the Research Forum at the IGA, we are nearing a completed version ready to roll out.

**PHASE TWO**

- Phase 2 will require each potential group-analytic centre, attempting to identify a quantity of group-analytic patients
- This can be any patients who have not undertaken any group analysis at all yet.
- This can include those who’ve had at least 6 months of therapy (if they’re currently receiving it)
- Those who have completed therapy can be included
- A volunteer can send out letters and stamped addressed envelopes
- Some may wish to do it online
• Any interest/questions please contact Helen at (helen.stocks5@nhs.net). Later down the line when things are finalised she can send a formal expression of interest sheet.

• For those who contact back to say they’re interested once the study measure is finalised we will likely require:

• Participants in Group Analytic Groups to complete the wellbeing tool (PROM) at the beginning, middle and end of therapy. You can use an increased frequency if this is more compatible with your organisation, but this is the minimum required to achieve productive results.

• Participants to complete the CORE-34 as and WEMWBS as general comparisons (discriminant validity)

• We would then like you to perform your own analysis on a body of patients that have been issued with the ASK questionnaire over the next year. We would then require you to forward us the details of the research analysis that you have performed over this period.

• We do hope that you will want to be part of this project once up and running and we very much look forward to hearing from you in due course, and are looking forward to the end results.

If interested please contact: - Helen Stocks on helen.stocks5@nhs.net

Please also see Helen’s published paper in Group Analysis, which will provide you with further details of the project: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0533316419888603

We look forward to hearing from you, Angela Tony & Helen

Distance Professional Doctorate in Psychotherapy Studies University of Central Lancashire

About a year ago you would have received an email from me via the Institute of Group Analysis regarding a survey to determine the interest in an online professional doctorate programme through the University of Central Lancashire. The aim of developing this programme was to enable group analysts to attain a doctorate in our field of practice.

There was a very good response to the survey and there seemed to be significant interest in having this academic option available, especially given the online option. Since then, I have left my employed position as an academic at the university to return to clinical practice, but I have continued my relationship nonetheless. The doctorate has been named a doctorate in psychotherapy studies and it has now become operational. Students have been accepted onto the programme and have begun their studies. The next intake of students will be September 2020.

As mentioned, I am still connected to the university as an honorary academic and, if there were a group analysts or students of group analysis wishing to pursue this doctorate programme, I am happy to be involved by providing a supervisory group analytic perspective alongside the academic supervision.

If you are interested in finding out further information about the online doctorate programme, then please click the link below:

https://www.uclan.ac.uk/courses/dprof-psychotherapy-studies.php
You are also very welcome to email me (danieledwardanderson@icloud.com) the course leader Marie Percival (who is available through the above link).

With kind regards,

Dr Daniel Anderson
Group Analyst and Consultant
Psychiatrist

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Richard Curtis, Shireen Gaur

Please send submissions, sketches, cartoons, articles, scraps, jokes, book reviews and contributions to
richardmc@curtis@gmail.com
shireen_gaur@yahoo.com

Institute of Group Analysis & Group Analysis North
Groupwork Training, Manchester, starting
September 2020

The IGA Foundation Course in Groupwork is a one-year, stand-alone course providing a comprehensive introduction to group dynamics. It will support and develop your practical skills to help you run groups confidently. The course will:

- Give you the knowledge and skills to set up and run groups with greater confidence.
- Provide you with a learning community that supports and facilitates personal and professional development.
- Help you to navigate an increasingly complex world working with complex clients in complex organisations.
- Support you in developing resilience at a personal and professional level.
- Help you work with difference and diversity.
- Support your leadership and team-working skills.
- Build your capacity to develop and maintain healthy working relationships with colleagues and others using an understanding of organisational dynamics and how you relate to others in a group situation.

The course runs on 10 Saturdays and 1 Friday across the year from September 2020 to July 2021

Course venue: Newlands Estate, 315 Chorley New Road, Bolton, BL1 5BP

Course fees: £1,550 ‘early bird’ rate for applications before 31st May 2020, £1,650 thereafter

For more information visit www.groupanalysisnorth.com or email administrator@groupanalysisnorth.com